PRESENCING SETTLER COLONIALISM: WHITE SETTLER GIRLS' ENGAGEMENT WITH COLONIAL VIOLENCE

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A thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctorate in Philosophy degree in Women's Studies

Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies
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Abstract

Euro-Western girls are well represented within the field of girlhood studies. However, there exists a silence in the girlhood literature vis-à-vis the ways that white settler girls maintain and resist systems of colonial injustice. Everything that is known about white, North American girlhood is, therefore, predicated on a foundation of settler colonialism that has never been interrogated. The current research disrupts the colonial fixation on Indigenous "dysfunction" in order to interrogate settler identity. More precisely, drawing on girlhood theory, Indigenous feminist theories, and settler colonial theory, I examine the ways that white settler girls negotiate recently emerging discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. Using feminist, qualitative, narrative methods, I conducted twelve in-depth, semi-structured interviews with white settler girls, aged fifteen to seventeen, living in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal. My analysis of the interviews offers critical insights into white settler girlhood in the following ways: the complex ways that Canadian identity and whiteness are intricately linked; the ways that white settler girls disrupt and support national narratives that erase Canada's relationship to colonialism; the ways that Canadian curricula fail to adequately prepare settler girls to make sense of colonial violence; and the complex ways that settler girls tend to situate colonialism in the past. These insights reveal the on-going structure of colonialism in Canada and the way it shapes the identities and lived realties of settler and Indigenous girls. They also create space for further discourses surrounding the socio-political interventions required to restructure relations of colonial oppression in radical ways.

Acknowledgements

A doctoral dissertation is the work of the individual, but it is also the product of many other people who facilitate its creation. The list of people who supported me on this journey, and allowed me to live with balance, is long. The current list is, therefore, not exhaustive.

My thesis supervisor, Dr. Mythili Rajiva, has been a valuable source of expertise and support. Her feedback was always incredibly constructive and encouraging. Each time I felt "stuck" in this journey her comments always pointed me in the right direction. She also recognised that a thesis journey is not only academic, but incredibly personal and emotional as well.

Thank you to my committee members: Dr. Corrie Scott, Dr. Nicholas NG-A-Fook, and Dr. Audrey Giles. They have all been a tremendous source of critical insight and passion. This project is stronger because of their input.

I would like to thank Dr. Chantal Maillé at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University. Without her support and encouragement, I am not sure I would have had the confidence to apply to the doctoral program at the University of Ottawa. She provided an authentic example of women supporting other women. I hope to pay it forward. Merci sincèrement.

Thank you to Dr. Ada Sinacore for introducing me to feminist theory and activism those many years ago. The lens through which I see the world was forever changed. I am also grateful for her guidance and support as I contemplated pursuing a doctoral degree. Her encouragement helped to demystify the process and it provided yet another much-needed gentle shove in the right direction.

I have valued the humour, support and friendship of many fellow PhD colleagues. Katie Wellard, in particular, kept me laughing during a very stressful first year of this doctoral program. She also served as a reminder that there is so more to life than academic success!

I am grateful to my parents who laid the foundations of my journey in education. Thank you for always loving me and supporting me. Your love provides the solid base on which I stand.

To my children: Mathieu, Gabriel and Alexandre. No matter what I may achieve in this life, it is of the three of you that I will always be the proudest. I feel so honoured to be your mother. You bring me so much joy and you continually remind me of what is most important in life. Thank you for supporting me on this journey and for being patient with all my supper time conversations around social justice issues. I know it is not always easy having a mother who is also a PhD student!

Thank you to my incredible husband Vincent-Pierre. You have been my biggest fan and my greatest support throughout this process. You always believed me even (and especially!) during the times when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for always keeping me laughing. I am so incredibly blessed to have you as both my partner in life and my best friend. La vie est belle avec toi mon amour. Que l'aventure continue et continue…

To end, I'd like to acknowledge and express respect to the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation whose territory has been my base for most of my life. Thank you for allowing me to walk as a visitor on your lands.

"To my mind, Canadians are still on the misguided, obsessive, and mythical quest to assuage colonizer guilt by solving the Indian problem. In this way, we avoid looking too closely at ourselves and the collective responsibility we bear for the colonial status quo. The significant challenge that lies before us it to turn the mirror back upon ourselves…"

— Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (2010, p. 11)

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Presencing Settler Colonialism: Settler Girls' Engagement with Colonial Violence

Girlhood studies is an interdisciplinary academic field of study that focuses on the unique perspectives and lived experiences of girls. As a theoretical framework, girlhood studies conceptualize girls not only as distinct, yet diverse, groups who must confront interlocking systems of oppression, but also as subjects with agency who influence, and are influenced by, the contexts they inhabit (Gonick & Gannon, 2014). Girlhood scholarship, therefore, disrupts essentialist understandings of girlhood by paying attention to the particular socio-historical, material, and discursive realties that produce and shape the social category of girl. Girlhood scholars further interrogate the dynamics of power that impact on girls' access to privilege as well on their vulnerabilities to violence.

In Canada, an interrogation of the dynamics of power that shape girls' relationship to privilege and power is *critical.* Dominant national discourses construct Canada as a democratic nation state with little to no history of colonial violence. These discourses further construct setter Canadians, that is Canadian citizens who are not indigenous to these lands, as innocent "peacemakers" whose relationship with Indigenous peoples evolved through practices of reciprocity and negotiated settlement (Regan, 2010). The true story of Canada is far less benevolent. The history of Canada is the history of settler colonialism — a distinct kind of colonization that aims to eliminate Indigenous peoples in order to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity (Wolfe, 1999, 2006). Throughout Canada's colonial history, these attempts to eliminate Indigenous peoples included, and continue to include, policies and practices of assimilation, dispossession and disempowerment. Settler colonialism further entails sexual and physical acts of violence against Indigenous peoples. While all Indigenous peoples living in Canada are at risk of such violence, intersections of racism, colonialism, and sexism render

Indigenous women and girls particularly vulnerable (Anderson, 2016; Bourgeois, 2014, 2017; Hunt, 2015; LaRocque, 2007). For instance, Indigenous girls experience higher rates of sexualized exploitation and physical violence than settler girls (Bourgeois, 2014; Dhillon, 2017; Sikka, 2010). Indigenous girls are also disproportionately represented as victims of homicide. In fact, the recently concluded National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) notes that thousands of women, girls, and Two-Spirit people —an umbrella term used to describe Indigenous peoples who fulfill a traditional third gender (or other gender-variant) ceremonial role in their cultures —have been killed or disappeared in Canada in the last forty years. The risks of such forms of violence are exacerbated by persistent colonial ideologies that position Indigenous girls as hypersexualized and immoral and, therefore, disposable (Anderson, 2016; Bourgeois, 2014, 2015).

The field of girlhood studies counters the silencing of girls' voices by shedding much needed light on their lived experiences as well as on their agency in negotiating the various social conditions that impact on their lives. This field of scholarship further challenges prevailing images and discourses around “normative” expressions of girlhood by centring the perspectives of previously unexamined groups of girls (Jiwani et al., 2006). However, despite the transformative potential of girlhood scholarship, various gaps have been identified in the literature. For instance, while there has been a significant focus on North American girlhoods, relatively few contributions have been made from a Canadian context (Gouin & Wais, 2006). Research that examines the complex ways that settler colonial discourses mediate acceptable expressions of Canadian girlhood is, hence, sorely missing from the girlhood literature. Research that makes connections between North American girls’ access to colonial privileges and their vulnerability to violence is also largely absent from the girlhood literature. In fact,

girlhood scholars frequently fail to recognize settler colonialism as an on-going gendered process and a still-existing structure firmly embedded within the fabric of North American society.

Indigenous girlhood still remains largely unexamined within the field of girlhood studies. However, in very recent years, girlhood scholars have begun to interrogate the ways that Indigenous girls negotiate and resist systems of colonial violence and trauma that impact on their lives (Clark, 2016; de Finney, 2014; 2015; Dhillon, 2015). Research that focuses on the roles that white women play in the colonial context has also emerged (D'Arcangelis, 2015; Perry, 1997). Problematically, however, virtually no attention has been given to the complex ways that settler colonial forces shape and mediate the lived realities of settler girls. In fact, while there has been an overrepresentation of Euro-western girls in both feminist and girlhood studies, ironically, there is a lack of research emphasis on understanding how white settler girls benefit from, maintain, and even resist systems of colonial injustice and violence. Everything that is known about North American girlhood is, therefore, predicated on an invisibilized foundation of colonialism that remains largely uninterrogated by settler society.

The current thesis addresses the problematic lack of interrogation of settler identity within girlhood studies. More specifically, I bring girlhood studies into conversation with settler colonial theory to examine the ways that white settler girls make sense of recently emerging discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Such research is not only critical, it is long overdue. It disrupts the colonial fixation on the so-called Indigenous problem and problematic focus on the "broken" Indigenous girl in order to interrogate the settler problem — the colonial mentality, moral indifference, and systemic denial and evasion that allows white settler girls, like *all* settlers, to continue profiting from the widespread dehumanization, victimization, and dispossession of Indigenous girls and peoples

(Alfred, 2005; Epp, 2008; Regan, 2010). It also aspires to address the problematic lack of interrogation of settler identity within girlhood and feminist studies. Finally, the current thesis aspires to create much needed space for further discourses surrounding the educational and social interventions required to disrupt and restructure relations of colonial oppression for current and future generations of settler Canadian girls in radical, and potentially transformative, ways.

Research Questions

Colonial practices and discourses differentially impact the lived experiences of Indigenous and white settler girls living in Canada. For instance, while it is difficult to envision the death and disappearance of hundreds of white settler girls not eliciting a deafening public outcry, the realities of settler dominance have allowed such systemic violence against Indigenous girls to remain largely overlooked by both the Canadian government and the settler population at large. In fact, while Indigenous women have been resisting colonial violence for centuries, it is only very recently that the Canadian government and mainstream media have begun paying attention to this systemic problem. For example, after decades of unheeded calls to action from Indigenous groups and their allies, on August 3, 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The final report of this inquiry, made possible by powerful testimonies from Indigenous survivors and families of victims, outlines what the commission describes as an intergenerational Canadian genocide (Final Report, 2019). It further outlines 231 calls for justice, including a number that address the persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses that Indigenous women and girls encounter (Final Report, 2019). Due, in large part, to the efforts of Indigenous activists, artists and scholars, numerous social media campaigns, art installations, podcasts, and

documentaries related to the problem of colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls have also emerged in recent years.

These aforementioned colonial truth-tellings represent profound acts of political and personal resistance. They challenge the mythology that colonialism in Canada is situated in the past. They also disrupt dominant narratives that position Canada exclusively as a peacemaking, tolerant, multicultural country. However, the ways in which the current generation of settler girls makes sense of these newly emerging discourses related to violence against Indigenous women and girls can either reinforce colonialism or support anti-colonial resistance. That is, settler girls can rely on colonial discourses and ideologies that alternately deny systems of injustice or place the onus of responsibility on the victims themselves. Alternatively, settler girls can engage in a critical analysis of the complex ways that colonial dynamics contribute to violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples. They can also reflect on their collective and individual responsibility in disrupting and transforming these dynamics. Problematically, however, there exists a silence in both feminist and girlhood studies literature regarding how settler Canadian girls engage with emerging national discourses related to colonial violence. In fact, while the experiences of Indigenous girls have long been the subject of paternalistic scrutiny, the experience of settler Canadian girls, much like the experience of other dominant identities, remains largely unexamined within girlhood studies.

In the current research, I conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 12 white settler girls (ages 15-19) living in the cities of Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal. My research has two main empirical and theoretical objectives: (1) To address the problematic silence in the current empirical literature regarding settler Canadian girls' experience of settler colonialism; (2) To address the extent to which the Othering of Indigenous women and girls plays an important

role in the construction of settler Canadian girls' identity. As such, I seek to answer the following questions: How do white settler Canadian girls engage with discourses surrounding violence against Indigenous girls and women? To what extent do they rely on dominant national mythologies to understand this colonial violence? In what ways do they resist these national mythologies?

These research questions emerged from an on-going commitment to feminist research as well as a nascent interest in the contemporary academic work being conducted in girlhood studies. It also emerged from a deepening understanding of the systemic problem of gendered, colonial violence directed at Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples in Canada. It began as a curiosity, an urge to understand the context of contemporary girlhood in Canada, and a desire to contribute to this field of academic work in a meaningful way. It is now clear to me that one cannot look at girlhood identity in the current Canadian context without addressing the structure of settler colonialism and its impact on hegemonic constructions of girlhood. Further, while it is extremely important to interrogate the impact that colonial violence has on Indigenous girls, it is also apparent that there is a silence in girlhood studies regarding the ways that settler colonialism shapes the identities and lived experiences of white settler girls. The need to aim my analytical lens on the non-Other — in this case, the white Canadian settler girl — is evident. More specifically, while Indigenous girls have long been the subject of patronizing scrutiny in dominant discourses, settler girlhood remains largely uninterrogated. I, therefore, choose to disrupt the colonial focus on the victimized Indigenous girl to interrogate the ways that white settler girls understand and negotiate recently emerging discourses around violence against Indigenous women and girls. In doing so, I shift the focus away from the oppressed to study the stories of the privileged.

By committing myself to this research project, I heed Chandra Talpade Mohanty's (2006) plea for scholars to produce work that disrupts the "imperatives of empire" (p. 15) as well as Leanne Simpson's (2014) insistence on the need to "rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality" (p. 8). Such calls to action are critical because, while Indigenous peoples have long been engaged in colonial resistance and truth-telling, the burden of such resistance can no longer rest solely on the backs of Indigenous peoples. If we are to have any hope of dismantling systems of colonial injustice and violence, settler Canadians must engage in our own process of colonial resistance and critical self-reflection. We must begin the process of deconstructing our own identities and re-examining our histories to better understand colonial systems of violence and collusion. This shift towards settler awareness and co-resistance must start early. Understanding, interrogating, dismantling and transforming the barrage of social and educational influences that reinforce colonial ideologies for white settler girls is, hence, key to furthering the long and arduous process of repairing Indigenous-settler relations.

But why girls?

One of the most notable characteristics that academic and popular discourses have traditionally associated with North American youth in the last forty to fifty years is their conflation with social change and ideological disruption. However, representations of North American youth have often been centred on the male image (Harris, 2004). Similarly, while resistance within boys' culture has long been a pre-occupation for youth studies scholars in North America, popular representations of girls' resistance tend to be one dimensional and uncomplicated (Hardwardt, 2013). The binary of empowered girl versus girl in crisis, for example, presents resistance or compliance as "the only options within identify formation… girls are not given the option of complicated and multifaceted identities that can both challenge and

comply with the rigid rules of girlhood" (Hardwardt, 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, when North American girls *are* shown as resisting hegemonic ideologies and conventions, their resistance is often narrowly defined through their anti-mainstream consumer choices (Giroux, 2002; Hardwardt, 2013). Such limited examinations obscure the nuanced and complex ways that North American girls can simultaneously support and resist systems of inequality and injustice. Such limited examinations further undermine girls' capacity for socio-political change.

Historically, scholarship on North American youth has reflected the societal tendency to overlook and/or simplify the perspectives and lived experiences of girls. However, the field of girlhood studies has contributed have seen a substantial shift in the way North American culture views girls. That is, while previously girls were viewed as passive and irrelevant, girlhood scholarship acknowledges the potential of girl-centred research to provide valuable insight into dynamics of inequality, intolerance and socio-political resistance. In fact, girlhood scholar Sherrie A. Inness (1998) notes:

> How girls are shaped and molded suggests a great deal about how a society views itself and how it sanctions or rewards certain behaviours. Studying girls and their cultures can reveal as much about adult culture as about children's culture. It is impossible to disconnect the two; they are intimately intertwined. (pp. 2-3)

In a similar vein, McRobbie (1990) argues that research that focuses on girls has the potential to create "a kind of clamour" that is needed to challenge dominant ideologies and societal inequities (p. xviii). In Canada, such a challenge is critically needed. Despite the myth of racial equality in Canada, colonial hierarchies between settler and Indigenous girls are *astounding*. Indigenous girls experience higher rates of poverty, homelessness, and cultural isolation than settler girls

(Sikka, 2010). They are also disproportionately represented as victims of violence and homicide. While colonial modes of research have historically pointed to Indigenous “dysfunction” to explain such increased rates of violence, these modes fail to interrogate the structure of settler colonialism in Canada and the role it plays in shaping girls lived experiences. They also fail to interrogate the role that white settler girls play in perpetuating, supporting and, even, resisting colonial violence. In fact, white settler girls are positioned as both the dominant and innocent subjects in a colonial relationship. Their role in supporting colonial violence is, therefore, left unexamined in dominant discourses.

In recent decades, scholarship that focuses on the roles that white settler women play in colonial contexts has emerged. In her article, "Fair Ones of a Purer Caste: White Women and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia", for instance, Adele Perry (1997) examines the construction of white women as colonizers in British Columbia between the years 1858-1871. There is also literature that explores the way that white liberal settler women re-inscribe patterns of colonial hierarchy within current solidarity and activist movements (D'Arcangelis, 2015). Such scholarship highlights the fact that, while white female subjects living in the Canadian context have faced, and continue to face, gender-based social, political, and economic discrimination and violence, they are, nevertheless, positioned as superior to Indigenous female subjects. Such scholarship further underlines the complex ways that white settler identity in Canada was, and is, constructed in relation to the Indigenous female Other. Finally, such scholarship highlights the ways in which white settler women contribute to the maintenance of colonial hierarchies. However, there is a silence in the literature vis-à-vis the complex roles that white settler girls play in colonial context. This silence suggests that white settler women manifest as if "from thin air". That is, this silence precludes a discussion of the

complex ways that white settler women's understanding of, and relationship to, dynamics of injustice and violence are shaped by their experiences of girlhood within a Canadian settler colonial context. This silence also precludes a discussion of the agency of younger generations of white settler females to resist and disrupt systems of colonial inequality. The current research, therefore, contributes to both the feminist and girlhood literature in a timely and critical way.

Framework of Analysis

The current thesis brings girlhood studies into conversation with settler colonial theory as well as Indigenous feminist theories. Drawing on the contributions of girlhood theorists, I ground my research in the theoretical premise that there is no such thing as the universal girl. Neither, I contend, are girls passively shaped by social structures and dominant discourses. Rather, girls become "girls" by actively negotiating multiple, and often competing, discourses, social meanings, and practices that position and define girls in different ways (Gonick & Gannon, 2014). As Griffin (2004) underlines, girlhood is also produced and negotiated in particular historical and political moments. What it means to be a girl in Canada, therefore, changes depending on the political, cultural, and discursive context.

Drawing on both girlhood studies and settler colonial theory, my research also begins with the theoretical premise that settler colonialism provides the central frame for understanding the hierarchical relations between Indigenous and settler girls in Canada. For example, I maintain that the construction of white settler girls as true Canadians relies on, reinforces and upholds its antithesis— the construction of Indigenous girls as hypersexualized Others who threaten the colonial status quo. These colonial constructions of Indigenous women and girls serve to reify the supposed moral superiority of the white settler girl. They also serve to naturalize the presence of white settler girls on Indigenous lands. Finally, they deny the social and material conditions

— including systems of gendered, colonial, racialized violence — that differentially shape the identities of settler and Indigenous girls.

In order to understand and articulate the current colonial chasms between Indigenous and settler girls, I also turn to Indigenous feminist theories. Indigenous feminist theorists challenge dominant feminist and girlhood discourses to view settler colonialism as a structure firmly embedded within the fabric of Canadian society and not merely an unfortunate, lamentable period in our nation's history. They also address the particular injustices that arise for Indigenous girls and women as a result of the intersections of race, gender, and colonialism. Finally, Indigenous articulations of feminism are rooted in contexts and world views that contrast significantly from those of non-Indigenous feminist theories. For example, in contrast to dominant feminist theories that tend to view patriarchy as universal, Indigenous feminist theorists maintain that the current violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada is a result of colonialism. Indigenous feminist theories also offer a much-needed understanding of how colonization has been a gendered/racialized process whereby assaults on the roles, social status, and identity of Indigenous women and girls were utilized as a means of undermining the socio-cultural well-being of Indigenous societies in general. The disempowerment of Indigenous girls and women also served to reify white settler women as dominant, innocent subjects.

Methodology

In researching the ways that white settler girls engage with discourses of colonial violence, I do not seek to uncover "facts" or generate universal truths. Rather, through my research, I seek to understand the multiple subjective experiences of settler girls. As a white, settler academic who inhabits multiple spheres of privilege, I wish also to reflect on my interests/biases and the roles they play in co-creating data and in constructing knowledge.

Further, I seek to embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship and to recognize the ways in which what we know is embedded in a particular context (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Finally, I seek to co-create a space for white settler girls to speak about their understanding of colonial violence and settler privilege.

To meet the aforementioned objectives, I choose to adhere to a feminist approach to research. More precisely, I describe my methodology as feminist, narrative, qualitative research. As I discuss in greater detail in chapter four, this methodology challenges the belief in objective, value-free research. In fact, researchers are encouraged to embrace their subjectivity and to remain critically reflective throughout the research process. This particular methodology further addresses gender biases and power imbalances embedded within knowledge production. Finally, this methodology recognizes the need to produce research that not only constructs new knowledge but that also contributes to social and political resistance and change. While a variety of methods are available to me, I choose to engage in narrative inquiry — a method that is compatible with feminist and narrative research paradigms.

Stories that Change Us: A Personal Narrative of Coming to (Un)Know

As a feminist, settler colonial scholar informed by Indigenous methodologies, I am aware of the need to "identify at the outset, the location from which my voice emanates" (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 97). This process of self-situating not only identifies the position from which I approach this research, but also helps to situate me in regard to my relationship to the lands that I inhabit. Hence, while I articulate my settler identity and motivations for engaging in the current research on white settler girlhood in far greater detail in the methodology chapter of this thesis, the following discussion serves as an initial exercise of self-situating both within my research and within the structure of settler colonialism.

My name is Stephanie-Danielle Zulma Claude. I am a mother, a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a granddaughter, a friend, and a scholar. I am a Canadian citizen. I am white. I am a settler. My ancestors are not indigenous to these lands, though my family has been here for decades, and, in some cases, centuries. In the early 1700s, for instance, my maternal ancestor, André Bergeron, left Saint-Saturnin-du-Bois France to start a new life in the newly established colony of New France. Two centuries later, with the promise of bountiful, "unoccupied" farmland, my great grandparents, Joseph Bergeron and Marie-Anne Gagnon, boarded a train to Haywood, Manitoba (Treaty 1 territory) — lands that had been the original homelands of the Anishinaabeg peoples and the Manitoba Métis Nation. It was on these lands that Joseph and Marie-Anne raised what quickly became a large French-Catholic family of thirteen children.

I realize that, while the details may vary, my family's story of settlement is far from unique. The myth of empty land and the taming of rough terrain is elemental to the self-positioning of white settlers as the initial pioneers and, therefore, dominant national subjects (Reagan, 2010; Tuck & Yang, 2012). I further realize that my knowledge of my ancestors' relationship to this land is more thorough than many white settler Canadians — for whom Canadian roots and identity are both a mystery and an unquestioned given. Despite my relatively well documented family history, there is still much that is unknown about my settler story. There are still many narratives left to discover before I can conceptualize fully the multiple and complex ways that my family benefitted from the colonial disempowerment of Indigenous peoples and what this means for my own identity and responsibility as a settler. It is clear, however, that settler colonialism is part of my family's legacy. Indeed, while it has been left almost entirely unexamined, the history of my family is intricately connected to the lived experiences and colonial histories of Indigenous peoples. Many of the benefits that my ancestors

reaped as white, western European, and, therefore, *welcomed*, newcomers to Canada came at the expense of Indigenous people's autonomy, cultural well-being, safety, and traditional relationships to land. For instance, my great grandparents were permitted the privilege of autonomy over a parcel of land that required Indigenous absence in order to be claimed as a white settler space. And I continue to profit from the social, political, and economic benefits accorded to me as a white settler Canadian and a dominant actor in a colonial and racial hierarchy. For the past twenty-two years, for instance, I have lived an economically, politically and socially comfortable existence in Montreal, Quebec —on unceded, unsurrendered territory of the Kanien'keha:ka nation.

In spite of my family's legacy of settler colonialism, as well as the innumerable ways that I benefit from settler privilege, I have not always identified as a settler. This was not due to a conscious refusal on my part but, rather, a lack of awareness of the existence, the meaning, and implications of the term settler. I was also deeply ignorant of the complex ways that colonial violence continues to differentially shape the lives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and girls in Canada. I, therefore, felt little sense of obligation to interrogate, speak back to, and challenge the dominant settler group to which I belong.

I have since come to understand that ignorance and complacency in the face of systems of colonialism is far from unique. Canada's cultural mythology, perpetuated through media and popular discourses, holds that Canada is a democratic nation that upholds the values of equal opportunity and justice for all. This same cultural mythology conceals certain aspects of Canada's violent past in order to re-story this history in ways that are more congruent with the ideology of Canada as a peacemaking country. Consequently, many settler Canadians lack a critical awareness of Canada's history of violence towards Indigenous peoples as well as the

ever-evolving forces of colonialism still at work at all levels of our society. The identity of settler is also largely overlooked by non-Indigenous Canadians and not readily made available for exploration and critical analysis. I, therefore, began to question how I could centre settler colonial violence within my research while at the same time "staying in my own lane" in order not to appropriate Indigenous knowledge nor reproduce the colonial pattern of problematizing the Other — the ubiquitous tendency for non-Indigenous researchers to seek the source of a systemic problem as anywhere but in the settler self. I ultimately chose to disrupt the colonial focus on the Indigenous other to make white settler girls the focus of scrutiny.

In developing this research project, I questioned whether, by shifting the gaze to make white settler girls the focus of scrutiny, I risked repeating the problematic tendency for white people to "take back the centre" (Wildman, 2005, p. 251). To answer this question, I looked to Indigenous, settler colonial and whiteness studies scholarship for answers. As an example, Morgenson (2014) notes that all settlers benefit from settler colonialism. However, the failure to focus on the specificities of white settler privilege re-inscribes white supremacy by universalizing the white settler experience and by masking the ways in which systems of racism and white supremacy differentially determine access to colonial privileges. In a similar vein, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) and Smith (2012) note that researchers continue to frame their research in ways that implicitly or explicitly locate the blame for colonial disparities within Indigenous communities with little or no analysis of the systems of dominance, including white supremacy, that produce and maintain these disparities. Such frameworks render white privilege uninterrogated by white society, thereby reinforcing the power of white privilege and ensuring its continuance. Indeed, as Schick (1998) notes, for those racialized white, interrogating whiteness is a contradiction of its rules of operation:

> Whiteness exists most successfully under denial of its existence. The assumption is that other people, not whites, are the ones who are racialized, who have a racial identification. In that whiteness operates as the normative standard for public and social situations, the tenets usually pass unquestioned, unmarked, and unremarked upon. The invisibility of the normative effects of whiteness obscures the processes of subordination on which whiteness depends. (p. 13)

It is vital for all scholars, particularly white scholars, to interrogate the specificities of whiteness and the roles they play in the context of colonial relations. Such an interrogation challenges the invisibilization of whiteness and demands self-scrutiny from those occupying normalized positions.

I am motivated by the desire to disrupt the colonial tendency to interrogate Indigenous identity while leaving white settler identity unexamined. At the same time, I am aware of the potential risk of unintentionally reproducing some of the very things that I am trying to disrupt through my research. I cannot completely abandon my deeply ingrained settler ideologies and epistemologies. I cannot totally relinquish my unearned white settler privileges. However, I can remain attentive to how my positionality shapes the research process. Despite my insecurities, I can and, indeed, must attempt to "get the story right" and "tell the story well" (Simpson, 2014, p. 217). The work of decolonization can only occur when Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians "face each other across historic divides, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that their present and future are similarly tied together" (Donald, 2012, p. 535). The first step towards becoming an Indigenous ally entails contesting the colonial ignorance, silence, and complicity that allows settlers to maintain power and privilege (Barker 2007). What follows is, therefore, a journey that is not only academic, but personal as well.

What's in a Name? A Note about Terminology

Settler

Throughout this thesis, I make constant reference to two groups of people: Indigenous peoples and settler Canadians. The intent of naming these two groups of peoples is not to reinforce divisions or false dichotomies, but rather to acknowledge their different relationships to land and colonial privilege. I recognize, however, that such simplistic categories are problematic as, in reality, the identities and histories of Indigenous and settler people overlap with each other in myriad complex ways (Battel-Lowman & Barker, 2015). The Indigenous/settler binary also suggests that Indigeneity is a race, and settler people are, thus, race-less. That being said, the particular type of colonialism currently at work in Canada seeks to deny colonial violence in order to achieve its goals. I am, therefore, conscious of the need to choose terms that reveal the pervasiveness of settler colonial structures and dynamics.

By employing the term settler, I acknowledge implicitly that the identity of all non-Indigenous Canadians, regardless of their race, colour, or country of origin, is inherently connected to the on-going dispossession of Indigenous lands and the denial of Indigenous socio-political autonomy. I further acknowledge that Indigenous and settler identities are non-binary in that Indigenous and settler peoples live in relationship with each other and are influenced by the actions of one another (Battel-Lowman & Barker, 2015). Finally, I acknowledge that the power and privileges settlers receive as the dominant peoples in a colonial relationship are dependent on the cultural, physical, and political oppression of Indigenous peoples.

Various scholars employ the term settler to refer to all non-Indigenous Canadians. It is my position that the uncomplicated use of this term masks systems of white supremacy that shape Canadian society. More specifically, the uncomplicated use of the word settler

problematically obscures the complex ways that hierarchies of privilege based on proximity to whiteness and histories of immigration/slavery determine the extent to which non-Indigenous peoples profit from settler colonialism (Morgenson, 2014). For this reason, I make a distinction between white settlers, that is, non-Indigenous Canadians from mainly European backgrounds, and settlers of colour. While I recognize that these categories are far from satisfactory, they bring much needed to attention to the systems of white supremacy that determine one's access to colonial privileges.

Indigenous Peoples

In current Indigenous scholarly literature, the term Indigenous appears to be the least controversial term to describe First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples — peoples whose relationship to this land predates colonization and who continue to be primary targets of colonial dispossession. However, this term is not without its complications. I am mindful that the use of this collective term may elide the cultural, linguistic and land-based differences that exist amongst various Indigenous nations, societies, and communities — an elision that Emma LaRocque (2010) terms the "lumping effect" (p. 142). For this reason, I pay careful attention to employ the term Indigenous peoples (in the plural). This practice is intended to honour the importance that many Indigenous peoples place on tribal-based epistemologies and land-centred identities. It is also intended to acknowledge the heterogeneity of status and non-status Indigenous peoples.

White/Whiteness

Throughout this thesis, I employ the term white to refer to the participants in my study. It is, therefore, necessary it to flesh out what this term signifies. At first glance, it may seem that I employ this word to refer exclusively to skin colour or to an essentialist conceptualization of

race. By no means is this my intention. The category of white is not defined by any innate characteristics or factual entities. Rather, it is a category created by social and cultural and societal conceptions. Who is considered white, therefore, can change depending on particular social, historical and geographical contexts. For example, in early Canadian colonial history a white racial identity was reserved for those of Western European background. Consequently, in the late 19th century many southern and eastern European immigrants to North America, members of groups that are taken for granted as white today, were considered an inferior race; above the status of Indigenous and Black peoples but below the status of "white" Western Europeans (Burrows, 2013; Ignatiev, 1995;). Corrie Scott (2015) further underlines the fact that, in the late nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxon Canadians constructed French Canadians as not quite white.

Historically, Indigenous peoples in Canada have been considered inferior to whites. Nevertheless, the loss of Indian status that resulted from First Nations women marrying non-status men ensured the possibility that their offspring could be considered as lawful white subjects (Boock, 2009). In fact, throughout most of Canadian history, many peoples of colour have been able to pass for white and, therefore, allowed access to the privileges of the dominant racial group (Frankenberg, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006; McIntosh, 2005; McKinney, 2013). Hence, while race, itself, is a biological fiction, the symbolic and material consequences of being classified as white are very real. More specifically, the marginalization and oppression of peoples of colour enables the relational privileging of people who are coded as white.

By employing the term white, I am calling attention to the distinction between settlers of colour and white settlers in regard to their relationship to white supremacy. I am also alluding to the privileges/power that people who appear white in Canadian society receive because they are

not subjected to the racism and colonial subjugation faced by people of colour. Finally, I am disrupting the tendency of the dominant group to invisibilize whiteness. Such disruption is critical given that, for white settlers, whiteness tends to be the unspoken, uninterrogated discourse of race. It is the yardstick against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured, and usually found to be lacking (Dyer, 1997).

Girl

What is a girl? How do we define girlhood? These seemingly straightforward questions are, in fact, quite complex. Historically, girlhood has been presented as a physical and emotional stage of development along a predictable and linear path to female adulthood (Kearney, 2009). North American dualistic thinking has also positioned girls as "not boys", and this dualism creates and maintains a hierarchy where girlhood is positioned as inferior (Brown, 2011).

My use of the word girl throughout this thesis in no way endorses an essentialist, binary understanding of gender. Rather, drawing on the works of girlhood scholars, I ground my use of this term in an understanding of girlhood as a social construction "made and remade through the material realities and discursive practices of the society" (Adams & Bettis, 2005, p. 9).

While there is a tendency to want to ascribe a certain age to girlhood or use physical, sociocultural markers as indicators of being girl (Mitchell, 2008), the socially constructed nature of gender means that the category of girl is fluid. That is, the characteristics, meanings, and practices associated with girlhood are constantly shifting and adapting, dependent on time, place, and social, cultural, and historical contexts (Griffin, 2004; Jiwani et al., 2006).

Chapter Outline

This introduction provided a brief overview of the research. The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows:

Chapter One

In the first chapter, I draw on settler colonial theory to articulate the particular contours and characteristics of the type of colonialism currently at work in Canada today. For instance, I explain that settler colonialism is a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of Indigenous populations. Drawing on the works of Patrick Wolfe (1999, 2006), I further note that settler colonialism is a structure that continues to be firmly embedded in Canada's political, economic, and social systems. The importance of settler colonialism as a structure rather than an event, I argue, should not be overlooked. When settler colonialism is situated in the historical past, it is easy for contemporary settlers to overlook and deny their role in the maintenance of current systems of colonial violence and injustice. By clarifying that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure, Wolfe (1999, 2006) draws attention to the roles that current settlers, both individual and collectively, play in maintaining and actively supporting ever-evolving systems of setter dominance.

In the second part of the chapter, I briefly articulate four main phases of colonialism in Canada: separate worlds, contact, displacement and assimilation, and, finally, surface accommodation (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). Drawing on the contributions of Indigenous feminist and allied scholars, I also contextualize contemporary hierarchies between Indigenous and settler girls by discussing Canada’s history of colonial violence towards Indigenous women and girls. Finally, I map the historical reification of the "morally superior" and dominant settler female subject as a way towards mapping the contemporary production of that subject in relation to the Indigenous female Other.

Chapter Two

In the second chapter, I argue that colonization in Canada is not only racist, but it is highly gendered as well. More specifically, I draw on Indigenous feminist theories to articulate the way that intersections of colonialism, racism and sexism impact on Indigenous women and girls. For instance, throughout Canada's colonial history, Indigenous women have faced the threat of physical and sexual violence. They have also faced colonial constructions of their identities. These colonial constructions served to divert attention away from the ever-increasing repressive measures and colonial violence against Indigenous peoples who resisted colonization. They also served to reify the relatively dominant position of the white settler female.

In the second part of the chapter, I draw further on Indigenous feminist theories to articulate Indigenous acts of resistance to colonial violence. I note, for instance, the myriad efforts that Indigenous women have made to bring much needed attention to the problem of systemic abuse of Indigenous women and girls.

Chapter Three

In the third chapter, I situate the need for the current research within decades of scholarship related to girls. Drawing on the arguments of girlhood scholars, I articulate the historical absence of research and scholarship examining the specificities of girls' development and lived experiences. I further draw on the contributions of girlhood scholars in order to underline what Gonick (2004) describes as the tendency of popular representations of girlhood to present girls as "ethnographic curiosities" (p. 396), alternately lauding their successes or lamenting their perceived deficiencies.

In the second part of the chapter, I articulate how, in the last four decades, the field of girlhood studies has emerged as a unique and significant area of critical inquiry. This field of

scholarship captures the diversity of girls' experiences and honours the significant social and political potential of girl-centred research. I note that, despite its transformative potential, various gaps have been identified the field of girlhood studies. For example, while the role that white settler women played in early colonial contexts has been a subject of recent examination, virtually no scholarship has focused on the identities of white settler girls. Such silence in the literature, I argue, points to a pressing need to "presence" setter colonialism within girlhood studies.

Chapter Four

In the fourth chapter, I outline my research methodology. I discuss my decision to adhere to a qualitative, feminist, narrative approach to knowledge production. I further articulate my decision to conduct in-depth, qualitative interviews with twelve white settler girls, aged 15-19, living in the cities of Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal. Finally, I outline the basic tenets of the Gubrium and Holstein's (1998) model of narrative analysis.

Consistent with feminist epistemologies, in the second part of the chapter, I situate myself vis-à-vis the research by recounting the story of what brought me to this particular project. I outline the privileges from which I benefitted as a white settler girl growing up in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I further articulate my journey of awakening vis-à-vis the systems of racial colonial inequality that exist in Canada.

In the third part of the chapter, I articulate the reasons why I chose the cities of Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal as sites for my research. More specifically, I outline the particular dynamics of racial tensions and colonial divides that exist in these three cities, both current and historical. I take care to highlight the fact that, while these were the cities chosen for the research, the identities and life experiences of settler girls in *all* Canadian cities are shaped, to

one degree or another, by deeply entrenched structures of settler colonialism. White settler girls in every region of Canada also benefit from historical and current colonial hierarchies and systems of white supremacy that position(ed) Indigenous peoples as Others.

In the final part of the chapter, I reflect on the inevitability of power hierarchies within the research relationship. I further argue that is important for feminist researchers to remain attentive to issues of power throughout the research process. I also maintain that it is important to view girls as the experts of their own experience.

Chapter Five

In the fifth chapter, I examine the ways that the participants negotiate discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. I note that, despite obvious gaps in their understanding of these issues, Canada's history of systemic violence against the Indigenous peoples has not been entirely overlooked by the white settler girls who participated in this research. Such awareness disrupts the problematic ignorance and erasure of colonial violence that characterizes much of non-Indigenous society. However, I also I underline the tendency of some participants to identify settler colonialism as geographically and temporally specific. I argue that, by disavowing current systems of colonialism, certain participants re-inscribe the myth of setter colonialism as a regrettable period in our country's history rather than an ongoing structure whose maintenance requires settler complacency and active participation.

In the final part of the chapter, I argue that the education system, while beginning to integrate Indigenous perspectives and lived realities, still does not give young settler Canadians sufficient information to effectively engage with on-going systems of violence. Settler girls are, therefore, denied critical opportunities to comprehend and negotiate how their own identities,

family histories, and colonial privileges have been shaped and determined by historical and current efforts to subjugate and disappear Indigenous peoples, cultures, and experiences.

Chapter Six

In the final chapter, I outline the main findings and contributions of this thesis. I note that the current thesis addresses problematic silences that exist in both feminist and girlhood literature. More specifically, I note that the research disrupts the problematic tendency for non-Indigenous researchers to focus on alleged sites of Indigenous dysfunction to shed light on the ways that white settler girls benefit from, maintain and resist systems of colonial injustice and violence. This research also sheds lights on the complex ways that settler and Indigenous girls do not have the same access to colonial privileges. Finally, I note that the research provides critical insights into the ways that the current generation of white settler girls support and resist systems of colonial erasure and colonial violence.

Chapter One – The Logic of Elimination: Understanding Settler Colonialism in Canada

Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I articulated the need to centre settler colonialism within research related to girls in Canada. In fact, my research is firmly grounded in the theoretical conviction that settler colonialism provides the central frame for understanding the current hierarchical relations between Indigenous and settler girls. Personal and collective responses to Indigenous presence in Canada are guided by a "logic of elimination" — that is, that settler colonial power both requires, and is generated by, the destruction/assimilation of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and identities (Wolfe, 2006, p. 387). However, while settler colonialism is a central component in shaping the identities of both Indigenous and settler Canadian girls, it is rarely acknowledged or understood by settlers. Hence, in the first part of this chapter, I articulate the contours and characteristics of the particular type of colonialism currently at work in Canada today. I discuss the central role that the acquisition of land and the disappearance of Indigenous presence play in settler colonial structures and dynamics. I also underline the fact that settler colonialism is a structure that is still firmly embedded within all aspects of Canadian society.

In the second part of the chapter, I draw on Dussault & Erasmus (1996) to articulate briefly the four stages of colonization in Canada: 1. Separate worlds, 2. Contact, 3. Displacement and assimilation, 4. Surface accommodation. I also articulate the ways that the education system in Canada maintains and perpetuates colonial discourses and ideologies.

Understanding Settler Colonialism: The Logic of Elimination

To understand Canadian history and identity, it is essential to understand the particular dynamics and characteristics of settler colonialism. The contributions of settler colonial scholars

Verancini (2010, 2011) and (Wolfe 1999, 2006) are a vital starting point. Their contributions are essential to understanding the ways that settler colonial forces differentially shape the experiences and identities of white settler and Indigenous girls. For instance, Verancini (2010, 2011) argues that, unlike other forms of colonialism that focus on colonizing bodies as exploitable labour, settler colonialism is centred around access to and acquisition of land. Wolfe (2006) further notes that, in contrast to other forms of colonialism, settler colonialism is a structure rather than a temporarily isolated event. That is, settler invasion did not finish at the moment when Indigenous lands were conquered and Euro-western dominance was established. Rather, settlers "come to stay" with the explicit goal of legitimizing their claims to stolen land and building an ethnically distinct national community (p. 388).

The importance of settler colonialism as a structure should *not* be overlooked. When colonialism is perceived to be an event, it is easy for contemporary settlers to dismiss our participation in the current colonial project by pointing to the temporally isolated sins of our imperial ancestors. By arguing that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure, Wolfe draws attention to the fact that dominant colonial processes within Canada continue to destroy or neutralize Indigenous difference in order that settler norms can replace this difference. The recognition of colonialism as a structure rather than an event also results in different perceptions and conceptualizations of colonized bodies (Verancini, 2011). More precisely, while temporally located colonialism is invested in viewing colonial bodies as docile yet productive, settler colonial nation states view Indigenous peoples, who have legitimate claims to desired lands, as impediments to expansionist, imperialist agendas. In these states, Indigenous claims to traditional territories, natural resources and self-government also threaten to expose the "open secret of colonial oppression and reconstitute it as an outright scandal for a self-proclaimed

liberal democracy" (Henderson & Wakeham, 2009, p. 4). Consequently, settler colonialism is predicated on what Wolfe (2006) identifies as a "logic of elimination" (p. 387). That is, unlike other forms of colonialism whose main objective is to maintain colonial hierarchies and power differentials, settler colonialism's ultimate goal is the cessation of colonial difference in the form of an uncontested settler state. True completion of the settler colonial project can, therefore, only be accomplished when Indigenous peoples and their ties to land are disappeared and settler dominance and control are naturalized and normalized (Alfred, 2005; Tuck & Yang, 2012). In the words of Veracini (2011):

> Settler colonialism is characterized by a persistent drive to ultimately supersede the conditions of its operation. The successful settler colonies tame a variety of wildernesses, end up establishing independent nations, effectively repress, co-opt and extinguish Indigenous alterities…Settler colonialism thus covers its tracks and operates towards its on self-supersession. Colonialism reproduces itself, and the freedom and equity of the colonized is forever postponed; settler colonialism, by contrast, extinguishes itself. (p. 3)

These efforts to extinguish settler colonialism and legitimize settler dominance are not temporally contained but are continually reasserted each day of the occupation (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 2006). Furthermore, these efforts are not static, but continually evolve and "shape-shift" depending on particular historical and socio-political contexts (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 601). Finally, efforts to disappear Indigenous peoples are not merely state centric but involve the individual and collective actions, inactions and colonial ideologies of *all* settler Canadians (LeBlanc, 2014).

Stages of Settler Colonialism in Canada

It is only through an understanding of our country's history of colonialism that settlers can begin to acknowledge our contemporary roles within colonial processes and hierarchies. However, accurately summarizing and articulating the complex, context based, and interdependent nature of this history is a formidable task. This is especially true when one considers the enormous diversity vis-à-vis colonial relations in different areas of the country, populated by different Indigenous societies and settled at different periods by people of diverse non-Indigenous origins. In fact, while colonialism has impacted all Indigenous peoples, Inuit, Métis, and First Nations societies have different historical relationships to government policies and practices. For example, contact between many Inuit communities and European missionaries, fur traders and whalers began as early as the 1700s. However, unlike First Nation peoples, Inuit were largely ignored by the Canadian federal government until 1939, when a court decision ruled that they were a federal responsibility (Olofsson & Partridge, 2008).
After this date, colonial practices began to have more drastic impacts on traditional Inuit culture and modes of being. These colonial practices included, but were not limited to, the forced displacement of entire Inuit communities, the increased presence of RCMP officers and other settler authorities, the replacement of traditional Inuit names with identification numbers (disc numbers), as well as the establishment of mandatory residential schooling for Inuit children (Dussault & Erasmus, 1994; Watt-Cloutier, 2015). Colonial practices further entailed the mass evacuation of Inuit suspected of having tuberculosis to segregated hospitals in the south (Olofsson &Partridge, 2008).

In addition to the distinct colonial relationships that Inuit, Métis, and First Nations had with settler society, accurately articulating Indigenous/setter relations is tricky given the

subjective nature of historical accounts. That is, the ways in which historical events are understood and chronicled over time are shaped by the perceptions, world views, and desires of colonial historians. Despite these very real challenges, I draw on Dussault and Erasmus' (1996) Report from Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) to articulate briefly the four stages of colonization. While these stages follow each other with some consistency, they also overlap and occur at different times depending on the specific region of Canada.

Stage 1: Separate Worlds

In the period before 1500, Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies developed in physical and cultural isolation from one another. Indigenous nations were fully autonomous, free to occupy the land and organize themselves according to their distinct traditions, cultures, spiritual practices and world views (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). They were also able to satisfy all of their material and spiritual needs through the resources of the natural world around them. Furthermore, Indigenous nations had their own systems of self-government. These systems of government were frequently complex, with several levels of government based on the family, the band or clan, and the nation or tribe (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996).

Stage 2: Contact (1500 to 1870)

The influx of Europeans to the part of North America now known as Canada resulted in a period of contact between Indigenous and settler peoples, in particular between settlers and First Nations. This initial contact was characterized by the need, on the part of settlers, to appropriate the local practical knowledge required to survive in unfamiliar climates and territories (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). While existing racial and religious prejudices towards Indigenous peoples should not be minimized, such need established early patterns of non-violent relations between Indigenous and settler peoples. It further fostered trade, military and economy-based

relationships between the two groups. Many of these relationships, such as those based on hunting, trapping, and fishing, were seemingly compatible with the continuation of Indigenous lifestyles (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). However, a more critical analysis reveals that contact with Europeans had significant impacts on Indigenous peoples. The introduction of European technologies in conjunction with the imposition of a capitalist market system led to the over-exploitation of resources and the disruption of traditional modes of harvesting, hunting, and trapping (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). The entrance of Indigenous peoples into the global market system as producers of resources also contributed to their interdependence on foreign commodities, thereby drawing them further into the colonial economy (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). Pre-contact international relations were also distorted due to competition for resources and access to European commodities. Intertribal confrontations, therefore, increased dramatically. Furthermore, contact and alliances with Europeans resulted in the introduction of foreign diseases, such as smallpox and tuberculosis, to Indigenous communities — diseases which, in many regions of Canada, dramatically reduced Indigenous populations (Daschuk, 2002; Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). Finally, alcohol was deliberately introduced to Indigenous peoples in order to weaken Indigenous societies and render them more vulnerable to colonial control (Vowel, 2016).

Contact between First Nations peoples and European settlers also led to the creation of the Métis Nation. During the height of the fur trade in the 1700s and 1800s, many French and Scottish fur traders formed conjugal unions with Indigenous women, mainly Cree, Anishinaabe or Saulteaux women (Vowel, 2016). The initial offspring of these unions were individuals who possessed both Indigenous and European ancestry. However, the gradual establishment of Métis communities, primarily in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as the subsequent

intermarriages between Métis women and Métis men, led to a distinct Indigenous nation: the Métis Nation (Vowel, 2016).

Stage 3: Displacement and Assimilation (1871 onwards)

In this period, ever growing numbers of settlers began to perceive Indigenous peoples as obstacles to progress and colonial expansion. Consequently, colonial powers established policies and practices that forcefully disappeared Indigenous peoples and attempted to assimilate them into the Canadian mainstream (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). In order to "prepare the land" for European settlement and the eventual construction of the railroad, many Indigenous communities were forcefully removed from their traditional territories, and, in many parts of Canada, alienated from their traditional ways of life (Dussault & Erasmus, 1996). In the prairies, for example, the disappearance of buffalo herds and the establishment of colonial rule "dealt a combined blow to plains societies from which they would never recover. To those charged with the successful transition of the plains to agrarian capitalism, the elimination of the species was considered a precondition for large scale European settlement of the west" (Daschuk, 2002, p. 319). Government officials also employed the strategy of withholding food and medical aid from Indigenous communities affected by disease and starvation. In fact, Sir John A. MacDonald (1882), acting as both Prime Minister and Minister of Indian affairs during the most dire periods of famine, assured the House of Commons that "the (Indian) agents as a whole … are doing all they can, by refusing food until the Indians are on the verge of starvation" (as cited in Hopper, 2018). Similarly, at the height of smallpox epidemic that devastated areas of Manitoba in the late 1800s, the government of Canada failed to provide Indigenous peoples with appropriate medical aid (Dashuk, 2002).

The Canadian government implemented a number of policies designed to transform Indigenous peoples into subjugated Others. For example, the Gradual Civilization Act (1857) encouraged First Nations peoples to embrace the concept of private land ownership through the conversion of reserve lands into alienated plots upon enfranchisement (Lawrence, 2003). This Act was followed by the Gradual Enfranchisement Act in 1869, which gave the superintendent of Indian Affairs the power to determine access to Indian lands (Thobani, 2007). In 1876, the Canadian government passed the *Indian Act.* This highly invasive policy ensured, and continues to ensure, the federal government the power to regulate and control the day-to-day lives of status Indians and reserve communities (Bourgeois, 2017; Coates, 2008). The *Indian Act* further allowed the government to dictate who could qualify for Indian Status, and, consequently, who had access to rights of citizenship and government "aid". Historically, for instance, the *Indian Act* did not recognize Inuit and Métis identities. As a result, Métis and Inuit were not granted Indian status nor the rights conferred by this status. Bourgeois (2014) notes:

> Since its enactment in 1876, this racist legislation has defined almost every aspect of being an Indigenous person in Canada, including legally defining which of us “officially” count and don’t count as “Indians” and, therefore, who the Canadian state is obligated to provide for under existing and future treating obligations…the *Indian Act* has not only secured the racial binary of “Indian” and “Canadian” (predominately imagined as white), but also that of “Indian” and “non-Indian” amongst Indigenous peoples in Canada. Until a 1939 ruling of the Supreme Court, Inuit were excluded from the legal category of Indian, as were Métis and other non-status Indians until a 2016 Supreme court rule. (p. 261)

Under the *Indian Act*, status Indians are considered wards of the Canadian federal government, a paternalistic legal relationship that reflects the colonial ideology that Indigenous peoples require control and regulation to bring them into more "civilized" colonial ways of life. Over the years, this regulation of status Indians has ranged from overarching socio-political control, such as imposing governing structures on Indigenous communities, to control over the rights of Indigenous peoples to practice their cultural and spiritual traditions, including the Potlatch and the Sun Dance (Indigenous Foundations, 2009). The *Indian Act* further enforced the enfranchisement — the legal process for terminating a person's Indian status and band membership — of status Indians who, for instance, served in the Canadian armed forces, gained a university education, or left the reserves for long periods of time. In fact, government authorities considered enfranchisement as a privilege bestowed on status Indians — an opportunity to embrace full rights of colonial citizenship and become "civilized" (Keshen & Morton, 1998).

Until amendments were made to the *Indian Act* in 1951 and 1960, respectively, status Indians were prohibited from forming political organizations and voting in Canadian general elections (Indigenous Foundations, 2009). The *Indian Act* further imposed democratically elected band councils on Indigenous nations thereby undermining the ability of Indigenous nations to be self-determining (Anderson, 2016, Bourgeois, 2014). Finally, the *Indian Act* empowered the federal government to regulate the movement of status Indians, to forcibly separate them from their homes, their language, and their culture and to segregate status Indians by placing them on reserves (Indigenous Foundations, 2009).

The *Indian Act* has undergone numerous amendments since it was first passed in 1876. However, it maintains its original mandate of regulating Indigenous lives and identities. In

addition to the enforcement of colonial policies, the Canadian state popularized racist and colonial narratives to justify the dispossession of Indigenous land and the normalization of settler dominance. Coleman (2006) notes, for example, that the discourse of white civility was fundamental to the production of the Canadian nation state. More precisely, this discourse set up whiteness and British modes of being as the ideals to which Others should aspire. Consequently, the white settler subject, a transport of the European subject, emerged as the true Canadian citizen and the regulator of standards of conduct and civility (Coleman, 2006). The discourse of white civility also served to frame the uncivil dispossession of Indigenous lands as an inevitable step in establishing territorial borders and in shaping white national identity (Coleman, 2006). Because Indigenous peoples did not share the same socio-political traditions as white European settlers, they were constructed as subhuman and barbaric. Such a narrative allowed setters to reframe the concept of *terra nullius* — the Latin term for empty, uninhabited land — to include lands inhabited by "uncivilized" peoples. This reframing, in turn, justified the continued dispossession of Indigenous agency, lands, and natural resources through such tactics as the formalization of Numbered Treaties. Constructed as lawful land cessation contracts, these eleven Numbered Treaties served as yet another mechanism for ensuring colonial expansion and for reifying a white settler national identity (Coates, 2008).

The government of Canada disseminated discourses surrounding Indigenous dysfunction and need for paternalistic intervention to justify practices, including the Indian Residential Schools system (IRS), designed to eradicate Indigenous ways of life. The IRS, in place from the 1820s until the last school closed in the 1996, sought to assimilate/disappear Indigenous peoples into the dominant white settler society through the forced separation of Indigenous children from their cultural traditions, families and communities (TRC, 2015). Children attending residential

schools were forbidden to use their own language, to retain traditional modes of dress, or to have regular contact with their siblings or parents. In 1920, attendance at residential schools was made compulsory, and clergy, police, or Indian agents were granted the authority to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their families. As a consequence, thousands more (an estimated total of 150,000) Indigenous children endured unspeakable degradation and exploitation at the hands of the Canadian government in the name of education and assimilation (TRC, 2015). It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to narrate the myriad atrocities that occurred within the residential school system. It must be noted, however, that in addition to the significant number of mortalities due to malnourishment, inadequate health care, medical experimentation, substandard sanitary conditions and neglect, many Indigenous children were victims of chronic mental, physical, and sexual abuse (RCAP, 1996). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2015) explains:

> For children, life in the schools was lonely and alien. Supervision was limited, life was highly regimented, and buildings were poorly located, poorly built, and poorly maintained. Staff was limited in numbers, often poorly trained, and not adequately supervised. The schools often were poorly heated and poorly ventilated, the diet was meagre and of poor quality, and the discipline was harsh. Aboriginal culture was disdained and languages were suppressed. The educational goals of the schools were limited and confused, and usually reflected a low regard for the intellectual capabilities of Aboriginal people. For the students, education and mechanical training too often gave way to the drudgery of doing the chores necessary to make the schools self-sustaining—a fantasy that government officials indulged in for over a half-century. Child neglect was

> institutionalized, and the lack of supervision created situations where students were prey to sexual and physical abuse. These things did not just happen: they were the result of government decisions. (p. 162)

In short, residential schools were an extension of the government's civilization and enfranchisement policy, which attacked languages, cultures, spirituality, gender roles, family ties and nationhood systematically (TRC, 2015).

The effects of residential schooling were, and continue to be, devastating to Indigenous peoples. Monture-Angus (1995) is direct in her assessment: "Removing a child from their community weakens the entire community. Removing children from their culture and placing them in a foreign culture is an act of genocide" (p. 193). As entire generations were removed and segregated from their families and communities, languages, traditions, epistemologies and oral histories that would have normally been passed down from parent to child were lost. Many Indigenous survivors of residential schools were also left traumatized by their experiences of abuse, neglect, and cultural isolation (TRC, 2015). Such trauma, frequently passed from one generation to the next, diminishes a community's ability to transmit values, knowledge, and cultural pride (Jacobs & Williams, 2008). It also allows for the introduction of injurious modes of coping behaviour, such as substance abuse, self-injury and domestic violence (Jacobs & Williams, 2008)

The last residential school in Canada official closed in 1996. However, the Canadian state did not cease its efforts to separate children from their Indigenous cultures and identities. For instance, during the period of intensive child apprehensions that occurred between the 1960s and mid-1980s, commonly referred to as the Sixties Scoop, tens of thousands of Indigenous children in Canada were removed from their communities and placed into the child welfare

system or adopted predominantly into white middle-class households. (Sinclair, 2007). As I will discuss in further detail in the next chapter, such apprehensions and adoptions persist to this day. In fact, there are currently more Indigenous children in the care of the Canadian state than at the height of the Indian residential school system (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004).

Beginning in the early 20th century, the Canadian government established racially segregated "Indian hospitals" and tuberculosis (TB) sanitariums. This segregation was motivated, in large part, by dominant society's deeply ingrained prejudices about Indigenous peoples and their perceived threat to settler health and well-being (Lux, 2016). It was further motivated by the need, on the part of settler society, to problematize Indigenous peoples for failing to prosper under the oppressive, destructive, and debilitating conditions of colonialism (Joseph, 2017). For example, due to overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and lack of adequate nutrition, children in residential schools were highly vulnerable to contagious diseases. Children who became infected with tuberculosis were sent to the Indian hospitals and TB sanitariums, and when they showed signs of recovery, were sent back to the residential school. This "mutually beneficial arrangement" notes Joseph (2017) "maintained the numbers and funding of both organizations" (p. 1). It further reinforced the discourse of the problematic Indigenous Other. As Geddes (2017) underlines:

> Repeatedly referring to tuberculosis as "Indian tuberculosis", as government tended to do, was tantamount to racial profiling, and, indeed, pathologized the very notion of Indianness. Not yet having achieved the status of "persons," never mind citizens of Canada, they were susceptible to quarantine or incarceration at the whim of doctors, Indian agents, or government officials. Declaring individuals

> contagious was a good means of control, keeping them out of trouble or out of circulation while the task of clearing the land was underway. (p. 123)

Thousands of Inuit, Métis and First Nations peoples endured lengthy confinement in Indian hospitals and TB sanitariums often without any contact from their family and friends, the majority of whom were kept unaware of the whereabouts of their loved ones (Olofsson, Holton, & Partridge, 2008). The hospitals were chronically understaffed and the staff onsite were often undertrained and/or unlicensed. Furthermore, many patients were subjected to medical experimentation, invasive procedures, forced sterilization, chronic malnourishment, unsanitary living conditions, and sexual and physical abuse (Lux, 2016). Consequently, many patients died in these hospitals. Others returned home only to find that they were disconnected from their language, their culture, and their community (Lux, 2016).

Stage 4: Surface Accommodation

Dussault and Erasmus (1996) identify the fourth stage of colonialism as "Negotiation and renewal". According to their report:

> The last several decades have seen much more activity to advance Indigenous interests at the international level, developments that have had important implications for the Indigenous /state relationship within Canada. Indigenous peoples within Canada have formed alliances with similar groups in other countries. They have also played an important role in persuading international organizations such as the United Nations to have Indigenous rights recognized at the international level and to apply those standards to specific instances of injustice within Canada. (p. 186).

The report further notes that, in the last few decades, Indigenous peoples have won battles in the Supreme Court vis-vis land and constitutional rights. Indigenous leaders have also regained greater control over their own affairs and have begun to re-establish their own societies by re-claiming language and cultural traditions undermined by decades of domination.

I do not deny the victories that Indigenous peoples have won in regard to asserting their rights to land and constitutional rights. Neither do I deny the steps that the government of Canada has taken to disrupt colonial patterns. I do argue, however, that the current stage of settler colonialism is better characterized by token efforts on the part of settler society to include Indigenous peoples within the Canadian multicultural landscape and to acknowledge colonial policies and practices of the "past." For example, Canadian discourses surrounding reconciliation focus on the need to establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples. However, these discourses are based on a false conception of colonialism as a historic event rather than an ever-evolving structure firmly entrenched in Canada's political, economic, and social systems. Moreover, as LeBlanc (2014) notes, within discourses of reconciliation, the state is frequently framed as the sole agent of Indigenous subordination and dispossession. The roles that settler Canadians play in maintaining colonial injustice are, therefore, erased. Such erasure, notes LeBlanc, is highly problematic:

> It is not just the state that is responsible for the current conditions of colonialism in Canada. The actions and inactions of (settler Canadians), both historically and today, have impacted processes of Indigenous subordination and dispossession both directly and indirectly. Whether a Canadian is considered a twelfth- or first-generation citizen, he or she has inherited this colonial reality as his or her current

> presence on Canadian soil is predicated on the dispossession and subordination of an Indigenous other. (p.12)

Put simply, settler Canadians continue to benefit from systems of colonial violence and dispossession. We must, therefore, take the steps to interrogate and disrupt our settler complicity and participation in colonial violence. It is only through such disruption that settlers can hope to work with Indigenous peoples in their demands for reconciliation.

In recent years, the Canadian government has made public apologies for various colonial wrong doings. However, as Verdeja (2009) underlines, these apologies fail to repair exploitative relationships and, in fact, merely enable Canadian citizens and government elites to mitigate their guilt. Similarly, LeBlanc (2014) argues that state apologies fail to acknowledge both the role that the federal government continues to play in maintaining settler colonial rule as well as the agency exercised by settler Canadians in resisting and/or supporting ongoing processes of colonialism. For example, on June 11, 2008, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper publicly apologized to Indigenous peoples for the Residential School System, admitting that this system was part of a Canadian policy on forced Indigenous assimilation. This apology followed decades of calls from Indigenous peoples for legal accountability and public acknowledgement in regard to the states' role in perpetuating violence against generations of Indigenous children and their families.

It is in no way my intention to undermine the efforts of Indigenous peoples to realize this official apology, or any of the healing that may have come from it. This apology represents a symbolic act of acknowledgement of colonial wrongs. I argue, however, that this apology also represents an attempt to contain colonialism to Canada’s past without addressing the need to confront settler Canadians’ collective and individual roles in maintaining systems of colonial

inequities. More specifically, Harper managed the traumatic history of violence in residential schools, and colonial violence more broadly, by underlining the ways that current settler Canadians are now morally and ethically superior to settlers of the far way past (McKinley, 2014). In fact, Harper's insistence on pointing to current day settler civility was so pronounced that he emphasized it “nine times in the course of under fourteen minutes", largely through the repetition of phrases such as "we now recognize the mistakes of our past" (Thielen-Wilson, 2012, p. 285). Laura McKinley (2014) argues that such insistence served to alleviate settlers of the sense of guilt and responsibility that comes with acknowledging on going systems of colonial injustice. For example, she describes the way in which members of the House of Commons reacted to Harper's declaration that Canada no longer tolerates the racist ideologies that inspired the Residential School System:

> The chamber thunders with ovation. One can feel the tension mounting throughout the “sad” portion of the apology, where Harper details the faults and failures of the Indian Residential Schools, but at the very moment when shame is converted into pride, the chamber explodes with affect, pleasure in perceived moral-ethical superiority and the relief of anxiety…These civil white Canadians (whether or not they are in fact white, their membership in the House of Commons signifies that they are inhabiting a settler subject position, one that accepts the narrative of the legitimacy of Canada as a nation at the cost of the recognition of the sovereignty of Indigenous nations), cannot wait for Harper to “hurry and catch up” with the modern Canadian identity of civility and ethical-moral superiority. (pp. 73-74)

In short, while seemingly sincere, Harper's apology was, in effect, a performance of settler denial. It perpetuated the ideology of settler colonialism as historically situated. The apology further reinforced the discourse of modern-day white settler benevolence and heightened civility.

Much like state-initiated apologies, current Canadian discourses surrounding multiculturalism and inclusion point to the current civility of settler Canadians. Indeed, Canada's policy of multiculturalism is often cited as evidence of Canada's level of tolerance, generosity, and appreciation of diversity (Schick & St. Denis, 2005), not to mention our moral superiority over many other countries. Originally a political strategy introduced by liberal prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to reduce nation-claims of both Quebecois and Indigenous groups to the status of ethnic groups, multiculturalism, as defined by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988), purports to recognize the following:

> The importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canada…the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed…to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada. (p. 21)

More critical assessments of multiculturalism dispute this optimistic claim and suggest that multicultural discourses reflect a colonial discourse that works to normalize white supremacy and to deflect from the need to recognize Indigenous rights to sovereignty (Burrows, 2014; St. Denis, 2011; Thobani, 2007). In the words of Burrows (2014):

> Because Canadians are deemed to be officially accepting of others, it is assumed to directly follow that Canada is positioned as effectively anti-racist, having an

> obligation to uplift other, less tolerant, peoples and places…this practice encourages citizens to placidly accept the surface nature of multiculturalism without looking critically at the artificial ways in which it is often implemented. Through mosaic-type celebrations Canadians are encouraged to essentialize different cultures or races and to ignore that the remainder of the time, mainstream society reflects dominant white interests and understandings. (p. 24)

Put simply, while dominant narratives position Canada as a country that celebrates diversity, multicultural discourses continually construct racialized peoples as Other to white settler identity. These discourses also fail to deal with interlocking systems of oppression and the ways these systems differentially shape the lived experiences of peoples living within a racial, colonial hierarchy. In fact, within discourses of multiculturalism, racial difference and identity become lumped together to signify bodies as un-Canadian and, therefore, less worthy of the privileges of citizenship — a signification, that for Indigenous peoples, reasserts the violence committed by the *Indian Act* (Boock, 2009).

Multicultural discourses emphasize state efforts to recognize Indigenous peoples as a culturally distinct group of people who are deserved of the same legal rights and opportunities as the dominant settler society. However, many Indigenous people are understandably less concerned with achieving formal equality, recognition and inclusion *within* the nation state of Canada and more preoccupied with resisting colonialism and achieving independence *from* the nation state. Audra Simpson (2014), for instance, describes recognition and inclusion as the "least corporeally violent way of managing Indians and their differences, a multicultural solution to the settlers' Indian problem" (p. 20). Similarly, Morgenson (2011) describes the inclusion of Indigenous peoples within the law as "an attempt to eliminate Indigenous nations by

amalgamating Indigenous people as potentially protected children (of the settler state) whose racialisation as (Indigenous) leaves their consanguinity open to excision" (p. 62). Merely recognizing the cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples and including them within the multicultural nation state of Canada prohibits settler Canadians from acknowledging Indigenous peoples as historically, politically and territorially autonomous nations.

Similar to multicultural discourses, dominant discourses regarding meritocracy serve to normalize racial and colonial hierarchies in Canada. According to discourses of meritocracy, "the State is a container not yet full, a place of opportunity" (Battell-Bowman & Barker, 2016, p. 34). Hence, to experience success and achieve one's full potential, Canadians need only work hard and persevere in the face of adversity. Failure to do so is attributed to individual weakness rather than the conditions of oppression, racism and colonialism that structure access to privilege in differential ways. This narrative of meritocracy allows white settler Canadians to distance themselves from the truth of systemic racial discrimination and oppression. It also enables settler Canadians to ignore the fact that the privileges we have inherited as the dominant peoples in a colonial hierarchy are not conferred on Indigenous peoples. In fact, discourses of meritocracy and multiculturalism fail to address the continuing prevalence of structures of colonialism and racism. Consequently, these discourses problematically mask oppression and allow for the preservation of the self-interests and colonial privileges of the dominant settler group.

Maintaining Setter Colonialism: The Canadian Educational System

Canada's education system is implicated in the maintenance of settler colonialism. Margaret Kovach (2009) identifies current Canadian academic institutions as "gatekeepers" responsible for upholding what constitutes knowledge and universal categories of truth in our society — truths that serve to deny Indigenous perspectives and to legitimize the power of the

dominant, settler society. Dwayne Donald (2009) further evokes the image of the colonial fort to illustrate the colonial frontier logics — "those epistemological assumptions and presuppositions, derived from the colonial project of dividing the world according to racial and cultural categorizations, which serve to naturalize assumed divides and thus contribute to their social and institutional perpetuation" (p. 24) — that persist in Canadian educational institutions. These colonial frontier logics manifest in the form of practices and policies that exclude Indigenous peoples, world views, and lived experiences from the Canadian classroom (Battiste, 2000, 2013; Dei, 2000; Dunbar, 2008). In fact, the unwritten rules of educational institutions serve to establish Eurocentric knowledge, experience, culture and language as universal norms. These rules also serve to marginalize/homogenize Indigenous learners who do not conform to the expectations of the dominant culture of academia (Dunbar, 2008). For instance, within persistent, colonial hierarchies of knowledge production, settler teachers and scholars are frequently framed as the superior, authoritative voice of Indigenous histories and perspectives (Battiste, 2000, 2013; Brown & Strega, 2005; Smith, 2012).

In addition to marginalizing Indigenous perspectives and world views, the colonial frontier logics embedded in Canada's education system entail erasing certain aspects of Canada's unsavoury past to re-story this history in ways that are more congruent with dominant national mythologies. The exclusion and sanitization of Canada's colonial history of residential schooling in high school textbooks in Ontario, for instance, reflects what Smith et al. (2012) term a "curriculum of absence" — a term to describe the tendency for Canadian curricula to exclude aspects of Canadian history that do not correspond to the mythology of Canada as a democratic, peaceful country (p. 54). Such curricular absences deny the on-going dynamics of settler colonialism and contribute to socially constructed "truths" about Indigenous/non-Indigenous

histories and relations in Canada (Smith et al., 2012; Tupper, 2014). Consequently, many settler Canadians lack a critical understanding of Canada's history of violence towards Indigenous peoples. This lack of critical understanding allows settler Canadians to deny our roles as "architects, builders, and maintenance workers" in Canada's colonial project (Ahluwalia, 2012, p. 47).

Canadian educational institutions largely fail to provide settler students with an understanding of the history of treaty making in Canada or the fact that non-Indigenous Canadians are also treaty people bound to existing treaties. Educational institutions also fail to provide settler students with an understanding of the various ways in which their ongoing privileges are directly connected to the denial of Indigenous histories and perspectives. As Tupper (2012) points out, the relative absence of the history of treaties and treaty relations (which makes central the importance of Indigenous perspectives, cultural traditions, contributions, and experiences) reinforces colonial frontier logics. Such absence fails to account for the complexity and importance of Indigenous and Canadian relationships historically and today. Such absence also denies the possibility for students to become cognizant of Indigenous stories and epistemologies and reconsider their understanding of the history of Canada. In Tupper's own words:

> Treaty education requires students to consider Indigenous world views alongside European world views; to consider the importance of symbols in the treaty-making process; to explore the significance of and reasons for treaty failures on the part of the Government; to explore the complexities of contemporary treaty issues (treaty land entitlements stand as one issue) and to think through the significance of treaties for all Canadians. (p.151)

In brief, by failing to provide a comprehensive history of treaty making in Canada, Canadian educational institutions deny students the opportunity to understand the ways that the histories and socio-political realties of Indigenous peoples in Canada differ markedly from those of settler Canadians. Such failure further denies students the opportunity to learn from the events of Canada's colonial past in ways that inform, not only their historical consciousness, but their sense of identity and responsibility as settler Canadian citizens (Tupper, 2012).

Even when issues related to race, colonialism and inequality *are* addressed in the Canadian classroom, these topics are often approached in ways that do little to encourage settlers to engage significantly with our current roles in supporting systems of colonial injustice. In fact, the little information that is disseminated about Canada's relationship to colonialism tends to present a distorted conceptualization of settler colonialism: that of a historic, state driven event, which was destructive and unfortunate, but from which the Canadian state has since moved on. For instance, discourses around reconciliation are based a false conception of colonialism as a historical error for which the Canadian state is actively trying to make amends. Similarly, while multicultural approaches to education introduce students to aspects of racial diversity within Canada, they tend to deflect from the need to address Indigenous rights and desire for sovereignty by lumping all racialized peoples into one celebrated multi-cultural group (St. Denis, 2011). Multicultural approaches to education also tend to focus on the liberal goals of raising awareness and/or imparting information to students, rather than on confronting settler complicity and addressing the deeply entrenched problem of colonial injustice and systemic racism in Canada (Burrows, 2013; Simpson et al., 2011). In the words of Burrows (2013):

> While multicultural education can be credited with the introduction of diverse

> content into the curriculum and classrooms, standard multicultural approaches often fall short of teaching for critical citizenship as they tend to do little to disrupt the status quo. Instead, because of the superficial ways in which multicultural policies and practices are often implemented, they effectively limit meaningful incorporation of diverse knowledges, perspectives, and ways of knowing. By addressing diverse peoples and issues in an attempt to educate for or about the Other, multicultural education can actually serve as a colonial instrument asserting hegemonic control in order to ensure the ongoing assimilation or at best, conditional acceptance of Others into the national citizenry. (p. 8)

In short, while Canadians tend to embrace the idea of a diverse society, multicultural approaches to education do not encourage students to consider the systemic inequalities that shape Canadian society, and, hence, the lived experiences of its citizens. As Burrows (2013) underlines, this lack of engagement with systemic inequalities exists because the majority of teachers are white settlers and, therefore, feel no sense of urgency to initiate critical discussions around issues of race and colonialism. This lack of engagement is also due the structuring forces of white supremacy operating in the classroom and in society at large (Burrows, 2013).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the erasure of Indigenous presence and the naturalization of settler control over Indigenous lands and resources is central to the distinct type of colonialism at work in Canada today. However, most settler Canadians lack a critical awareness of the structure of settler colonialism and the ways that it differentially shapes the lives of Indigenous and settler girls. Hence, the first step in an ongoing commitment to more just and equitable

relationships between Indigenous and settler peoples must involve radical acts of colonial disruption and truth telling. More precisely, settler Canadians must interrogate our nation's history of preventing Indigenous peoples from maintaining their culture and language, from deriving spiritual and economic benefit and sustenance from their lands, and from escaping the dangers of political, economic, and socio-cultural marginalization. We must further examine the ways the identities of settler girls are shaped and determined by histories of colonial violence. Finally, as I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter, we must examine the ways that settler colonialism is not only a racist structure, but a highly gendered structure as well.

Chapter Two – Contextualizing Colonial Hierarchies between Settler and Indigenous Girls in Canada

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided a brief overview of the various stages of settler colonialism in Canada. In the current chapter, I draw on the contributions of Indigenous feminist scholars to articulate the ways that colonial policies and practices are not only racist, but highly gendered as well. I also contextualize contemporary hierarchies between Indigenous and settler girls by discussing Canada's history of discursive, physical, and sexual violence against Indigenous women and girls. Finally, I map the historical reification of the dominant white settler female subject as a way towards mapping the contemporary production of that subject in relation to the Indigenous female Other. My main goal is to explore the ways in which white settler females are constituted through the production of gendered colonial difference — as paragons of Canadian virtue and moral examples for the Indigenous female Other. I further explore the complex ways that the current epidemic of violence against Indigenous women and girls is connected through a pervasive colonial ideology that sees Indigenous female persons as hypersexualized, uncivilized, and exploitable.

In articulating these colonial injustices and reifications, I bear in mind bell hooks' (1990) observation that efforts by dominant groups to represent those who are oppressed can amount to a form of colonization, reinterpreting and, thereby, erasing the voice of the speaking subject. As a white settler scholar writing about colonial violence against Indigenous peoples, I am also mindful of the importance of situating myself, not as an expert, but as an active learner who, "through the act of empathetic imagination and by possessing critical self-consciousness, comes to gain a sense of what the other knows" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 67). Finally, I recognize the

importance of acknowledging the agency, however restricted and condemned, of Indigenous peoples in colonial encounters. Hence, I pay particular attention to the ways that Indigenous women have been resisting and denouncing colonial violence for centuries. I also make concerted efforts to refrain from speaking on behalf of, or for, Indigenous women and girls and their communities. Instead, I direct my focus to the words and contributions of Indigenous feminist scholars. Drawing primarily on the works of these scholars, I discuss the ways that colonial practices and policies normalized and legitimized the disempowerment of Indigenous women and girls. I also articulate the ways that persistent colonial images of Indigenous females as hypersexualized and uncivilized render Indigenous women and girls in Canada vulnerable to racialized violence and sexual exploitation. I contend that these colonial images, perpetuated by media and popular discourses, provide ideological confirmation that Indigenous women and girls, unlike white settler girls, are deserving of the violence inflicted upon them. They also elide the systemic nature of this colonial violence.

Exploring the Gendered Nature of Settler Colonialism

It is clear that the settler colonial state of Canada and its citizens have made concerted efforts to erase the presence of all Indigenous peoples. However, Indigenous feminist scholars offer a much-needed examination of how colonization has been, and continues to be, a gendered process whereby assaults on the roles, social status, and identity of Indigenous women and girls were (are) utilized as a means of undermining the well-being of Indigenous societies in general. Such an examination offers a vital understanding of the ways that the white settler female subject has been historically positioned as superior vis-à-vis the Indigenous female Other. It also provides much needed insight into the reasons why Indigenous girls in Canada have the highest rate of sexualized exploitation and racialized violence than any other group of girls.

As the contributions of Indigenous feminist theories highlight, the current violence targeted at Indigenous women and girls stems not from their culture but from the systems of racism and heteropatriarchy that grew out of settler colonialism (Anderson, 2016; LaRocque, 2007; Starblanket, 2017). In fact, while Emma LaRocque (2007) cautions against romanticizing pre-contact Indigenous societies as completely devoid of gender oppression, most Indigenous feminist scholars dispute the commonly held mainstream feminist belief that patriarchy is universal. For instance, Kim Anderson (2016) maintains that, despite vast differences in cultural practices, principles of equality and balance between men and women were built into the political, social, spiritual, and economic systems of most Indigenous societies. Indigenous women enjoyed considerable personal autonomy and performed spiritual, economic and political functions that were considered vital to the survival of Indigenous communities. Motherhood was also honoured in many Indigenous religious and cultural practices and women were revered as life-givers, educators and spiritual caretakers (Anderson, 2016; Henning, 2007). In fact, many Indigenous scholars describe their traditional societies as matrilineal — a societal system whereby power and inheritance is passed down through the mother's line of descent (Allen, 1992; Monture-Angus, 1995; Simpson, 2014). Indigenous scholars further note that the spiritual ceremonies and oral histories of many Indigenous societies replicated the cycles of renewal and rebirth that femininity and motherhood represented (Monture-Angus, 1995; Anderson, 2016). The different Iroquoian-speaking peoples of the Haudenosaunee nation, for instance, all tell slightly different versions of the creation story, which begins with the Iroquois mother goddess Sky Woman descending to earth through a hole in the sky (Laronde, 2005).

Traditional Indigenous gender relations differ greatly from the cultural norms of early European explorers. According to Slater (2011), cultural norms of European explorers included

an ideology of violent conquest and a desire to bring glory to king and church. The cultural norms of early European explores further included highly heteropatriarchal conceptualizations of gender and gender roles. According to Slater (2011):

> Women as guardians of the home were expected to project the utmost chastity, humility, and piety. Their obedience to their husbands and the male authorities within the politic and the church required women to maintain a very narrow identity of submission…(Men) controlled their homes, wives, and families, and inhabited an intensely religious world that fortified their position of power both in public and private. (p. 32)

Consistent with this ideology, middle- and upper-class European women were confined to the domestic realm. In addition, European male identity was constructed as "dependent on the coercive and symbolic regulation of women's sexuality" as well as their socio-political agency (Breitenberg, 1993, as cited in Slater, 2011, p. 32). The first European settlers to arrive in North America judged what they witnessed of Indigenous societies through the lens of their own heteropatriarchal culture. They were, therefore, appalled by traditional Indigenous gender roles and modes of being (Anderson, 2016). Hence, settlers began making efforts to disrupt traditional Indigenous gender relations, not only to convert Indigenous women and girls to white settler modes of femininity, but also to disempower Indigenous nations in order to gain control of Indigenous lands and resources (Anderson, 2016; Bourgeois, 2014, 2017; Monture-Angus, 1995;). In fact, throughout Canada's colonial history settlers reinvented, distorted and subverted Indigenous female identities in order to destabilize Indigenous societies and to justify the violence of colonial rule. These distorted identities further served to reify the superiority of the white female settler subject.

Pickles and Rutherdale (2014) argue that settler and Indigenous femininities identities represented a vital contact zone in early colonial Canada. In their own words:

> Women and bodies mattered and were bound up in creating and perpetuating an often hidden, complex, contradictory, and fraught history. Settler women occupied the spaces of colonial encounter between Aboriginals and newcomers as both colonizers and colonized, transgressing restrictive boundaries and making history. (p. 1)

Much like in other colonial contexts, white settler women in Canada "participated with varying degrees of alienation and enthusiasm in imperial projects" (Loomba, 2005, p. 144).

They also came to know themselves in relation to their connection with dominant structures of power and as well as their relationships to racialized Others. For example, drawing on the work postcolonial scholars Loomba (2005) and Yeğenoğlu (1998), D'Arcangelis (2015) explores the double positioning of white settler women in the patriarchal Canadian colonial context. More precisely, she explores the ways that white settler women in the Canadian context were positioned as both regulators/oppressors of Indigenous identities — serving as Christian missionaries, teachers, nurses, and "helpmates of colonial men"— as well as subordinate subjects within a white settler patriarchal society (Loomba, 2005, p. 144). Patriarchal constraints notwithstanding, the relative dominance of the white settler woman in the Canadian colonial context depended on the dispossession and effacement of the Indigenous Other and the continual positioning of white female settler subjects as the saviours and helpers of Indigenous women and girls (D'Arcangelis, 2015). In fact, Carter (1997) notes the particular identity of white settler women "depended for its articulation on a sense of difference from Indigenous women" (p. 205). What it meant to be a white woman in the Canadian colonial context "was rooted in a series of

negative assumptions about the malign influence of Aboriginal women" (p. 205). Through this process of fetishization/marginalization of Indigenous female identities, dominant white settler female subjects were afforded a sense of innocence and relative power vis-à-vis colonial relations.

Consistent with other colonial contexts, hierarchal distinctions between white settler and Indigenous female subjects were produced “through a language of difference that drew on images of racial purity and sexual virtue” (Loomba, 2005, p. 10). Throughout Canada's colonial history, this language of difference took on various forms depending on shifting colonial needs and agendas. Kim Anderson (2016) notes the ways in which early European explorers used women’s bodies as metaphors to convey Euro-western relationships with the earth — relationships characterized by conquest, elimination, and exploitation. In doing so, Indigenous female bodies became part of the landscape representing undiscovered lands available for possession, plunder, and exploitation. For example, early European settlers constructed the image of the self-sacrificing, sensual, yet virginal Indian Princess. This reductive representation equated Indigenous women and girls with untouched, penetrable land, thereby rendering them more accessible to the white male settler imagination (Anderson, 2016; Green, 2007). As Anderson underlines (2016):

> Indian princess imagery constructed Indigenous women as the virgin frontier, the pure border waiting to be crossed. The enormous popularity of the princess lay within her erotic appeal to the covetous European male within to lay claim to the "new" territory. This equation of the Indigenous woman with virgin land, open for consumption created a Native female archetype which… could then be used for the colonizer's pleasures and profit. (p. 101)

The relative innocence of the Indian Princess was, and continues to be, defined strictly in terms of her relationship with white male figures (Green, 2007). That is, in the white settler imagination, Indian princess are constructed as having rescued, willingly aided, or married a white man, thereby transcending to his "superior" white status (Anderson, 2016; Green, 2007). Further, good Indian princesses are depicted as having renounced their alleged barbaric traditions in favour of white settler modes of femininity (Green, 2007).

As Indigenous resistance to colonial domination intensified, Indigenous women and girls were no longer solely constructed as objects of lust and entitlement, but also as living obstacles to expansionist colonial agendas (Simpson, 2016). The construction of the Indigenous princess was transformed into the construction of Indigenous females as hypersexualized and immoral — arguably one of the most damaging and pervasive stereotypes of Indigenous women and girls (Green, 2007). This dehumanizing, hypersexualized representation served to divert attention away from the ever-increasing repressive measures and colonial violence against Indigenous peoples who resisted colonization. It also served to justify the sexual exploitation and assault of Indigenous female subjects by white settler men (Anderson, 2016). For instance, in defending Canadian law enforcement officers against accusations of sexual misconduct with Indigenous women in 1880, the Toronto Globe insisted that Indigenous women were to blame due to their "loose morals" that were "notorious the world over" (cited in Carter, 1997, p. 182).

Blatant misrepresentations of Indigenous females not only served to "ease the conscience of those who wished to sexually abuse without consequence" (Anderson, 2016, p. 100) but also to reify the morality of the ostensibly chaste and modest white settler female subject. Put simply, white settler females were cast as the moral saviours of the growing nation of Canada and essential subjects in the reproduction of normative standards of whiteness and nationhood

(Carter, 1997). Indigenous women and girls were, in contrast, constructed as dangerous subjects who threatened the virtue of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men. For example, writing about colonial relations in 19th century British Columbia, Perry (1997) notes that British colonial powers considered sexual and emotional relations between white male settlers and Indigenous women to be "deeply troubling" to Victorian constructions of race and gender (p. 501). Indeed, Congregationalist minister Mathew MacAfee (1862) raged about the “hundreds of dissolute white men” who were living in “open concubinage with these wretched creatures (as cited in Perry, 1997, p. 505, emphasis added). Such sentiments were due to the fact that, in the settler imagination, Indigenous women and girls were considered as racially inferior, non-submissive “heathens” who threatened the civility and respectability of white settler men (Perry, 1997, p. 501). Hence, notes Bourgeois (2014), settler discourse simultaneously characterized Indigenous peoples “as unqualified, by virtue of their perceived inferiority, for possession of the land and white settlers, by virtue of their perceived superiority, the rightful owners of Indigenous territories” (p. 32).

In early colonial Canada, white settler men's tendency to engage in sexual relations with Indigenous women and girls, along with their tendency to drink and to gamble, was largely blamed on the relative absence of white women in the colonies (Perry, 1997). Consequently, settlers considered the immigration of white wives, missionaries and teachers to be an indication that civilization had finally arrived on the Canadian frontier. In fact, settlers so believed in the superiority of the white settler female that, in arguing the need to increase the population of white women in the colony to curtail white male debauchery, colonial promoters rarely specifically referred to white women. Settlers simply assumed that the category "women" could not consist of anything other than the white settler female (Perry, 1997).

Narratives of Indigenous women and girls as unscrupulous prostitutes circulated from the mid-19th century onward to further consolidate socially constructed boundaries of whiteness and desirable femininity (Acoose, 1995; Bourgeois, 2015; Green, 2007; LaRocque, 1994, Mawani, 2002). Sociologist Renisa Mawani (2002) argues that, "by defining all Native women as prostitutes, authorities ensured that white men could continue to access the bodies of Indigenous women while ensuring that these women and their children could never make "legitimate" claims to Euro-Canadian property, identity, and privilege" (pp. 63–64). In a similar vein, Perry (2001) maintains that discourses of prostitution "were especially handy tools for defining respectable and unrespectable femininity" in colonial Canada and, consequently, "a convenient shorthand for signifying the immorality of First Nations womanhood was the suggestion that Aboriginal women were, by definition, prostitutes" (2001, p. 54). In fact, as Bourgeois (2015) underlines, the tendency to associate prostitution almost exclusively with Indigenous women "played a central role in some of the key provisions of the *Indian Act*…it served as the justification for increased criminalization of Indigenous women only, first through the *Indian Act* and then through Canada's *Criminal Code*" (p. 384). For example, in the early 1800s amendments to the *Indian Act* prohibited any white settler homeowner from allowing Indigenous women on his or her premises (Erickson, 2003). The Canadian legal system further highlighted the perceived threat of Indigenous promiscuity by prosecuting Indigenous women accused of engaging in prostitution under the category "Offences against Morality" (Erickson, 2003, p. 121). In contrast, white settler women accused of engaging in prostitution were prosecuted under the category "Keeping a Common Bawdy House" (Erickson, 2003, p. 121). This separate criminal legislation was designed to discourage miscegenation by policing Indigenous sexual agency, which was deemed a threat to the Canadian patriarchal order. It was also designed to reinforce

the position of the white settler wife as the rightful moral and sexual companion of the white settler man (Erickson, 2003).

In the Canadian colonial context, the imagined threat of violence against white settler women further solidified boundaries between white respectability and Indigenous depravity. Narratives of frail, vulnerable, innocent white female settlers held in captivity by Indigenous men circulated in the Canadian prairies from the mid 1880s to the early 1920s (Carter, 1997). These narratives, replete with depictions of Indigenous women as licentious and uncivilized, fed into the widespread fear of the "savage Indian" lying in wait to corrupt the purity of the white settler female subject. They also became a pretext for suppressing and controlling the Indigenous population and for securing socio-cultural and geographic boundaries between Indigenous and settler peoples. In the words of Carter (1997):

> The potential violation of a white woman and the threat to the safety of white women on isolated homestead and races was a useful means of rallying the non-Aboriginal community in a racist consensus against Aboriginal people. By promoting the image of a young white girl — the most symbolically vulnerable section of society — all alone on an Indian reserve, the makers of this propaganda were able to conflate powerful messages of the ever-present danger of violence to white women. (p. 147)

This conflation of Indigeneity and danger further justified policies and practices designed to regulate relations between Indigenous and settler peoples.

Colonial constructions of Indigenous women and girls emphasized not only sexual and spiritual immorality, but also a failure to conform to settler ideologies related to gender appropriate labour. For instance, in his 1885 book entitled *Indian Sign Language* William P.

Clark described the Plains Indian women he observed. "In savagery and barbarism", he wrote, "women are merely beasts of burden, prized and valued for their skill in fancy or capacity for heavy work, rather than for any beauty of face or figure" (as quoted in Weist, 1983, p. 30). Such colonial images were constructed to demonstrate the supposed superiority of the ideal domesticated white female subject whose womanhood was not seen as being compromised by physical labour and ties to the land (Anderson, 2016). This counter-image to ideal white settler womanhood also served to vilify Indigenous men, whose masculinity was equated with violence and savagery. Burnett (2005) notes, for instance, that the memoirs of Christian missionaries living in Canada in the early 1800s emphasized the violence and cruelty of Indigenous men, who supposedly beat their wives and children for the smallest infractions. Similarly, Perry (1997) points out that white Christian nuns were praised for their fortitude "in dealing with the drunken Indians when their wives, in fear of their husbands had fled to the Convent school for help" (p. 518).

The construction of Indigenous women as beasts of burden not only reaffirmed colonial domination over Indigenous peoples, it also justified the need to forcefully assimilate Indigenous peoples into settler colonial gender norms (Anderson, 2016). However, as Anderson (2016) underlines, this colonial construction reveals much less about Indigenous women's *actual* roles and identities than it does about the biases of the colonizer. More specifically, Anderson argues that firmly held heteropatriarchal and racist ideologies prevented early European colonizers from appreciating and respecting the myriad efforts Indigenous women made to provide for their families, to maintain their traditional ways of life, and to resist dispossession of their lands and cultures even in the face of crushing colonial violence and control. In fact, Indigenous women's strength and capacity for physical labour — qualities that were highly criticized by white settler

observers —were instrumental to the survival of both settler and Indigenous societies. Furthermore, as White (1987) underlines, in Victorian times white European women of lower socioeconomic class worked in factories, mines, and other sights of physical labour. These women also did not always meet the standards of chastity and monogamy that were being imposed on Indigenous women. Hence, it was the societal ideals of the colonizer, and not the lived realities of many women who were living in European countries, that provided the standard by which Indigenous women and girls were judged and, ultimately, deemed inferior.

As Indigenous people were forced off their land and their roles as producers and providers were interrupted, critiques of Indigenous women as beasts of burden transformed into critiques of Indigenous women's perceived inability to meet the standards of settler ideals of female cleanliness, piety and order. This focus on Indigenous women's alleged failure to abide by this "cult of domesticity" — a central feature of most colonial contexts and of the hierarchical status of women therein (McClintock, 2013, p.132) — served to reinforce the superiority and desirability of the self-sacrificing, subordinate white settler homemaker. It also positioned white settler women and girls as the necessary educators and moral guardians of the less "civilized" Indigenous subject. Memoirs of Protestant missionaries in western Canada during the late 19th century frequently emphasized the "unwomanliness" of Indigenous women whose domestic/maternal skills were deemed inferior to those of white Christian women (Burnett, 2005). They further stressed the need for white women to serve as examples, showing Indigenous women and girls how to be "good Christian wives because the home would be the vehicle through which First Nation's society would be transformed" (Burnett, 2005, p. 111). For example, Protestant missionary John Maclean (1889) described white settler women in the following way:

> The wise women from the east, the magi of modern times, who have travelled westward with their gifts of culture, grace, and love and laid them at the feet of the men and women who sit in loneliness and with depressed hearts in the lodges widely scattered on prairie and mountain, and in the cold bleak regions of the northland. (as cited in Burnett, 2005, p. 110)

The construction of white settler women as gatekeepers of civility and domesticity was not restricted to western Canada. Rather, settlers in all regions of Canada embodied this paternalistic ideology. For example, in the mid 1800s, nurses and missionaries working in Pangnirtung only provided "aid" to Inuit women and girls who conformed to settler standards of dress, personal hygiene and domesticity (Rutherdale, 2005).

In addition to white settler women imposing settler norms on Indigenous women, the Canadian criminal justice system played a substantial role in maintaining settler dominance. Arrest records and police reports filed with the Indian agent of the Kainai reserve in Alberta in the mid to late 1800s, for instance, reveal that the rape of Indigenous women and girls could result in only three outcomes: the rape was ignored, charges were reduced to common or indecent assault, or, most commonly, Indigenous women and girls were simply disbelieved (Erickson, 2003). Although white, feminist settler women resisted many of the patriarchal assumptions embedded in these legal outcomes, they, nevertheless, "supported the regulatory scope of the law by idealizing settler familial norms and by singling themselves as the rightful guardians of societal morals" (Erickson, 2003, p. 30)

In the 1950s, the Training School Act was established to deter Indigenous girls away from perceived “promiscuity” and "backwardness" towards domesticity. As Sangster (2005) notes, the aim of training schools, presided over by white teachers and nuns, was both to

domesticate Indigenous girls as well as to reify their position as subordinate, inferior female subjects. In her words:

> Domesticity had a direct relation to imperialism and nationalism, proving a justification for the dispossession and segregation of Native peoples in the 19th century, with their "primitive" families and customs. Just as in Africa, a colonial discourse on domesticity ruled on images of the wild, the foreign, the untamed, not only within the family, but also a means of establishing new geographical borders (such as reserves) between citizen and "savage". (p. 187)

These images of Indigenous women and girls as wild and untamed served to detract attention away from the crippling and demoralizing impacts that colonial violence, government underfunding, and forced relocations had on Indigenous peoples forced to live on reserves (Anderson, 2016). High infant mortality rates on the reserves, for instance, were blamed on the indifferent care of negligent, slovenly mothers. Canadian government publications also denounced Indigenous women for spreading germs and diseases, such as tuberculosis, due to their supposed inherent inability to adequately clean their homes (Carter, 1997). As a Canadian inspector of Indian agencies complained in 1908, Indigenous women “on nearly every reserve, are a hindrance to the advancement of men…The majority of them are discontented, dirty, lazy and slovenly” (CHC, 1909, cited in Carter, 1997, p. 162). Such fallacious accusations reinforced colonial hierarchies between Indigenous and white settler female identities. They also justified policies that both undermined Indigenous women’s maternal rights and restricted their autonomy and movement off the reservations (Carter, 1997; Forsyth, 2005). In fact, both informal and formal constraints, such as the pass system — a process by which First Nations people had to present a travel document authorized by an Indian agent to leave and return to their reserves —

served to keep Indigenous women from white settler spaces. Consequently, their presence there became increasingly marginalized and vilified (Bourgeois, 2015).

Gendered Colonial policies: The Indian Act and Residential Schools

The disruption of traditional Indigenous gender relations and the normalization of colonial hierarchies between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and girls were further entrenched in Canadian society through legislated policies such as The *Indian Act*. The *Indian Act* was grounded in racist and sexist ideologies that deemed Indigenous peoples uncivilized and the agency accorded to Indigenous women "dangerous impediments to progress" (Barker, 2008, p. 261). The act, therefore, sought to eliminate perceived obstacles to settler dominance by establishing paternalistic, patriarchal control over access to Indian status. For instance, by constructing the category of "half breed" — a derogatory term used to refer to peoples of mixed ancestry— Canadian legislators placed many Indigenous peoples outside the category of Indian, thereby excluding them from reserves and creating racial, gender and class divisions between and among Indigenous communities (Erickson, 2003). However, Canadian legislators quickly realized that such exclusions limited the power of colonial authorities to regulate the lives of the Métis peoples in the same way as those with Indian status. Hence, in order to undermine the autonomy of Métis peoples, local authorities constructed them as savage characters who embodied the worst of both races: sexual immorality, criminality and chronic drunkenness. In his description of Métis women living in the Prairie West in the mid to late 1800s author Joseph Collins wrote:

> The women are all slatterns, and as a rule they exhibit about as much morality as is found moving among the female elk of the prairies. A white man here who is at all successful in winning female attention, need but to whistle, or to raise a finger,

> to have a half of dozen of the dusky beauties running after him (as quoted in Erickson, 2003, p. 60).

Such derogatory and biased representations of Métis women further reinforced the ostensibly superior status of white settler women and girls within a colonial hierarchy.

In addition to arbitrary standards of pure bloodedness, consistent with the colonial ideology of the time, Indian status was determined by a heteronormative, patrilineal system. More specifically, an Indian in this system was defined as a male Indian, the wife of a male Indian or the child of a male Indian (Bear, 2013). Such criteria rendered First Nations women and girls entirely dependent on their fathers and husbands for their status and band membership and disappeared those who "married out" into the settler body politic. In the words of Deputy Superintendent General Duncan Campbell Scott:

> When an Indian woman marries outside the band, whether a non-treaty Indian or a white man, it is in the interest of the Department, and in her interest as well, to sever her connection wholly with the reserve and the Indian mode of life. (as cited in Dussault & Erasmus, 1996, para.12)

This legal disconnection from the "Indian mode of life" represented a direct misogynistic, assimilationist attack on well-being and sovereignty of First Nations as status women were not only stripped of their rights and identity, but also the ability to transmit their culture and status to their children. Women who married outside their band were prohibited from living or being buried on their reserve, accessing treaty benefits, or participating in ceremonies and rituals on their traditional land, or inheriting family property (Bear, 1991). In 1884, the *Indian Act* was slightly modified to include an amendment that allowed Indigenous men to will their estate to their wives. However, an Indigenous woman could only benefit from this amendment if the

Indian agent deemed that she was of "good moral character" — a criterion defined by white settler standards of subservience, chastity and domesticity (Sangster, 1999. p. 37). Such exclusions propelled generations of Indigenous women and their children toward cultural marginalization, homelessness and poverty, and facilitated the destruction of familial and social support networks. These exclusions further corroded the traditional roles and identities of Indigenous women and girls by preventing them from seeking leadership roles, voting, or even speaking at public meetings (Anderson, 2016). Bonita Lawrence (2004) contends that the consequences of gender discrimination within the *Indian Act* have been devastating for Indigenous nations in Canada:

> The phenomenal cultural implication hidden in this legislation is the sheer numbers of Native people lost to their communities…If one takes into account the fact that for every individual who lost status and had to leave her community, all of her descendants also lost status and for the most part were permanently alienated from Native culture, the numbers of individuals who ultimately were removed from Indian status and lost to their nations may be, the most conservative estimates, numbers between one and two million. (pp. 55-56)

While attempts were made to remedy the sexism embedded in the *Indian Act* (i.e., Bill C-31, Bill C-3, Bill S-3), it continued to contribute to the marginalization and exploitation of Indigenous women and girls. Bills C-3 and S-3, enacted in 2010 and 2017 respectively, did little to remedy gender discrimination because the differentiation and hierarchy of status between 6(1)(a) (seen as male category) and 6(1)(c) status (seen as female category), resulted in status women and their descendants losing status sooner than descendants on the male line (Hurley & Simeone, 2014). The amendments also failed to extend housing and financial resources to Indigenous

communities that face population growth, thereby further contributing to the marginalization of Indigenous women and the impoverishment of Indigenous communities (Lavell-Harvard, & Brant, 2016).

The establishment of residential schools in Canada in the early nineteenth century further served to disappear Indigenous peoples into the settler body politic as well to normalize the abuse and subjugation of Indigenous women and girls. Consistent with the stated agenda of cultural genocide, residential schools sought to erode Indigenous women and girls' status by imposing white settler ideologies and heteropatriarchal conceptions of gender relations as part of the assimilation process (Anderson, 2016; TRC 2015). For example, while boys were trained in farming and manual labour, girls received instruction in domestic skills, including sewing, cooking and mending their own clothes. Furthermore, unlike the non-coercive nature of Indigenous modes of child rearing, teachers and staff members rigorously timed, monitored and regulated all of the student's activities. Such modes of surveillance and regulation served to thwart girls' agency, silence their voices, and disrupt the traditional place of influence and leadership they held in their societies (TRC, 2015).

In order to undermine gender norms that contradicted white settler ideals of female chastity and submission, Indigenous girls were also taught that their bodies were "dirty, unkempt, and inherently rape-able" (Willis, 1973, as cited in Downe, 2006, p. 4). For example, the testimonies of female survivors of residential schools reveal that Catholic nuns and nurses considered menstruation to be a shameful curse. Hence, during menstruation. Indigenous girls were subjected to degrading inspections. Teachers and nuns severely punished girls with blood on their undergarments and linens (Anderson, 2016). Survivors of residential scholars have also spoken out about the frequency and severity of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. In fact, the

TRC (2015) highlights the direct link between the relatively high rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) experienced by Indigenous peoples and the pervasive abuse and trauma they endured in residential schools. Bourgeois (2017) further highlights the direct link between abuse experienced by survivors of residential schools and violence against women. The "intergenerational trauma created through the dehumanizing and violent residential school system", she notes, "continues to reverberate through our communities with the consequence of increased violence in our communities" (p. 263).

The degradation of Indigenous women and girls was not limited to residential schools. By the early twentieth century, control of Indigenous peoples living on reserves shifted from the church to the Department of Indian Affairs. Consequently, Indian agents became the dominant force for regulating Indigenous autonomy and for punishing Indigenous women and girls who did not conform to accepted standards of white femininity, heteronormativity and morality. "Women, particularly young women," notes Million (2013), "could be sanctioned or incarcerated for acting outside the church's and the Indian agent's sense of proper behaviours" (p. 45). In fact, one of the primary goals of Indian Agents at this time was to create obedient and submissive wives who would adhere to white, settler standards of femininity heteronormativity (Carter, 1997). To achieve this goal, Indian agents began regulating even the most personal affairs of the Indigenous people they administered: arranging marriages, denying persons the right to marry, prohibiting people from separating, and breaking off unions they deemed illegitimate. The traditional acceptance of non-heteronormative unions and the social agency and bodily autonomy permitted Indigenous women and girls were, thus, disrupted by white settler conceptualizations of appropriate gender roles and marital behaviours (Anderson, 2016; Arvin et al., 2013; Henning, 2007).

Between the decades of the 1960s and the 1980s, tens of thousands of Indigenous children in Canada were removed from their communities and placed into the child welfare system or adopted predominantly into white middle-class households. This action, often referred to as the Sixties Scoop, was yet another mechanism for regulating and punishing cultural behaviours that did not conform to white settler standards of being. In the colonial imagination, Indigenous practices, such as community involvement in the raising of children, as well as family/kinships that differed from settler society's ideal of the heteronormative, patriarchal nuclear family were considered problematic (Fournier & Crey, 1997, Lawrence, 2004). Indigenous parents, in particular Indigenous mothers, were also characterized as unfit, neglectful and incapable to look after their children (Lawrence 2004). Consequently, child "welfare" workers frequently removed Indigenous children from their families and communities because they deemed the ideal home to be one that instilled the values and lifestyles with which the workers themselves were familiar: white, middle-class homes cared for by white, middle-class mothers. In this way, the Sixties Scoop reflected "mainstream social work's ideation of a profaned, sexualized Indian mother in contrast to white settler femininity, such as stay-at-home mothers in pumps and pearls" (Million, 2013, p. 45).

The ideology of Indigenous women as unfit mothers is still present in settler society. For example, Canada's history of sterilizing Indigenous women without their informed consent is well documented (Hunt, 2013; Stote, 2012). Such acts of violence are not confined to Canada's colonial "past". In fact, in the last several years, over one hundred Indigenous women have come forward with their experiences of being coercively sterilized in the context of Canadian hospitals, with the most recent case occurring in 2017 (Kirkup, 2018). Furthermore, while residential schools no longer exist, it is estimated that there are currently more Indigenous

children in the child welfare system across Canada than were institutionalized during the height of the residential school era (Sinha et al., 2013). Indeed, the most recent national data indicates that 52 percent of children under the age of fifteen living in foster homes are Indigenous. Yet, Indigenous children represent only eight percent of the under-fifteen population in Canada today. In Alberta and Manitoba, these nation-wide trends are even more pronounced. For instance, in Alberta, almost 64 percent of children in care are Indigenous, even though they makeup five percent of the province's child population. In Manitoba, more than 90 per cent of the province's 11,000 children in care are Indigenous. This number is increasing at an alarming rate (Trocmé et al., 2004).

Canadian child welfare agencies predominately identify "neglect" as the principal justification for removing Indigenous children from their homes at such disproportionate rates (Blackstock et al., 2004). The main criteria employed to justify claims of "neglect" tend to revolve around poverty-related issues (Trocmé et al., 2004). In other words, in order to justify the removal of Indigenous children from their homes, families, and communities, child welfare agencies point to the very conditions that settler colonialism and the underfunding of First Nation reserves created in the first place: a lack of adequate housing, clothing, food, medical and dental care (Crichlow 2003; Trocmé et al., 2004). This large-scale placement of Indigenous children into non-Indigenous environments results in the disruption of Indigenous cultures, languages, identities, family ties, and a sense of belonging (Lavell-Harvard, & Brant, 2016). In addition to culture shock and feelings of isolation, many Indigenous children in the child welfare system also experience mental, physical and sexual abuse. Such experiences of abuse and cultural isolation render Indigenous peoples at greater risk of depression, suicide, and post- traumatic stress syndrome. These experiences further increase Indigenous people's risk of being placed in

youth detention, and eventually, the prison system. Finally, for Indigenous women and girls, these experiences increase the risks of child exploitation and sex trafficking (Bourgeois, 2015; Lavell-Harvard, & Brant, 2016). They also increase Indigenous women and girls' risk of living in situations of poverty and addiction. All of these realities greatly affect Indigenous women and girls' vulnerability to violence and abuse

Not Merely a "Sad Chapter": Recognizing Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls

Throughout Canada's colonial history, Indigenous women have been resisting and pushing back against colonial constructions of their identities. Despite a history of systemic, colonial efforts to subjugate, distort and erase them, they also continue to embody their culture and identities. Nevertheless, Indigenous women must negotiate the heteropatriarchal framework of colonization and the disruptive effects it has had on Indigenous political, social, familial and economic systems. The imposed heteropatriarchy of the *Indian Act*, for instance, not only reordered traditional socio-familial relations but established male dominance, particularly heterosexual male dominance, within Indigenous political and economic life. Throughout the years, the so-called Bill C-31 women — women to whom Indian Status was restored through the passing of Bill C-31 — have been treated as though "they are not truly Indian, or not Indian enough, less entitled to benefits and housing, and obliged to fight continually for recognition by male Indigenous leadership, their families, communities, and broader society" (FAFIA, 2017).

In order to eradicate traditional hereditary leadership and facilitate colonial control, the federal government imposed democratically elected band councils as a new form of Indigenous governance. Consistent with the settler ideology of female inferiority, the Canadian government created these band governments as a strictly male domain. (Anderson, 2009; Bourgeois, 2014, 2015). In fact, between 1876 and 1951, the *Indian Act* excluded Indigenous women, who

previously were key decision-makers and advisors, from decision-making in their own communities (Anderson, 2009, Bourgeois, 2015, 2017). As Bourgeois (2015) notes:

> This disempowerment of Indigenous women's historical primary roles in Indigenous leadership has been linked to the economic marginalization of Indigenous women and girls, the absences of social supports appropriately and adequately addressing the needs of Indigenous women and their children, and the high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. (p. 1460)

The long-term consequences of this imposition of heteropatriarchy onto Indigenous systems of governance is also evident in the on-going under presentation of Indigenous women in positions of influence and band leadership. This underrepresentation results in the concerns of Indigenous women being frequently overlooked or criticized within male-focused political systems and agendas (Anderson, 2009). For instance, discourses around sovereignty often fail to consider the perspectives and lived experiences of Indigenous women and girls, particularly their experiences of gender discrimination and violence.

Indigenous feminist scholars note that the dehumanization and over sexualization of the Indigenous female body have become firmly rooted in the Indigenous and non-Indigenous consciousness, rendering all Indigenous females more vulnerable to violence and exploitation than white settler females. Janice Acoose (1995) explores the lasting negative impacts of stereotypic images of Indigenous women and girls, not least of which are the reinforcement of colonial dichotomies between Indigenous and white settler female identities and the rationalization of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Of particular relevance to this thesis, Acoose (1995) points to the involvement of white settler females in this dynamic.

Colonial images of Indigenous females, she argues, continue to "function as sentinels that guard and protect the white Euro-Canadian-Christian-patriarchy (and now, to a limited extent, the same kind of matriarchy) against any threatening disturbances that might upset the status quo" (p. 55). That is, the construction of white settler women and girls as innocent, virtuous, and truly Canadian continues to rely on, and uphold, the dehumanization and hypersexualization of Indigenous women and girls — a reality that re-inscribes colonial hierarchies between Indigenous and white settler girls.

Other Indigenous and allied scholars point to the persistence of colonial constructions of Indigenous female identities and their implications for settler/Indigenous hierarchical relations. de Finney (2015) and Bourgeois (2015) note that Indigenous girls in Canada are more at risk of violence and sexual exploitation than white settler girls due, in large part, to persistent colonial images of Indigenous girls and women as passive, hypersexual, and mysterious. These colonial stereotypes, notes Bourgeois (2015), provide "ideological confirmation that Indigenous women and girls are sexually available and therefore sexually violable—which not only enables the trafficking of Indigenous females, but all other forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls" (p. 1442). Further, in contrast to white settler girls, whose victimization is often met with shock and outrage, violence against Indigenous women and girls has become normalized in contemporary Canadian society (Bourgeois, 2015; de Finney, 2015; Palmater, 2016). The circumstances contributing to violence against Indigenous women and girls also tend to be presented outside of any historical-colonial context. In fact, Canadian media "plays a decisive role in promulgating racist ideology and in maintaining white dominance in Canada" (Harding, 2006, p. 206). For example, Wakeford's (2016) critical discourse analysis of fifteen federally produced reports purporting to account for the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous

women and girls reveals the tendency to occlude the broader colonial context by attributing this violence to the failures and inherent vulnerabilities of Indigenous peoples. Similarly, Gilchrist (2010) underlines the tendency for Canadian newsmakers to engage in a highly subjective and hierarchical process of news production that centres crimes committed against "newsworthy" white settler female victims while silencing and sensationalizing violence against Indigenous women and girls. In the words of Gilchrist:

> The lack of coverage to missing/murdered Aboriginal women appears to suggest that their stories are not dramatic or worthy enough to tell, that Aboriginal women's victimization is too routine or ordinary, and/or irrelevant to (White) readers. The common news adage "if it bleeds it leads" is not an accurate one as "it really depends on who is bleeding"…While the White middle-class victims were considered legitimate, "worthy," and "innocent," the Aboriginal women by contrast were denied such status and legitimacy. (p. 15)

In a similar vein, Jiwani and Young (2006) and Harding (2006) argue that the media plays a decisive role in disseminating racist ideology and in maintaining white dominance in Canada. The normalization of violence against Indigenous women and girls reinforces white "middle-class notions of propriety and hegemonic femininity" (Jiwani, 2006, p. 896). Such normalization and silencing of violence against Indigenous women and girls further reproduce the social norm of the Indigenous Other, thereby reinforcing the superior moral standing of white settler girls (Jiwani, 2006).

Differential responses to violence perpetuated against settler bodies versus Indigenous bodies are reflected in the well-documented problem of police abuse against Indigenous women and girls (Dhillon, 2015; Palmater, 2016). For instance, a Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2013)

report on law-enforcement responses to disappeared and murdered women in British Columbia documents the on-going failure of police to protect Indigenous women and girls from violence. The report further documents the prevalence of sexual, verbal and physical assaults committed by police officers against Indigenous women and girls. Due to this violent dynamic, notes the report, Indigenous women's reactions to being interviewed about their relationships with police officers were comparable to those found in post-conflict or post-transition countries, where security forces have played an integral role in government abuses and denial of human rights. Findings from the Stolen Sisters report by Amnesty International (2004) further highlight the tendency of police to view Indigenous people, not as a community deserving protection, but, rather, as a community from which the rest of society must be protected. As Bourgeois (2014) points out, this over policing and under protecting of Indigenous peoples, justified primarily on the basis of enduring racist and sexist stereotypes, "allows perpetrators to commit violence unchecked, with the effect that Indigenous women and girls are likely to pay for these failings with their lives" (p. 65).

Canadian police forces not only fail to adequately protect Indigenous women and girls from acts of violence, including murder, but tend to disregard these violations when they occur. Oppal's (2012) report on police responses to missing and murdered women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside underlines the blatant failure of Canadian police to include family and community members in their investigation, to follow up on tips, to employ adequate investigative strategies, and to respond in a timely, professional manner. Razack (2002) further articulates how the delineation of certain spaces as degenerate elides, justifies and normalizes the violence enacted on the bodies of the Indigenous peoples, mainly women and girls, who inhabit these spaces. Such colonial conceptualizations of identities and spaces render Indigenous bodies

unimportant and, hence, ungrievable (Bourgeois, 2017; Palmater, 2016). They also place the onus of responsibility for victimization on the victims' alleged high-risk lifestyles with little or no recognition of the extent to which the dynamics of colonialism determine the material and social conditions — including poverty, homelessness, and addiction — of Indigenous women and girls (Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017). Finally, colonial conceptualizations of Indigenous bodies and spaces reinforce the demarcation of white settler spaces as normal and desirable (Bourgeois, 2014, 2015).

The perpetuation of colonial narratives not only renders Indigenous women and girls more vulnerable to violence than white settler girls, but also minimizes punishment for those who commit this violence. (Razack, 2002; Bourgeois, 2014). More specifically, as Bourgeois (2014) underlines, Canadian courts are noted for being extremely "lenient on perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women and girls, where, once again, racist and sexist perceptions of Indigenous females serve to exonerate perpetrators of any wrongdoing" (p. 65). In 2014, for instance, the murdered body of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine (Sagkeeng First Nations) was pulled out of Winnipeg's Red River. The subsequent 2018 acquittal of her alleged murderer Robert Cormier, a verdict that is all-too fresh in my (outraged) mind on the cold February day that I write these words, exemplifies the ways in which the Canadian settler state differentially determines, as Butler puts it, "who counts as human" and "whose lives count as lives"(Butler, 2003, p. 10). Consequently, the disproportionate level of violence against Indigenous women and girls is not only allowed to continue but is implicitly encouraged to continue due to lack of accountability. Moreover, Indigenous victims of violence, as well as their families and communities, are continuously re-victimized by the nation state's consistent failure to ensure

adequate policy, legal, and community responses to this violence (Bourgeois, 2017; Palmater, 2016; Simpson, 2014)

Resistance and Resilience

It is important to gain an understanding of the complex ways that colonial constructions of Indigenous female identities were (are) employed to disempower Indigenous societies and reify the superiority of white, settler females. It is also important to understand how on-going structural inequalities render Indigenous women and girls at risk of violence. However, I am aware that, by articulating these realities, I risk centring the stories of the colonizer while silencing the stories of the colonized. I also risk reinforcing the narrative of Indigenous women and girls as exclusively victimized. Such a narrative is both inaccurate and misguided. The truth is that, in spite of all the attempts to annihilate Indigenous culture and the understanding of women therein, Indigenous women have been resisting colonially imposed roles and identities (Anderson, 2016). Many factors have assisted in this resistance: women's relationships with their community, in particular, their connections with female (often older) role models, as well as their connections to land and cultural traditions (Anderson, 2016). These factors also include Indigenous women's commitment to speaking out against racist stereotypes. In fact, notes Anderson (1997):

> The earliest act of resistance for most Native women is to recognize and then challenge negative stereotypes. As difficult and courageous an act as it is, it is a liberating experience. For many contemporary Native women, this was something that happen at an early age, often with the stereotypes that were faced with when

> they entered the school system. It may have been the first time…they felt a need to resist the racism that defined the new world they found themselves in. (p. 137)

Indigenous women and girls also employ the act of storytelling as a form of resistance to colonial violence. Indeed, Anderson (1999) argues that the teachings within traditional stories have always provided "the foundation for a strong Native female identity. The respect accorded to Native women in many traditional stories can assist Native women in retaining an understanding of their power" (p. 94). They also provide a means of passing down Indigenous cultural traditions and histories to younger generations.

In recent decades, other scholarship has emerged that highlights Indigenous women and girls' resistance to colonization. For example, Carol Cooper's (1993) paper, "Native Women of the Northern Pacific Coast: A Historical Perspective, 1830-1900", articulates the ways that Indigenous women defied colonial stereotypes of submissiveness by playing active and integral roles within traditional productive activities as well as within the fur trading industry of the Hudson's Bay Company. Scholarship has also emerged that highlights the various ways that, despite their relative powerlessness, both children and parents resisted residential school policies and practices. Such resistance included parents refusing to send children to the schools, parents resisting the aggressive recruitment methods of some school officials, and parents lodging complaints with officials at the Department of Indian Affairs (LeBeuf, 2011; Miller, 1996). However, the most persistent and profound form of resistance and protest came from the students themselves: they would run away from schools, find ways to speak their languages, and form support networks as a means to survive the violence around them while maintaining a sense of self and family (Haig-Brown, 1988). In some cases, support networks were created principally as a form of "mutual protection, whether to obtain and share food among members of the group, or

to discourage acts of bullying or abuse by staff-members" (Stout & Kipling, 2003, p. 38). In other cases, support was provided by siblings or cousins who acted as parental figures to younger relatives. The testimonies of residential school survivors also underline existence of more subtle forms of resistance, including children masking their true emotions or subverting orders given by school authorities to maintain a sense of agency and dignity (TRC, 2015). For many survivors, resistance also came in the form of refusing to abandon their traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices, resisting the option to identify as white later on in life, and, perhaps most significantly, simply existing despite the violent conditions in which they found themselves (Anderson, 1999).

An examination of more contemporary forms of resistance reveals Indigenous women's instrumental role in fighting back against on-going colonial practices designed to diminish their humanity and erase their culture. Bonita Lawrence (2003) outlines the tireless of efforts of Indigenous women, including Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Yvonne Bedard, and Sandra Lovelace, to eliminate gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*. In a similar vein, recent scholarship underlines the role of Indigenous women in challenging the dynamics of colonialism embedded within historical and current Canadian child "welfare" policies and practices (Fluke et al., 2010; Trocmé et al., 2004). Finally, scholarship has emerged that articulates Indigenous women's political and social activism. For example, Barker (2015) and Klein (2013) outline the historical precedents of the Idle No More movement — an ongoing protest movement founded in December 2012 by three Indigenous women (Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, and Nina Wilson) and one non-Indigenous ally (Sheelah McLean). In the words of Leanne Simpson:

> Over the past 400 years, there has never been a time when Indigenous peoples were not resisting colonialism. Idle No More is the latest—visible to the

> mainstream—resistance and it is part of an ongoing historical and contemporary push to protect our lands, our cultures, our nationhoods, and our languages. (as quoted in Klein, 2013, para. 3)

Likewise, Bourgeois (2014) argues that the Idle No More movement represents one of many historical and contemporary female-led efforts to assert Indigenous sovereignty in opposition to settler colonization.

Indigenous women have long been resisting colonialism and (re)claiming their identities through art, music, and creative expression. For decades Indigenous women such as Marie Campbell, Emma Baroque, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Lee Maracle, Chrystos, Joséphine Bacon, and Sheila Watt-Cloutier have been using writing as means of denouncing racist images and fostering more realistic representations of Indigenous experiences. Contemporary Indigenous female playwrights such as Monique Mojica, Reneltta Arluk, Marie Clements, and Yvette Nolan have also been countering colonial narratives of gendered and racialized violence by emphasizing Indigenous female resistance, resilience and collective coalition (MacKenzie, 2016). Similarly, the works of activist filmmakers such as Alanis Obomsawin shed light on both colonial discrimination and on Indigenous women's strength and resistance. Finally, Indigenous artists such as KC Adams, Jaime Black, Rebecca Belmore, Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory and Cree Stevens resist and oppose misrepresentations of Indigenous gender roles by bringing much needed attention to issues of racial injustice and colonial stereotypes. These artists also highlight the multiplicity and diversity of Indigenous identities and lived experiences.

In recent years, scholarship has also emerged that examines the connection between sport and acts of resistance and decolonization. For example, McGuire-Adams and Giles (2018) examine Indigenous women's perspectives on physical activity. More specifically, drawing on

Indigenous feminist theories, these authors examine the ways that physical activity represents an act of healing, personal decolonization, and ceremony for many Indigenous women. Similarly, McGuire-Adams (2018) examines Anishinaabeg women's physical activity as a site of personal decolonization, health, and wellbeing. She argues that well-being for Indigenous women can be improved through decolonized physical activity, reconnecting to oral histories, and building community in urban spaces. These activities, she argues are "important resistance tools that can lead to meaningful ways of addressing embodied settler colonialism and can also make strong contributions to Indigenous health research" (p. iv).

Raising Awareness of Colonial Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls

For decades, Indigenous women have been at the forefront of efforts to bring national attention to gendered, colonial violence. These efforts were frequently met with denial and hostility. Opponents of colonial violence faced societal racism and denial, victim blaming in the media, and indifference both on the part the Canadian government as well as male-dominated Indigenous organizations and bodies of governance (Palmater, 2016). However, despite the numerous obstacles these "warrior women" and their allies succeeded in creating much-needed spaces for research, for activism, and, importantly, for honouring all those that had been disappeared (Bourgeois, 2014, p. 4). Numerous reports, including Amnesty International's Stolen Sisters report (2004), raised national awareness of the crisis of colonial violence as well as well as of the urgent need for all levels of government to respond to this crisis. However, in spite of these efforts, former Prime Minister Harper denied the need for a national inquiry. He stated:

> We should not view [violence against Indigenous women and girls] as a sociological phenomenon. We should view it as a crime. It is a crime, against innocent people, and it needs to be addressed as such. We brought in laws across

> this country that I think are having more effect, in terms of crimes of violence against not just Aboriginal women, but women and persons more generally. (as cited in Boutilier, 2014, p. 6)

Such ill-conceived responses from the government served to intensify Indigenous and allied efforts to see a critical, comprehensive response to the issue of violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples. For instance, three advocacy groups, No More Silence, Families of Sisters in Spirit and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, worked tirelessly to bring attention to the brutal deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Annual memorial marches and vigils were also created to honour the lives of the disappeared and to create awareness for the need for a national response to violence against Indigenous women and girls. Popular social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook further drew attention to Indigenous lives lost to violence. For example, in 2014, Holly Jarrett, the cousin of a murdered Inuk woman named Loretta Saunders, spearheaded the “Am I Next” social media campaign. The campaign, in which Indigenous women and girls post photos of themselves holding a sign reading "Am I Next?", has succeeded in provoking national discussions on the issue of systemic acts of violence towards Indigenous women and girls (Hunt, 2014). However, despite the popularity and relatively high visibility of this campaign, some Indigenous people objected to the one-dimensional portrayal of Indigenous women and girls as victims rather than active agents. For instance, Sarah Rainville posted a powerful picture on herself social media with a message that criticized the "Am I Next?" campaign. She wrote:

> Harper doesn't care about our Indigenous women. Colonialism is a rape culture. I will not ask if I'm next. I decided after all the trauma I went through, that I would fight 'til the death of me. #imnotnext I will not remain a victim. Our people will

> heal. We're our sisters' keepers. Asking "am I next?" creates an expectation; saying we're inherently rapeable/killable. Say no to victimhood. #ImNotNext #StrongIndigenous. (as cited in Hunt, 2014, para. 3)

While the strengths and weaknesses of the two social media campaigns have been debated, they both succeeded in increasing discussions around the largely silenced issue of colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls (Hunt, 2014). They also succeeded in disrupting the reductive view of Indigenous women and girls as passive victims by revealing their resistance, refusal, and defiance in the face colonial violence.

In order to further respond to the lack of national attention given to disappeared and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Indigenous peoples have developed multiple visual art, theatre, dance, and spoken word projects. For example, throughout public spaces in Canada, hundreds of disembodied red dresses have served as ghostly visual reminders of the shocking number of Indigenous women who have been disappeared in the last decades. Métis artist and creator Jaime Black (2014) calls these art installations an "aesthetic response" to colonial violence — a way "to draw attention to the gendered and racialised nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence" (para. 1). In a similar vein, Métis artist Christie Belcourt created "Walking With Our Sisters", a crowd-sourced project designed to bring awareness to the issue of disappeared and murdered Indigenous women and girls and to build opportunities for community-based dialogue (Walking With Our Sisters, 2019).

In 2015, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau came to power with a declared mandate to work towards a new relationship with Indigenous peoples: "One based on recognition of rights,

respect, cooperation and partnership" (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). Consistent with this purported mandate, on December 08, 2015, Trudeau upheld his campaign promise and announced the initiation of an independent national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples. This long-awaited national inquiry initially promised to be radically different from previous inquiries. For example, newly appointed federal Indigenous affairs minister Carolyn Bennett assured the nation that the families of murdered and disappeared Indigenous women and girls would "play a key role in the inquiry, which could also include elements of Aboriginal ceremony and culture" (as cited in Murphy, 2015, para. 2). The inquiry further emphasized its intended mission to examine the systemic causes of colonial violence while putting the "families first and holding the lives of Indigenous women and girls sacred" (as cited in Murphy, 2015, para. 2).

Many Indigenous peoples welcomed the launch of a national inquiry. However, others have long questioned the potential of government-initiated inquiries to contribute to any substantive, transformative change in colonial violence (Bourgeois, 2012; Hunt, 2015). For example, Robyn Bourgeois (2012) underlined the fact that the federal government's past responses to violence against Indigenous women and girls have been driven by self-interest, blatant victim blaming, and colonial state agendas. She, therefore, questioned the likelihood that a national inquiry could/would adequately respond to the needs of Indigenous women and their communities. In her own words:

> An inquiry allows the Canadian state to appear that it is doing something about violence against women without ever having to actually do anything. Indeed, with state-based information gathering mechanisms like inquiries, the state does little more than create and fund it, and it is the work of commissioners, but more

> importantly, contributors to make things happen…I want meaningful change and I want it now, and I don't think that's too much to ask for. Because my life and the lives of all women and girls are worth more than this. (para. 7)

In a similar vein, Hunt (2014) argued that a national inquiry into the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls could only serve the needs of the Indigenous community if it placed power and authority in the hands of Indigenous women. Smiley (2016) further underlined the need or the inquiry to be conducted "within an expressly feminist framework", led by “fearlessly feminist Indigenous women” dedicated to revealing the sexist, racist colonial context within which this violence occurs (p. 312).

After the 2016 launch of the inquiry, important concerns were raised about its intended direction, its composition, and its efficiency. Various media-driven critiques described the inquiry as both a “fortress of bureaucratic incompetence” (Macdonald, 2017, para. 1) and a “slow motion implosion” (Palmater, 2017, para. 3) due to its perceived problems in communication, transparency and vision. Indigenous and allied scholars also questioned whether the inquiry undermined its own its raison d'être: centring the voices and serving the needs of Indigenous women and their communities. For example, the inquiry was criticized for its lack of Inuit representation, particularly the failure of the inquiry to include an Inuk commissioner (Zerehi, 2016). In addition, Walsh (2017) noted the failure of the inquiry to consult key stakeholders — including the survivors, family members and community activists — in important decision-making processes. According to Palmater (2016), this problematic oversight led to the exclusion of two critical areas of the inquiry: 1. A review of all the known police case files of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and 2. A comprehensive review and investigation of police behaviour, specifically racism, abuse and sexualized violence of

Indigenous women and girls by police forces. Kanienkehaka attorney and activist Beverly Jacobs (2017) further noted the failure of the inquiry to respect Indigenous law, cultural practices and legal processes. Indeed, she argued that the inquiry employed "a very colonial model", one based not on Indigenous consensus-oriented processes but on a Euro-western top-down process" (as cited in Hamilton, 2017, para. 4). One of the commissioners of the inquiry, Marilyn Poitras (2017), echoed these sentiments. In her letter of resignation, she described the process of the inquiry as "traditional colonial style"— a process of inquiry that focuses on scrutinizing the "Indian Problem" rather than focusing on the voices, strengths and resilience of Indigenous women and their communities (as cited in Hamilton, 2017, para. 4).

In spite of the controversies and debates that surrounded it, the national inquiry succeeded in underlining colonial truths that are too often ignored by settler society. For example, the inquiry disrupted the colonial tendency to place the blame for violence on Indigenous peoples themselves by pointing to the settler colonial structures that contribute to this violence. In the words of the Executive Summary of the Final report in Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls (2019):

> The significant, persistent, and deliberate pattern of systemic racial and gendered human rights and Indigenous rights violations and abuses — perpetuated historically and maintained today by the Canadian state, designed to displace Indigenous Peoples from their land, social structures, and governance and to eradicate their existence as Nations, communities, families, and individuals — is the cause of the disappearances, murders, and violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual] people, and is genocide. This

> colonialism, discrimination, and genocide explains the high rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. (p. 58)

Amongst other recommendations, the report underlined the need for federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments, in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, to develop and implement a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit peoples. The report further stressed the need for all forms of government to ensure Indigenous people equitable access to basic rights such as employment, housing, education, safety, and health care — rights that are too often ignored by settler society. Finally, the report underlined the inherent right of Indigenous peoples to embody their cultures, languages, and modes of creating and disseminating knowledge.

The National Inquiry into Missing Murdered Women and Girls helped initiate mainstream media discourses vis-à-vis the issue of colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. For example, in October 2016, investigative journalist Connie Walker (Cree), in collaboration with CBC radio, launched a podcast called *Who Killed Alberta Williams?* This eight-part podcast, which provided an intimate account of the 1989 murder of 24-year-old Alberta Williams (Gitanyow First Nation) along the Highway of Tears, succeeded in attracting the attention of settler Canadians and in raising awareness about the realities of colonial violence. In a similar vein, in 2016, CBC radio began broadcasting a series of nation-wide public forums on the issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. The CBC news channel also established an on-line data base of over 300 unsolved cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. This interactive website provided a personal and detailed look at the names, faces, and lives of the many victims of colonial violence — victims who had previously been ignored and/or dehumanized by mainstream media.

In addition to traditional media discourses, the national inquiry helped open doors to creative expressions of resistance to colonial violence. For example, the short documentary film, entitled *This River,* helped to further expose the devastating reality of colonial violence in Canada. More specifically, this film focused on Drag the Red, a volunteer group that searches the Red River in Winnipeg, Manitoba for the bodies of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Since the launch of the inquiry numerous art projects, music videos, murals, and stage performances have also served to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and to bring national attention to the issue.

Reflections: History is Written by the Victor

In the last two chapters, I outlined the colonial histories and the lived realities of Indigenous people living in Canada. In doing so, I often thought of the African proverb: "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter". This proverb reminds me that, until Indigenous peoples' perspectives and modes of knowledge production are given equal space in dominant discourses, settler accounts of history will always be considered more legitimate. Colonization entails, not only physical and sexual violence, but also the negation of Indigenous world views and the imposition of settler epistemologies and paradigms as superior ways of knowing (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Ermine, et al., 2004; Kovach, 2005, 2009; Smith, 2012). Hence, for Indigenous peoples, decolonization involves self-determination, not only from a political, social and economic point of view, but also with respect to the right to produce and disseminate knowledge in accordance with their own world views, oral histories, and cultural practices. To this end, Indigenous academics have been asserting a distinctly Indigenous perspective on knowledge production and reclaiming a voice that challenges the hegemony of settler epistemologies and modes of

disseminating knowledge. However, despite the increased visibility of Indigenous peoples within academia, it is still non-Indigenous perspectives of settler colonial realities that continue to dominate (Kovach, 2005).

In articulating the colonial history of Canada, I made a conscious effort to seek out academic sources written by Indigenous peoples. I also made a conscious effort to document, not only the detrimental impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples in Canada, but also Indigenous acts of resistance to various acts of colonial violence. Nevertheless, I continue to grapple with the inescapable nature of Euro-centric perspectives. Despite my efforts to centre the scholarly work of Indigenous people, I recognize that non-Indigenous perspectives of settler colonial histories and realities continue to dominate. These perspectives determine, to a large degree, which types of knowledge sources are favoured. For example, throughout this thesis, I rely on written histories of settler-Indigenous relations. I, therefore, question how my articulations of the history of Indigenous/setter relations may have differed had I relied on the oral histories of Indigenous peoples— histories, notes Harris (2003), that are still largely perceived as unreliable within academia. How might my focus have changed? How might my research questions and/or analysis have differed?

I cannot say I have the answers to these aforementioned questions. I do know that these (gnawing) questions serve as yet another reminder of the importance of paying attention to my particular social identities (e.g., age, ethnicity, class, experience, etc.) and the roles they play in this thesis journey. As Chambers (2012) reminds me, I too am a treaty person. As such, I must be willing interrogate settler complicity with the colonial project (Chambers, 2012). Hence, rather than surrendering to my uncertainties, I strive to use my voice, and my position of privilege, to aid in the disruption of the colonial myths embedded within dominant discourses.

As a settler colonial scholar, I strive also to generate research questions that disrupt the invisibility of settler identity and privilege.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the current hierarchies between Indigenous and settler girls are intricately linked to historical and current efforts to undermine the cultural, physical, socio-economic, and spiritual wellbeing of all Indigenous peoples. In fact, the literature reveals that the introduction of Euro-Christian ideologies transformed the ways Indigenous girls and women were perceived both within and outside of Indigenous communities. Gendered and racist legislation and policies, such as the *Indian Act*, also served to disrupt the traditional roles Indigenous girls and women played within their society. Such disruption not only served to justify colonial practices and policies that dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their land and their autonomy, but also reified the dominance of the white settler woman whose identity came to serve as a measure of morality and femininity. It also helped secure the social conditions that allow Indigenous girls and women to suffer disproportionately high risks of violence and abuse.

In the second part of the chapter, I noted the recent emergence of government, media, and academic discourses surrounding the systemic problem of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. These discourses and testimonies, I argued, represent profound acts of political and personal resistance. They give voice to histories, perspectives and lived experiences that have long been denied, distorted, and erased. Moreover, they serve as powerful counter narratives to dominant national mythologies of Canada as a country free of colonial baggage. What remains to be seen, however, is whether the current generation of settler girls is paying attention to such transgressive discourses. Also unclear are the ways in which settler girls make sense of these discourses. For instance, do their understandings of these systems of

violence reinforce well-worn colonial tropes? Do they pierce the invisibility of the mechanisms of settler colonialism? These are important question that need to be addressed. Therefore, in the following chapters, I discuss the current literature related to girls. I also analyze how the participants in this research study negotiate recently emerging discourses surrounding violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Chapter Three – Situating the Need for the Research: Identifying Gaps in Girlhood Literature

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I contextualized contemporary hierarchies between Indigenous and settler girls by discussing Canada's history of gendered, colonial violence towards Indigenous women and girls. I further articulated how the construction of white settler girls as true Canadians relies on and upholds its antithesis — the construction of Indigenous girls as hypersexualized Others. In the current chapter, I situate the need for this examination of white settler girlhood within decades of scholarship related to girls. I articulate the ways that youth and cultural studies have historically ignored girls' unique perspectives and lived experiences. I also outline the ways in which contemporary girlhood scholarship challenges prevailing images and discourses around "normative" expressions of girlhood by centring the lived experiences of previously unexamined groups of girls. While such research has enormous transformative potential, I argue that problematic silences still exist within girlhood studies. In particular, I note the failure of girlhood scholars to centre settler colonialism within research and scholarship.

The Emergence of Research Related to Girls

The emergence of girlhood studies as an area of research and academic study is a fairly recent phenomenon. Girlhood scholar Mary Celeste Kearney (2009) notes that when she entered graduate school in 1990:

> No professors taught classes specifically related to female youth, and no one organized panels or workshops to promote and expand girl-centred research. Scholars committed to analyzing girls had to cobble together theory from a

> number of different disciplines in order to make sense of their objects of study. (p.1)

In fact, for most of the twentieth century, the need for specialized academic and clinical studies of girls and women was devalued, minimized, and ignored. Consequently, while girls were understood to exist alongside boys, their perspectives, activities, social interactions and lived experiences remained in the margins and were not considered to be distinct from boys. Kearney (2009) points out that hegemonic theories of child and adolescent development, including the theories of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, were based on the perspectives and lived experiences of boys. When adolescent girls did come to the attention of academic research, it was frequently "under the guise of some specific concern often articulated by a number of self-appointed moral guardians who then went on to problematize these girls for failing to adhere to a narrowly middle-class notion of ladylike behaviour"(McRobbie, 1990, p. 21). Such sexist research biases were exacerbated by the fact that, until the mid-twentieth century, white, middle-class Euro-western girls were confined mainly to the domestic sphere, thereby rendering them less accessible and, seemingly, less valuable to researchers (Kearney, 2009)

In the 1960s, the field of Women's Studies began to emerge as an academic area of study in North America. Scholars in this field placed women's lived experience, concerns and perspectives at the centre of their research and academic work. They also became increasingly vocal in their critique of the male biases embedded within hegemonic theories and modes of research. According to Hesse-Biber et al. (2004):

> These [feminist scholars] asked why women were being excluded from knowledge construction. They started thinking about research from the point of

> view of women's lives…Researchers pointed out how androcentrically (male) biased the sciences and social sciences in fact were, and, how this bias had caused women to be left out of both the research questions and their respective "answers"…Feminist researchers began to add explicitly women into the research question. (p. 3)

Due, in large part, to this push to centre women's voices and perspectives within research, scholarship focusing on the unique development and lived experiences of girls also began to emerge. For example, Carol Gilligan's ground-breaking book, *In a Different Voice* (1982) drew attention to the persistent construction of males as normative in all forms of research and theories, including those that claimed to speak for all youth. More specifically, she criticized well-known theories of moral development for failing to take into consideration the distinct perspectives and developmental stages of girls. Feminist sociologists and cultural theorists also called attention to the ways in which male-centric research and perspectives marginalized and obscured the voices and concerns of female youth (Chesney-Lind, 1974; Fine, 1988; McRobbie, 1980). For instance, McRobbie's (1980) seminal article, "Settling Accounts with Subculture: A Feminist Critique" highlighted the tendency for cultural studies of youth to ignore the ways in which adolescent girls negotiate the structural determinations of age, class, and gender that shape their lived experiences.

Despite these critiques of male-centred scholarship, throughout the 1970s and 1980s scholars interested in researching youth persisted in their problematic tendency to conflate and ignore gender differences, thereby obscuring the distinct and multifaceted nature of girls' experience. Arguably as problematic was the propensity of feminist researchers to concentrate primarily on the experiences of women with little focus given to girl-centred research. For

example, feminists replaced the term “girls” with “young women” to distance themselves from connotations of passivity and subordination. They also focused largely on socio-political issues, including reproductive rights and sexual discrimination in the workplace, related to adult women (Kearney, 2009). While such research and activism called further attention to the sexism that informs gender norms, the singular focus on women’s experience precluded an examination of the distinct ways that girls negotiate the systems of violence, injustice, and privilege that shape their experiences. Such research also failed to provide crucial opportunities for girls to participate in the production of knowledge related their own lived experiences (Hussain et al., 2006). In fact, in the period leading up to the 1990s, girls and girlhood were “synonymous with unimportant” (Brown, 2008, p. 2) and, therefore, largely marginalized within academic and popular discourses. Consequently, notes Kearney (2009), female youth remained an enigma and many feminist scholars and activists came to believe, albeit primarily unconsciously, that girls were “irrelevant to feminist politics and scholarship” (p. 6).

Scholars dedicated to studying girls persisted in their efforts to remedy the marginalization of girls’ voices and perspectives. In her book, *Feminism and Youth Culture: from 'Jackie' to 'Just Seventeen'* Angela McRobbie (1990) examines the cultures and the social realities of young girls, including the culture and influence of magazines geared towards girls. Mazzarella and Pecora (2007) note that such ground-breaking work not only helped pave the way for future girl-centred inquiry but “served as a central text informing girl studies scholars who followed… she [McRobbie] began to lay the groundwork for girls’ studies” (p. 108). In fact, the latter half of the 1990s witnessed a “veritable explosion” of academic and popular discourses related to the lived experiences of girls (Jiwani et al., 2006, p. xi). This explosion was initially characterized by popular literature that focused on concerns about girls’ victimhood and

psychosocial well-being— a narrative that Harris et al. (2005) term “girlhood as crisis” (p. 40). For instance, Peggy Orenstein’s (1994) book *Schoolgirls* and Mary Pipher’s (1994) book *Reviving Ophelia* characterizes girlhood as a period of low-self-esteem, faltering sense of identity, and vulnerability to depression, drugs and self-harm. Orenstein (1994) states that “girls emerge from their teenage years with reduced expectations and have less confidence in themselves and their abilities than do boys” (p. xvi). Similarly, Pipher (1994) describes girls as “saplings in the storm” who “crash and burn in a social and developmental Bermuda triangle” during adolescence (p. 19). This storm, she argues, represents the negative influence of popular culture as it tries to force girls to compromise their authentic selves to conform to normative standards of femininity.

At the same time that this “girlhood as crisis” narrative emerged in mainstream culture; discourses related to what Harris (2004) terms the “can-do girl" also emerged (p.19). This message of female strength and rebellion was born out of a critical sociopolitical movement in the 1990s and 2000s. For example, the feminist punk underground movement Riot Grrrl called for recognition of issues of sexual violence, gender discrimination and capitalism (Piepmeier, 2009). Indeed, according to Riot Grrrl’s London manifesto:

> Riot Grrrl and feminism are still needed for a myriad of reasons; because women are accused of asking for it when they are raped, because beauty is valued over intellect, because female musicians are dismissed as worthless, because enjoying sex makes you a slut, because, because, because... The list is endless. (British Library, 2019, para. 1)

This message of anti-capitalism and anti-sexism encouraged girls, in particular white, middle-class girls, to see themselves not as the “passive consumers of culture…but as producers and

creators of knowledge, as verbal and expressive dissenters" (Harris et al., 2005, pp. 20-21). It also disrupted the idea that girls are helpless victims who cannot defend themselves or rebel against toxic cultural messages.

The Riot Grrrl's message of female autonomy and resistance was quickly appropriated by mainstream media and re-packaged as a neoliberal version of girl power —a discourse that is still popular today (Harris et al., 2005). Neo-liberalism is a social order in Canada that sees individuals as autonomous subjects who are rational, independent, and bear full responsibility for their actions no matter how severe the constraints upon their lives (de Finney et al., 2011). Neo-liberal discourses portray empowered girl subjects as assertive, confident, resilient, strong and tenacious. These discourses also problematical portray empowered girls as embodying these characteristics in a stereotypically feminine manner — as subjects focused on, not only personal success, but conforming to mainstream definitions of beauty, femininity and fashion. In fact, critics note that the mainstream notion of girl power has become depoliticized and detached from the values and objectives of a feminist movement (Harris, 2004; Taft, 2004). Critics also note that girl power, as both an ideology and a slogan, is deeply connected to consumerism as it is often evoked to sell clothing, makeup, television etc. This type of commodified feminism serves the needs of a patriarchal, capitalist economy. It is also elides the very real social conditions that impact on girls' access to power and privilege. In the words of Taft (2004):

> While Girl Power as “girls can be anything” can give girls a sense of power and esteem, it hides both the material and the discursive forces shaping identity and the ways that these gendered, raced, classed, and sexualized identities may give girls privileges or pose challenges. (p. 73)

That is, while discourses of girl power promote the idea that girls can be anything they want, they offer limited options for what is deemed normative and acceptable (i.e., thin, white, feminine, able-bodied and heterosexual). Discourses of girl power further suggest that, with the right attitude and aesthetic, North American girls can now "compete successfully alongside their male counterparts and attain equality without sacrificing femininity" (Genz & Baron, 2009, p. 77). Systemic inequalities are, therefore, denied, and feminist activism is characterized as necessary only in less "progressive" (in other words, less white) nations. Such denials and characterizations, note Jiwani et al. (2010), result in a lack of interrogation of gendered violence in North American nations such as Canada.

In the early 2000s, concerns about girls' relational aggression also emerged within North American popular and academic discourses. For example, the books *Queen Bees and Wanna Bees* (Wiseman, 2002) and *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression* (Simmons, 2002) became best sellers in North America. These books highlighted the damaging effects that female friendship groups, and their associated aggressive and manipulative behaviours, can have on girls. This newly emerged focus on "mean girl" behaviour disrupted previous characterizations of girls as exclusively passive and voiceless. However, it also problematically reinforced, and continues to reinforce, the narrative of girls in crisis, except that rather than focusing on girls' passivity, it underlined the ways girls claim power through bullying and relational aggression (Harris et al., 2005)

Contemporary Girlhood Studies

An examination of mainstream discourses surrounding girlhood "enables us to think and ask questions about how certain meanings of girlhood become common sense and authoritative" (Harris et al., 2005, p. 18). It also helps us to understand what these discourses "leave out, marginalize or prohibit from being included in the issues and debates surrounding what it means to be a young woman in these times and places" (Harris et al., 2005, p. 18). What mainstream narratives of girlhood as crisis/can-do girl leave out, argue Kearney (2009) and Pomerantz (2009), are nuanced discussions of girls' agency, their capacity for resistance, as well as the multiple spheres of oppression/privilege in which they inhabit. Instead, notes Gonick (2004) these narratives tend to present girls as "ethnographic curiosities" (p. 396), alternately celebrating their accomplishments or critiquing their perceived deficiencies. They also create a universal, but non-inclusive, conception of what it means to be a girl — that is, western, white, middle-class, heterosexual and able-bodied (Harris, 2004; Harris et al., 2005). The effect, argues Gonick (2004), is that the differences between girls and the particular socio-economic, cultural, and racial factors that impact on their lives are glossed over. Non-inclusive conceptions of girlhood also obscure the various strategies that girls employ to negotiate and resist the dominant discourses that shape their lives. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss girlhood in a manner that makes clear the ways that subjectivity, location, interpretation and experience dramatically shape what it means to be a girl.

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on the importance of employing an intersectional feminist framework in studying girlhood. Such a framework disrupts the reductive view of girls as passive victims and/or failing subjects by examining the "power, agency and complicity of girls in resisting and negotiating the structures of oppression and inequality that

shape their lives and contribute to their vulnerabilities" (Jiwani et al., 2006, p. x). Such a framework further troubles essentialist understandings of girlhood as a universal, biological condition of female experience by drawing attention to differences among girls, including how social identities such as race, class, ability and sexual orientation determine and shape the acceptable practices of girlhood and its experience (Gonick & Gannon, 2014). For instance, girlhood scholars Handa (2003) and Rajiva (2004, 2006, 2013) provide critical insights into the specific discourses through which South Asian girls are positioned as Others in the Canadian context as well as the strategies that they employ to negotiate this Othering. In a similar vein, Jiwani et al. (2006) offer a nuanced discussion vis-à-vis the complex ways in which systems of sexism and racism impact on the lives of girls of colour living in an English Canadian context. Various girlhood scholars have also explored the lived experiences of girls who identify as queer (Driver, 2007; James, 2011), of girls living in "Third World" countries (Sensory, & Marshall, 2010), and of girls living with disabilities (Stienstra, 2015; Erevelles & Nguyen, 2016). Other perspectives surrounding girlhood identity that have emerged in recent years include discussions of contemporary construction of girls and girlhood in the new millennium (Ward & Cooper Benjamin, 2004), an examination of the potential consequences of the (post) feminist and neoliberal qualities of contemporary discourses of girl power (Cairns, 2014; Goodkind, 2009), as well as an examination of the ways in which the current generation of girls negotiates power, choice and agency (Gonick et al., 2009).

Such contemporary scholarship related to girlhood challenges prevailing images and discourses around what constitutes a "normal" girl by underlining the perspectives and lived experiences of previously marginalized groups of girls. It also makes explicit the manner in which the category of "normal" girl is only identifiable and knowable through the identification

of the Other. The complex ways in which racism mediates expressions of girlhood, for instance, depends on constructions and discourses of racialized girlhood that are available, accepted and disseminated in dominant society (Jiwani et al., 2006). These might take the form of the oppressed, victimized racialized girl in need of enlightenment and protection from a more progressive, egalitarian Euro-western society (Griffin, 2004). They may also take the form of the morally inferior, sexually provocative, and, therefore, threatening, racialized girl. Such constructions, note Jiwani et al. (2006), not only permit for a degree of benevolence, fear and pity on the part of dominant (white) society, but deflect attention away from patterns of gendered violence, sexism and racism that exist within dominant societies. They further serve to reify the boundaries between the subordinate racialized Other — whose access to North American identity is dependent on assimilation to dominant white culture as well as on the denial of the violence of racism and sexism — and the liberal, enlightened, and, therefore, normalized white girl.

Centring Settler Colonialism within Girlhood Studies

Girlhood research disrupts dominant understandings of what constitutes a "normal" girl by examining the ways that discourses around race, ethnicity, socio-economic class impact on girls' lives. However, important gaps remain within the girlhood literature. For example, as Gonick (2010) underlines, research that makes connections between girls' identities and their access to colonial privileges is sorely missing from girlhood literature in Canada. Also largely absent from girlhood literature is an interrogation of the role of settler colonialism in (re)producing normative neoliberal constructions of girls' agency, femininity and sexuality (de Finney, 2014). For example, superficial notions of empowerment prevalent in girlhood studies fail to recognize how the dynamics of colonialism benefit settler Canadian girls while simultaneously marginalizing the lived experiences and perspective of Indigenous girls (de

Finney, 2014). Furthermore, girlhood scholars bring critical attention to the ways in which the experiences of North American girlhood are shaped by discourses related to race. However, they tend to limit their focus to discourses related to minority ethnocultural groups while excluding discourses related to sovereign Indigenous nations living within the imposed borders of settler colonial countries such as Canada. Such scholarship is limited in vision and exclusionary in practise. It obscures the dynamics of colonial injustice at play in countries such as Canada as well as the distinct racial/colonial discourses related to female settler and Indigenous persons. This scholarship further precludes an examination of the complex ways settler colonialism differential shapes the identities and lived experiences of both Indigenous and settler girls. Consequently, Indigenous girls are rendered, at best, only partially visible as historical and contemporary agents. The complicity of settler girls in maintaining structures of colonialism is also left problematically unexamined.

Although still a drop in a vast unexplored ocean, in very recent years Canadian girlhood scholars have begun exploring the ways that settler colonial forces mediate Indigenous girls' identity formation and lived experiences. For instance, de Finney's (2014, 2015) research disrupts the colonial construction of Indigenous girls as sexualized and dispensable by drawing attention to the ways that Indigenous girls, who live the intergenerational effects of colonial trauma, negotiate this trauma with humour, strength, cultural solidarity, and acts of resistance. de Finney (2017) also points to the need to expand definitions of girls' resilience to "foreground the political, historical, economic, and sociocultural forces that structure colonial heteropatriarchy and sexualized violence" (p. 19). Leaving settler colonialism largely uninterrogated in girlhood studies, de Finney argues, enables "Eurocentric notions of resilience to pathologize Indigenous girls for living in a systematically violent colonial context" (p. 19).

Similarly, Dhillon's (2015) work points to the urgent need for girlhood scholars to listen to the stories that Indigenous girls have to tell. Her work further exposes the need to centre settler colonialism within girlhood studies by drawing attention to the colonial policing and devaluing of the Indigenous female body — realities, "that profoundly destabilize the hubristic portrayal of Canada as a humanitarian nation cleansed of settler colonial rule" (p. 1). More specifically, her work provides a much-needed examination of the role that Canadian police forces play in enforcing colonial control of Indigenous girls' bodies and social agency. Without such examinations, notes Dhillon, scholars run "the risk of reinscribing the narrative of white settler benevolence (the state is trying hard to improve the situation for Indigenous peoples) *and* a colonial subjectivity that keeps white settler power intact" (p. 6). Finally, Clark's (2016) research foregrounds Indigenous girls' resistance to colonial violence, their desire for sovereignty, and their efforts towards decolonization. In doing so, she challenges conventional trauma scholarship that continues "to perpetuate narratives of risk located within Indigenous girls and their families and communities" (p. 48). She further underlines the need for girlhood scholars to address the root causes of colonial violence by centring the stories and voices of Indigenous girls.

Girlhood research that centres Indigenous girls' lived experiences sheds a critical light on the dynamics of settler colonial currently at work in Canada. Such research further offers a much-needed understanding of the agency that Indigenous girls possess in negotiating the various threats of cultural disruption, geographic dislocation, and systemic violence in their lives. Finally, such research disrupts the reductive view of Indigenous girls as hypersexualized, faceless victims by foregrounding their capacity for pleasure, resistance, and personal empowerment

as well as by highlighting "multiplicity of frames that shape their lives" (Simpson, 2003, p. 41). Problematically, however, virtually no attention has been given to the complex ways that settler colonial forces shape and mediate the lived realities of settler girls — the advantaged subjects of colonial systems and discourses. In fact, while there has been an overrepresentation of white, Euro-Western girls' voices within both feminist and girlhood studies, problematically, there is a dearth of research related to the ways white settler Canadian girls negotiate, and benefit from, systems of colonial violence. For instance, while there exists an abundance of literature related to Euro-Western girlhood and violence (Chesney-Lind et al. 2007; Hussain et al., 2006), there has been little interrogation of the complicity of white settler girls in either the passive or active maintenance and perpetuation of settler colonial violence and injustice. Further, while recent scholarship examines the roles that white settler women play in maintaining colonial hierarchies, virtually no attention has been paid to the way white settler girls both support and resist colonial violence directed at Indigenous women and girls. This lack of attention is incomprehensible given the recent national and international attention given to violence against Indigenous women and girls in North America. Indeed, even United States president Donald Trump, a political figure who has often been criticized for his history of racist and discriminatory speech and actions, acknowledged that the rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women are "sobering and heartbreaking" (as cited in Nagle, 2019, para. 2). In 2020, Trump launched a new task force into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The task force, dubbed Operation Lady Justice, aims to improve co-ordination and communication among federal, state and tribal authorities in response to cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the United States. In the Canadian context, the Final Report on Missing and Murdered Women (2019) pointed to the staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-

Spirit peoples. More specifically, the report argues that the scale and severity of violence faced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada constitutes a genocide (Final Report, 2019). In fact, Indigenous girls have the highest rate of sexualized exploitation and racialized violence than any other group of girls (de Finney, 2015). The number of disappeared and murdered Indigenous girls in Canada is also disproportionately high. While the exact number are difficult to attain, some sources estimate that as many as 4000 Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples have been murdered in Canada in the past 30-40 years (NWAC, 2017).

Despite the staggering numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples, as well as the recent emergence of national and international discourses related to colonial violence in North America, nothing has been written on how settler girls engage with and make sense of the realities of colonial violence. These glaring silences in the literature preclude an understanding of the distinct ways that settler girls negotiate the cognitive dissonance that results from the contrast between emerging discourses about systemic violence and the dominant national mythology of Canada as a non-violent, democratic nation free of colonial injustice. This silence further prevents a critical examination of the power and agency of settler girls in both supporting and challenging the structures of colonial violence that adversely impact on the lives of Indigenous girls while simultaneously benefitting their own.

Breaking the Silence

Why this silence? Why this failure to interrogate the white settler experience within feminist and girlhood studies? To answer these questions, it is important to look towards the contributions of anti-racist and critical whiteness scholars (Fellows & Razack, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006; McIntosh, 2005). As these scholars note, domination frequently operates and manifests itself in society through the rendering of the dominant group as

“normal”, and, consequently, innocent and unexamined, to those who hold positions of power. Hegemonic discourses surrounding sexual orientation allow those who present as heterosexual the privilege of not having their sexuality questioned or criticized. Similarly, people who are coded as white are permitted the comfort of being considered the norm. In fact, whiteness often comes across as “emptiness or absence” and is almost “always defined in relation to Otherness and to differences, as if only non-whiteness can give whiteness any substance” (Mackey, 1999, p. 35).

The relational nature of whiteness is also characteristic of Canadian identity. More specifically, the identity of "true Canadian" is always “constituted in relation to its excluded Other” (Thobani, 2007, p. 5). In this way, the Other serves to define and reinforce the identity of those deemed more worthy of the benefits of Canadian citizenship (Mackey, 1999; Thobani, 2007). Canadian identity is dependent, for instance, upon a degraded image of Indigenous people. Within discourses of multiculturalism, Canadian identity is also dependent on the Othering of peoples of colour regardless of their citizenship. In fact, dominant national mythologies construct Canada as a nation built on the moral and benevolent actions of white settler subjects. National mythologies further construct settlers of colour as late arrivals to an already firmly established white settler state — ethnic Others "marked only by symbols of religion or so-called tradition that must be tolerated by white Canada" (Bannerji, 2000, p. 45). Such mythologies disappear Indigenous peoples from the land and reify the nation of Canada as a white settler space (Razack, 2002). They further allow white settlers to position themselves as the rightful regulators of national belonging. Finally, these national mythologies permit the reproduction of white supremacy and colonial hierarchies within contemporary Canadian laws, institutions, and social practices (Razack, 2002).

Canada's demographic composition is ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse. However, it is the white body that has sedimented itself as the dominant identity within racial and colonial hierarchies. White settler girlhood, therefore, remains unexamined by dominant society because it is constructed as the norm. White settler girls represent the real measure of "Canadianness" as well as the centres against which Indigenous female appear only as Others, or points of deviation. Reflecting on my own experience of girlhood, for instance, I know that I was granted certain privileges reserved only for the dominant group. Such privileges included the ability to see race as a non-issue, to ignore discourses of colonialism if I so chose, and to never have to interrogate or defend the legitimacy of my Canadian identity or my ties to this land. Such privileges further included the ability to situate myself as innocent bystander in situations of colonial violence. Finally, my settler identity permitted me the privilege of being exposed to popular and educational discourses that continually reinforced my superior position within the Canadian racial hierarchy.

White settler identity remains largely uninterrogated in feminist and girlhood studies because, for those in positions of power, it is the unmarked norm. It also remains largely uninterrogated because such interrogation requires that settlers acknowledge Canada's historical relationship to colonialism. Such interrogation further entails acknowledging that settler colonialism is ongoing and that the power and privileges that settlers receive as the dominant peoples in a colonial relationship are dependent on the persistent denial of Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and socio-cultural wellbeing. However, as the beneficiaries of colonial systems, settler Canadians have a deep personal, political and socio-economic investment in maintaining the colonial status quo. Consequently, while Indigenous peoples in Canada must continually confront the reality that colonialism is far from a legacy, the Canadian state is deeply invested in

erasing historical and current forms of settler colonial violence and oppression. Such erasure is reflected in the perpetuation of dominant national discourses, including educational discourses, that obscure Canada's violent history of settlement. It is further reflected in the tendency of many settler Canadian leaders and politicians, including Ontario Senator Lynn Beyak, to frame Canadian practices of cultural erasure and assimilation as well intentioned and inevitable (Kirkup, 2017, para. 1). Finally, it is reflected in the failure of many settlers to "turn the mirror back" upon ourselves to reflect on colonial privileges, responsibilities and identities (Regan, 2010, p. 11).

This failure to centre settler colonialism within girlhood studies and to interrogate how white settler girls position themselves in regard to colonial violence renders many girlhood scholars unintentionally complicit in the masking of colonial injustice and the maintenance of colonial hierarchies. The unmarking of white settler Canadian girls suggests that they are innocent of the domination and oppression of others. However, white settler girls are decidedly implicated in the production and on-going perpetuation of colonial systems of violence and injustice. In fact, while white settler girls must confront various systems of oppression, in particular gender-based oppression, they profit from the economic, socio-cultural, and political benefits that they have inherited as the dominant people in a colonial relationship. They are further shaped by, and implicated in, ever-evolving efforts to suppress threats posed to the socio-political dominance of settler Canadians as well as to the authority that settler Canadians hold over Indigenous land and natural resources. Such efforts involve the elimination and/or assimilation of Indigenous peoples, the imposition of settler colonial authority over all aspects of Indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultures, as well as its respective policies and practices that undermine the physical, cultural, social, and political well-being of Indigenous societies

(Anderson, 2010, 2016; Cunningham, 2006; LaRocque, 1996, 2007; Smith, 2012). These efforts further involve the perpetuation of national mythologies, reinforced by provincial school curricular policies, that have historical worked to erase colonial injustice from our historical consciousness and to affirm settler superiority and belonging as a normalized historical narrative (de Finney, 2016; Regan, 2010). Finally, and of particular relevance to this research, settler colonialism seeks invisibility through colonial practices and ideologies that devalue Indigenous girls and women as hypersexualized, uncivilized Others (Anderson, 2010, 2016). Consequently, settler Canadian girls, particularly white settler girls, are continually bombarded with colonial discourses that reinforce the myth of their superior moral position within the democratic, multicultural nation of Canada.

The failure to centre settler colonialism within girlhood studies and to interrogate how white settler girls positions themselves vis-à-vis colonial violence also obscures the manner in which the identity of settler girls is produced in relationship and tension with the identity of Indigenous girls — the least valued and, therefore, most vulnerable, subjects in a settler colonial context. As the contributions of girlhood scholars highlight, there is no such thing as the universal, essentialized girl (Driscoll, 2002; Gonick & Gannon, 2014; Jiwani et al., 2006). Rather, girls constantly negotiate their identities within particular social, political, racial and historical contexts. Dominant notions of girlhood are also constituted, in large part, through a series of contradictions, especially surrounding the dichotomies of good/civilized girls and bad/uncivilized girls that tend to be played out with respect to representations of race, femininity and sexuality (Griffin, 2004). The lack of research focus on settler girls, therefore, precludes a critical understanding of how the subject formation of settler girls is intimately linked to the disempowerment of the Indigenous female Other and the colonial marking of Indigenous female

bodies as hypersexualized and exploitable. Such an understanding is vital to disrupting colonial hierarchies and relations of violence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a brief overview of the evolution of literature related to girls. I articulated the historical erasure of the unique perspectives and lived experiences of girls. I also described the recent representations of girlhood that have emerged in the popular literatures. I noted that dominant representations of girlhood that emerged in the 1990s tended to represent girls as either passive victims or, conversely, as empowered subjects (i.e., girl power). Such limited representations of girlhood mask the diversity and complexity of girls' lived experiences. They also minimize girls' agency and capacity for social and political resistance.

In the second part of the chapter, I examined the need for contemporary scholarship related to girlhood to challenge prevailing images and discourses around "normative" expressions of girlhood by centring the lived experiences of previously unexamined groups of girls. I argued that, while Euro-western girls are well represented within girlhood studies, there is a silence in the literature related to the ways in which settler girls benefit from the on-going structure of colonialism in Canada. Furthermore, despite recently emerging national discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples, there exists a problematic silence vis-à-vis the ways in which white settler girls negotiate and make sense of recently emerging discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. This silence, I argued, precludes an understanding of the distinct ways that this generation of settler girls negotiates the dissonance between this systemic violence and national mythologies that characterize Canada as a peacemaking, multicultural country This silence further prevents a critical examination of the power and agency of settler girls in both supporting and challenging

the structures of colonial violence that adversely impact the lives of Indigenous girls while simultaneously benefitting their own. Finally, this failure to centre settler colonialism within girlhood studies and to interrogate how settler girls positions themselves vis-a-vis colonial violence obscures the manner in which the identity of settler girls is produced in relationship and tension with the identity of Indigenous girls — the least valued and, therefore, most vulnerable, subjects in a settler colonial context.

Chapter Four – Research Methods and Methodologies

Introduction

The purpose of the preceding chapters was to establish the need for more research into the ways that white settler girls negotiate and make sense of newly emerging national discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. In my literature review, I underlined the fact that, while there is an abundance of research and literature related to Euro-western girls, there has been little examination of the ways in which settler colonialism shapes the lived experiences of settler girls living in North America. I also discussed the ways that settler colonialism benefits white settler girls while, simultaneously, placing Indigenous girls at a socio-political, physical, and economic disadvantage. For example, I articulated the ways that colonial constructions of Indigenous female personhood serve(d) to both support an assimilationist agenda as well as to reify the dominant position of the white settler female. Finally, I discussed the ways in which dominant national discourses, including educational discourses, serve to erase and to sanitize Canada's on-going relationship with racism and settler colonialism. Such whitewashing of colonial realities, I argued, serves to both disappear Indigenous peoples as well as to maintain the myth of Canada as a democratic country with little history of colonial violence. White settler girls must, therefore, negotiate the dissonance between this myth of Canada and recently emerging discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit peoples.

My thesis work addresses the virtual silence in both feminist and girlhood literature vis-à-vis the ways that white settler girls make sense of and negotiate national discourses related to murdered and disappeared Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirits. In the current chapter, I outline my research methods and methodologies. I begin by discussing the value of qualitative

research in regard to gaining rich, detailed descriptions of participants' feelings, opinions, perspectives and lived experiences. I also argue that a qualitative approach to research is well suited to research projects, such as mine, where little is known about the research topic. I further discuss my decision to adhere to a feminist approach to knowledge production. Finally, I outline the ways in which narrative inquiry lends into well to the goals of feminist research.

In the third part of the chapter, I locate myself within the process of knowledge production by recounting the story of what brought me to this particular research project. I outline the ways that my Winnipeg girlhood shaped my understanding of colonial hierarchies. I also provide a brief overview of the particular colonial histories and current colonial dynamics of the cities of Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, and Montreal. Such an overview is necessary to fully appreciate the ways that the participants understand and negotiate current dynamics of colonial violence.

In the fourth part of the chapter, I outline my research design. I describe my recruitment methods, my choice of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, as well as my process of analyzing the data. I further reflect on the inevitability of power hierarchies within the research relationships as well as issues related to insider/outsider status. Finally, I reflect on the challenges of being a settler scholar writing about colonial histories.

Research Methodology

I choose to adhere to a feminist approach to research. More specifically, I describe the current methodology as feminist, qualitative, narrative research. A feminist approach to research is distinctive to the extent that it is shaped by feminist theory, politics, ethics as well as by critiques of positivist research (Ramazangolu, 1992). For example, feminist approaches to research recognize the need to produce research that views the experiential as an important site

of consciousness raising and resistance to systems of oppression, as well as the need to produce research that addresses gender biases and power imbalances embedded within knowledge production. Feminist approaches to research also seek to co-create space for marginalized and or unexamined experiences and to encourage critical reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). Moreover, as opposed to traditional research, the objective of feminist methodologies includes both the construction of new knowledge and the production of social transformation. In fact, feminist research "begins from the premise that the nature of reality in western society is unequal and hierarchical" (Skeggs, 1994, p. 77). In other words, from a feminist methodological perspective, research for the sake of research is insufficient. Rather, a motivation to change the socio-political status quo must be the starting point of feminist research projects. For instance, I consider the perspectives and narratives of settler girls to be powerful and potentially transformative. More specifically, these narratives and perspectives have the potential to provoke conversations that challenge prevailing discourses surrounding girlhood and nationhood. They also make public experiences that "comprise the so-called private, every day, mundane and bodily" (Hyams, 2004, p. 105).

Feminist researchers recognize the inevitability of power dynamics within the research process. More specifically, feminist researchers recognize that, due to the inherent power in identifying the issues to be studied and why they are worthy of study, researchers are situated in a more privileged position vis-à-vis the research participants. Feminist researchers also acknowledge the power of the researcher to decide which questions will be asked, how one behaves towards one's respondents and how the data are treated (Green 2014). Indeed, as Reinharz and Chase (2002) point out, the voices of respondents do not speak on their own. Rather, it is the researcher who ultimately decides how to interpret these voices and which

transcript extracts to present as evidence. The manner in which the feminist researcher addresses these concerns related to power determines, to a large degree, whether the research relationship is structured in hierarchical terms or through a commitment to research for and with women and girls rather than simply about them (Grenz, 2014).

In order to minimize power differentials, both feminist and narrative approaches to research emphasize the importance of critical self-reflexivity. This emphasis differs from many approaches to research, where the researcher is viewed as being "outside" the research process — that is, objective, value-free and non-biased. In fact, according to feminist and narrative methodologists, the researcher's standpoint, personal experiences, and location (in all its geographical, economic and socio-cultural specificities) are central to the production of knowledge and need to be made explicit (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Hence, self-reflexivity entails taking a critical look inward to examine how one's social background, lived experiences and assumptions shape the research questions and the research design (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). It further entails the researcher remaining "wakeful and open" in order to ensure that one's motives for conducting research are free from selfish intent that could potentially harm the participants involved (Dubnewick et al., 2018, p. 413). This critical reflection disrupts hierarchically based research patterns by keeping the researcher aware of the power dynamics flowing back and forth between researcher and participants throughout the entire research process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Kovach, 2009). It further allows the researcher to engage with participants' stories as an embodied person, attentive to the particular context in which one find oneself, rather than as a "disembodied omniscient narrator claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961). Such engagement is particularly important in a context, such as the current one, of research with an over studied, yet under

examined, group of people where past research has aided in the settler colonial project rather than opposing it.

Feminist researchers can engage in three types of research: quantitative, qualitative, or a mixed methods approach. I choose to engage in qualitative research. Qualitative research is a type of research approach that is "interested in analyzing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than number and statistics" (Flick, 2014, p. 542). This means that qualitative researchers "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Indeed, while qualitative research does not lend easily to engagement with large numbers of participants, it allows for "thick," that is, in-depth and detailed, descriptions of participants' feelings, opinions, perspectives and lived experiences (Flick, 2014). Qualitative research also permits researchers to discover the participants' inner experience and to figure out how meanings are shaped through and in culture (Corbin et al., 2015). Furthermore, a qualitative approach is well suited to research project, such as the current one, where not much is known about the research topic. In fact, there has been virtually no research focus on settler girls' experience within the field of girlhood studies.

Narrative Inquiry

Many methods were available to me as a feminist, qualitative researcher. I consider narrative inquiry— a form of research inquiry that involves the gathering of narratives, focusing primarily on the meanings that people assign to their experiences and seeking to offer insight that reflects the complexity of human lives — to be very compatible with feminist and narrative methodologies. As Bloom (2002) outlines, there are three main aims of narrative inquiry: (1)

Narrative inquiry uses individual lives as a source of investigation, (2) Narrative inquiry is invested in using individual narratives of the self as a place to generate social critique and advocacy and (3) Narrative inquiry attempts to deconstruct the self as a humanist conception allowing for unconventional understandings of self. Grounded in interpretive hermeneutics and phenomenology, narrative inquiry is based on the premise that not only do individuals make sense of their existence by "understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story" but that through storytelling they come to understand who they are, who others are, and what the relationship is between them (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.150).

My decision to employ narrative inquiry is enmeshed in feminist critiques of conventional notions and practices of rational empiricism and Eurocentric modes of knowledge production. In fact, a narrative inquiry falls in well with the goals of feminist research for a number of reasons. Firstly, consistent with a feminist epistemology, narrative inquiry involves a rejection of the notion of static and universal truth and upholds the existence of multiple subjective positions from which to understand experience (Tootell, 2004). Hence, as Rajiva (2004) underlines, unlike research that focuses on the veracity of participants accounts, narrative inquiry "brackets the concern with truth, focusing, instead on what the participant says, how she says it, and why she says it" (p. 228). The answers that participants give and the stories they tell are "analyzed as much for the ways in which storytellers and the conditions of storytelling shape what is conveyed as for what their contents tell us about lives" (Gubrium & Holstein 1998, p. 172).

Secondly, consistent with feminist methodologies, narrative inquiry challenges positivist modes of knowledge production that position the researcher as outside or above the contaminating influences of the subjective realm. Indeed, the turn towards narrative methods of

inquiry is characterized as a movement away from objectivity toward a research paradigm focused on interpretation and understanding of meaning. Researchers who employ narrative inquiry recognize that the researcher and the research participants are "in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 9). This relational work between the researcher and the research participant results in the articulation of stories that are co-constructed between the researcher and research participant.

Thirdly, consistent with feminist methodologies, narrative inquiry is grounded in the epistemological position that personal, situated, and subjugated narratives can offer alternative, often resistant or counter-hegemonic versions of lived experience. Gubrium and Holstein (1998), for instance, note that the use of narrative methods of knowledge production allows researchers to centre the voices of the unheard or the previously unexamined, thus enriching our understanding of misunderstood or taken-for-granted relationships and experiences. In a similar vein, Kimpson (2005) notes the importance of stories and personal narratives in revealing the partial and perspectival nature of knowledges. Such an understanding of knowledge, she argues, opens researchers up to new perspectives and a multiplicity of positions.

My decision to employ narrative inquiry was further influenced by the many years I spent as a feminist therapist listening to the rich and complex life stories of the women and adolescent girls with whom I was engaged in a therapeutic relationship. I am, therefore, drawn to a mode of knowledge production that is profoundly relational in nature and that sees people as embodying the stories they tell. Further, in exploring the lived experiences of settler girls living within a Canadian context, I am equally drawn to a method of knowledge production that contextualizes lived experience and requires the researcher to attend to both the ways a participant sees her life

as well the social resources upon which she draws in her attempts to make meaning of her life. I concur with Etherington's (2004) assertion:

> Narratives are particularly suited for portraying how people experience their position in relation to a culture. The richness of the narrative helps us to understand how they understand themselves, their strategies for living and how they make theoretical sense of their lives. (p. 31)

Moreover, I am drawn to a mode of knowledge production that embraces and honours ambiguity, subjectivity, and reflexivity. In fact, the narrative inquirer is required to inhabit discursive spaces that are frequently ambiguous and shifting, where experiences and events can always be interpreted in multiple ways, and where beliefs, values and assumptions are continuously challenged (Clandinin & Connelley, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2007).

Reflection: Locating the Researcher Within the Research

Before proceeding further with a discussion of the research, it is imperative that I situate myself, not just in terms of my formal knowledge, but in terms of my relationships to land, colonial privileges, and stories that have shaped my research journey (Battiste, 2013; Wilson, 2001, 2008). I recognize, however, that the very act of reflecting on my positionality and motivation for conducting this research is fraught with the related risk of re-centring the white settler subject. Nonetheless, a feminist, anti-colonial study such as this one demands that I reflect critically on my subject position and relationship to the research. It also demands that I strive to disrupt a colonial understanding of Canada's history that naturalizes the presence of my white body on these lands. Thus, I write with/in tension—aware of the necessity of discussing my subject position and lived experiences and also of the possibility that I will re-centre whiteness and reproduce white settler privilege in the process.

How did I arrive at this particular point of departure? What compels me to engage in such an intense exploration of white setter girls' identity and complicity in on-going systems of colonial violence? It is beyond the scope of this thesis to recount my complete story. Nevertheless, I will highlight specific life experiences that helped to guide me to this research project. The first involves my experience of growing up as a white, settler girl in Winnipeg — a city simmering with racial tensions and defined by firmly entrenched colonial divides. Poverty, homelessness, systemic racism, police neglect/abuse, and colonial violence — including the rape and murder of Indigenous women and girls — are among the many well-documented issues facing Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg. Mine, however, was a childhood imbued with myriad privileges. My white skin protected me from racism, if not gender-based biases and aggressions. My middle-class socio-economic status sheltered me from poverty and class-related discrimination. My Christian upbringing did not position me as Other.

As a child, I learned to situate myself within a racial Canadian hierarchy. For example, the dominant discourses disseminated in my classroom continually reinforced the myth of Canada as a democratic nation founded on the toil and courage of white, European settlers. These discourses also facilitated a collective ignorance vis-à-vis the colonial trauma imposed on Indigenous peoples. Indeed, sheltered by the comforts of a carefree suburban existence, Indigeneity was merely a backdrop in my life. My exposure to Indigenous peoples was limited to infrequent forays to the so-called "dangerous" areas of town. Sitting in the back seat of the family car, doors safely locked as per my parents' instructions, I would watch, wide-eyed, as the images of poverty that played out before me. Likewise, trips to my beloved grandparents in their rural Franco-Manitoban town were characterized by hushed silences as we passed country roads leading to "Indian" reserves — mysterious sites to which, as a child, I instinctively understood

my white settler body should never have cause to wander. As I comb through childhood memories, I also recall how conversations with extended family members and other trusted adults were peppered with racist statements and offensive humour about "*les sauvages*" and their supposed apathetic, yet destructive, ways.

Derogatory attitudes and comments about Indigenous peoples were a consistent soundtrack to my Winnipeg childhood. However, racist language and ideologies had no place in my home. Indeed, my parents made a conscious effort to disrupt the cycle of explicit racism towards Indigenous peoples that had characterized their own upbringing. As an adult, however, I recognize that, while I was not taught be overtly racist, neither was I taught to be anti-racist. I was taught to see racism in isolated acts of injustice and intolerance. I was not, however, taught to think critically about unexamined, yet omnipresent, systems of privilege and oppression. Safe in my predominantly white, middle-class suburban neighbourhood, I knew very little, if anything at all, about the colonial policies and practices that contributed to the precarious living situations of those that I gawked at so wide-eyed. I had no concept of how intricately their lives were connected to mine. While I had a vague understanding of the systems of racism that oppressed Indigenous peoples, I was years away from seeing how these same systems placed me at an advantage. Nothing had prepared me to understand the structure of Canadian colonialism and the ways that it greatly shaped and benefitted so many aspects of my life. I trusted whole-heartedly in the myth of Canada as a just society rooted in values of democracy, multiculturalism and meritocracy. Discourses of peaceful settlement supported the benevolence of white settler identity and made my affiliation with this identity, however unconscious, seem harmless. I, therefore, gushed with pride over my liberal, non-violent Canadian roots, unabashedly waving my Canadian flag as I admired celebratory Canada Day fireworks lighting up vast prairie skies.

Nevertheless, as a young adult living in Montreal, Quebec I began to interrogate not only the veracity of national mythologies but also the complex and problematic ways they had shaped my understanding of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada. The road leading to this interrogation was long and the experiences myriad. My time working as a guidance counsellor with settler and Kanien'kehá꞉kA girls in the context of a Montreal high school, for example, shaped my sensitivity to, and awareness of, the need for settler Canadians to examine our own roles in maintaining systems of colonial oppression. Indeed, it was while working at this school that I was forced to face my own ignorance vis-à-vis the Indigenous youth with whom I was working. Like many settler Canadians, I lacked a critical awareness of the cultural traditions and lived realities of Indigenous peoples whose land I occupied. What were their particular histories before European invasion? What were their historical and present acts of resistance to colonial occupation? How did their everyday lived realities differ from mine? These were questions that I was unable to answer. I, therefore, quickly got to work on educating myself about the unique history and lived experiences of Kanien'kehá꞉ka peoples. Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin's exceptional documentaries, "Rocks at Whiskey Trench" and "Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance" provided me valuable insight into the colonial history of settler encroachment on Haudenosaunee lands. These films also dramatically challenged the dominant settler narrative vis-à-vis the siege of Oka that I had been exposed to as a settler girl living in Winnipeg in the summer of 1990 — narratives that characterized Mohawk warriors as angry, unreasonable criminals, "some of whom (were) not even Canadian citizens, and whose actions have been ... illegal for some considerable period of time" (Brian Mulroney, as quoted in Smyth, 2000, para, 3). The pain of these events was still very much evident in the voices of stories of the

students with whom I worked. While most of them were only toddlers during the siege of Oka, the scars, both physical and emotional, remained.

It was also while working at this school that I had to confront my growing recognition of the tragic degree to which the settler colonial school curriculum, and often ill-equipped teachers and administrators, failed to meet the needs of Indigenous students and their families. History classes told of a Quebec founded by French settlers facing the threat of British colonialism — nationalist discourses that ignored and marginalized the histories, world views and lived experiences of, not only the Indigenous students, but all of the racialized students in the classroom. French teachers admonished Indigenous students for their resistance to, and perceived lack of effort to, engage with the language — with little or no understanding of the ways in which these classes represented the imposition of yet another colonial language on a community already struggling to maintain and revitalize their own cultural and linguistic traditions. Staffroom chatter too often consisted of frustrated staff complaining of the seeming reluctance of some of the parents of Indigenous students to engage with staff members. It is with a heavy conscience that I admit that I lived some of these same frustrations. I was still years away from understanding that, given the long history of abuse and cultural isolation of Indigenous children by non-Indigenous teachers and staff, these parents may have been justifiably wary of my or any other "well-intentioned" staff member's involvement with their children.

My awareness of Indigenous/setter hierarchies was further shaped by my increased exposure to the works and contributions of Indigenous feminist, settler colonial, and critical race scholars. While admittedly colloquial, it is not an understatement to say that the works of these scholars "rocked my world". Seven years ago, for instance, while I was working as a guidance

counsellor at the YWCA in Montreal, I began reading Paulette Regan's (2010) book *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* — a seminal book that is still a consistent presence on my nightstand. Regan argues that non-Indigenous scholars and learners must situate themselves as critically self-reflective subjects, learning from Indigenous experiences while actively engaging unsettling emotions. She also identifies the need for settlers to be conscious of their own role in colonization, to embrace difference, to disrupt the privileges gained from unequal power structures, and to resist new systems of imperialism. Until that time, I had not given much thought to my personal role in upholding settler colonialism. Wasn't I one of the good ones? Didn't my liberal, feminist ideologies differentiate me from those actively reinforcing colonial forms of violence? Hadn't I long ago acknowledged the multiple spheres of privilege that I inhabit and the ways they shape my understandings (frequently naive) of the world around me? In what ways could I be contributing to colonial violence? Although I did not realize it at the time, it was these questions that helped propel me toward my (life changing!) decision to pursue a doctoral degree and that laid the seeds for the current investigation.

My time as a doctoral student further enriched my knowledge of settler colonial relations. Through the works of settler colonial scholars such as Veracini (2010, 2011) and Wolfe (1999, 2006), I came to understand that settler colonial states are invested in the denial and the invisibilization of colonial violence. Consequently, settler Canadians employ a number of strategies — what Tuck and Yang (2012) term settler "moves to innocence" —to distance ourselves from the uncomfortable, and potentially threatening, emotional state that comes from acknowledging current systems of colonial violence and our role in upholding them (p. 1). And isn't this the very crux of colonial privilege? To have the choice of whether to acknowledge

colonial violence or to turn off the proverbial switch? To recognize our privilege (or not) while at the same time taking measures to protect ourselves from the implications of it?

Further delving into the works of Indigenous scholars such as Marie Batiste, Margaret Kovach, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith as well as settler ally scholars such as Paulette Regan and Roger Epp, I gained a deeper understanding of the problematic tendency for non-Indigenous scholars to focus their research efforts on examining and interrogating the Indigenous Other. What is missing, argues Regan (2010), is a corresponding research emphasis on understanding our own experiences as the "descendants of colonizers and the primary beneficiaries of colonialism" (p. 33). This lack of interrogation of setter identity allows non-Indigenous Canadians to "avoid looking too closely at ourselves and the collective responsibility we bear for the colonial status quo" (p. 11). In a similar vein, LeBlanc (2011) notes that current mainstream understandings of colonial and de-colonial processes conceptualize colonialism as an event for which only the state is directly implicated. This understanding of colonialism not only ignores the fact that colonialism is an on-going process but elides the roles that settler Canadians play in maintaining systems of colonial violence and inequality.

Throughout my first year of the doctoral program, I grew increasingly familiar with the field of girlhood studies. I also became aware of the marginalization of Indigenous girls' voices within this field of studies. I, therefore, decided to contribute to the centring of Indigenous girls within girlhood studies by researching Indigenous girls' resistance to micro and macro forms of colonial violence. In doing so, I hoped to contribute to a muchneeded understanding of Indigenous girls' agency in negotiating the various threats of cultural disruption, geographic dislocation, and violence in their lives. However, I also became cognizant of the problematic lack of interrogation of settler identity and lived experiences within girlhood studies. I, therefore,

decided to shift the lens and make settlers the "subjects under scrutiny" (Epp, 2008, p.121). More precisely, I decided to shed much needed light on the settler problem — settlers who are so immersed in national mythologies and colonial ideologies that we refuse to acknowledge our role in maintaining colonial hierarchies.

Centring the voices of Indigenous girls within girlhood studies is crucial to disrupting the persistent construction of Indigenous girls as hypersexualized, victimized, and dispensable. However, I began to realize that virtually no attention has been given to the complex ways that settler colonial forces mediate settler girls' lived realities in remarkably different ways from that of Indigenous girls — the disadvantaged subjects of colonial systems and discourses. I also began to recognize the problematic silence in current girlhood literature regarding how settler girls understand and negotiate current forms of colonial violence directed at Indigenous girls and women. Finally, I came to understand the need to presence settler colonialism within discourses on girlhood to disrupt the perpetuation of settler perspectives and colonial insensitive research. I, therefore, concluded that I could best use my settler positionality to examine how white settler Canadian girls living in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal girls benefit from, maintain, and even resist systems of colonial injustice and violence directed at Indigenous girls and women. I firmly believe in Regan's (2010) assertion that education and research are not simply about the transfer of knowledge but can be "transformative experiential learning that empowers people to make a change in the world" (p. 23). This entails not only confronting settler girls' ignorance vis-à-vis colonial injustice, but also examining the purposeful, active, and strategic operation of this ignorance. It further entails interrogating settler girls' self-serving attachments to colonial myths and "white-washed" discourses.

Why Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, and Montreal?

In the spring of 2018, I participated as a co-animator for a Kairos Blanket Exercise — an interactive learning experience designed to help settler Canadians gain a more truthful understanding of Canada's history — in the context of a Montreal community organization. Upon debriefing, I was informed that I should not have employed the word racism in reference to my personal experience of Indigenous/settler relations in Winnipeg. I was told that this word was too harsh, too jarring, too confrontational and could possibly upset and offend some of the non-Indigenous participants in the room. It was, in short, a word to be avoided. Yet I unequivocally stand by this choice of words. The well-documented geographical and socio-economic divisions that exist between Indigenous and settler Canadians in Winnipeg were a very real and unavoidable part of my girlhood. While I had very little contact with Indigenous peoples growing up, the racist attitudes that many non-Indigenous Winnipeg residents hold towards Indigenous peoples were made clear to me at a very young age. These racist attitudes and omnipresent colonial divides greatly shaped not only my identity as a settler Canadian girl — an identity from which I greatly benefitted— but my understanding of Indigenous/settler relations in Canada.

The colonial divides and discriminatory attitudes toward Indigenous peoples that marked my experience of girlhood are not unique to Winnipeg. In fact, the identities and life experiences of settler girls in *all* Canadian cities are shaped, to one degree or another, by deeply entrenched structures of settler colonialism. White settler girls in every region of Canada also benefit from historical and current colonial hierarchies and systems of white supremacy that position(ed) Indigenous and other racialized peoples as Others.

An exhaustive examination of the territorial-based histories of settler colonialism in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, and Montreal is beyond the scope of this paper. However, in the next section, I present a very brief synopsis of the history of Indigenous-setter relations in these cities. I further examine the particular dynamics of current racial tensions and colonial divides that exist in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal. Such an examination is critical to disrupting the dominant myth of Canada as a peacemaking country with no history of colonial violence. It is also necessary to appreciate the reasons I chose these three cities as sites for my research as well as to understand the context of colonial relations in which the research participants find themselves.

Winnipeg

Winnipeg, named after the Cree word win-nipe-k, or murky water, is the capital and largest city of the province of Manitoba. It lies at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers — a location with a long and rich history of Indigenous presence *(The Canadian Encyclopaedia,* 2019). In fact, thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans, the area's rivers provided important travel and communication routes for the Assiniboine, Ojibway, Anishinaabe, Mandan, Sioux, Cree, and Lakota peoples (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019a). Indigenous peoples also lived in this area and utilized its lands and natural resources for hunting, fishing, trading, and further north, agriculture. However, in 1738 the first French European settlers arrived by canoe and erected Fort Rouge, the first of many forts that would be erected in the area. A permanent settlement, known as the Red River Colony, was later founded by British settlers in 1812, the nucleus of which was incorporated as the City of Winnipeg in 1873 (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019a). The arrival of these European setters dramatically impacted on the lives of the Indigenous peoples in the area. The most notable impact includes the

involvement of Indigenous peoples — as hunters, trappers, traders, translators, and suppliers — in the European fur trade as well as the movement of Indigenous hunting bands into new territories (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019a). European settlement also led to the introduction of infectious diseases and the near eradication of the prairie buffalo — realities that dramatically decreased Indigenous populations in the Winnipeg area and disrupted their traditional ways of life.

The arrival of Europeans to the area of Winnipeg also resulted in the creation of the Manitoba Métis Nation — a distinct cultural and ethnic group of peoples who trace their descent to unions between Indigenous women and European male settlers. In fact, between 1869–70, present day Winnipeg was the site of organized Métis resistance to colonial expansion and dispossession of Métis homeland (Manitoba History, 2009). This conflict, known as the Red River Rebellion, was sparked by the transfer of the vast territory of Rupert's Land, a large portion of which was occupied by the Métis peoples, to the new nation of Canada. Métis people were strong in their resistance to settler takeover of their homelands. However, increasing immigration from Ontario, the United States and Western Europe proved too strong and destructive, and the Metis Nation was ultimately defeated following a second resistance by Métis leader Louis Riel in 1885 (Manitoba History, 2009). In fact, in what would prove a pattern of colonial domination of all Indigenous people in the region, governmental policies and practices, including denial of land rights, were put into place in an attempt to assimilate Métis people, displace them from their homeland, and disappear their culture.

On August 03, 1871, Treaty One came into effect (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019a). Indigenous peoples involved in the signing of this treaty hoped that it would represent a potential peace bond between themselves and the settlers. However, in drafting Treaty One, the

government sought to permanently disappear the Indigenous peoples from Southeastern Manitoba to allow for continued European immigration and colonial expansion. To this end, the land allocated to First Nation peoples was not only smaller than promised but was less desirable and more difficult to cultivate. Moreover, the government did not provide the amount of livestock promised or the proper farming equipment required to cultivate the land. These conditions, as well as the many oppressive policies and practices of the *Indian Act*, proved devastating to the First Nations peoples living on Treaty One reserves.

In the subsequent years following the signing of Treaty 1, the population of Winnipeg continued to grow due to the influx of immigration from Eastern Canada, Europe, and the United States and, in more recent decades, the influx of immigrants of non-European descent. After the 1950s, Indigenous peoples increasingly migrated to Winnipeg (Kalbach, 1987) due, in large part, to the abolishment of the pass-system — a system that restricted the movement of First Nations peoples — as well as the limited social, economic, and educational opportunities and resources on the reserves. This increased migration, coupled with the fact that the Indigenous population in Winnipeg is younger and growing at a faster pace than the city's overall population, resulted in Winnipeg's relatively large Indigenous population. In fact, despite colonial attempts to disappear Indigenous peoples in the area, the city now has the highest total number (92,810) of people who identify as Indigenous of any major Canadian city. Recent data from Statistics Canada also reveals that, at 12.2 percent, Winnipeg has the second highest proportion (after Thunder Bay) of Indigenous residents among major Canadian cities (Statistics Canada, 2016). Consequently, similar to those living in other cities with large relative Indigenous populations (i.e., Thunder Bay, Regina and Saskatoon), non-Indigenous residents of Winnipeg are among the

most likely to have regular contact with Indigenous people or to know Indigenous people as close friends, neighbours and co-workers (UAPS, 2010a).

In spite (or perhaps because of) their relative frequency of contact, deep economic and social divisions exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in Winnipeg. These divisions are due, in large part, to the detrimental impacts of colonialism and institutionalization as well as on-going patterns of systemic discrimination. For example, in comparison to non-Indigenous residents, Indigenous peoples are more likely to score significantly lower on indexes of community and social well-being — including income and educational levels, access to standard housing, and rates of participation in the labour force (UAPS, 2010a). They are also disproportionately represented in Winnipeg's child welfare and judicial systems. Moreover, in comparison to non-Indigenous residents, Indigenous peoples are more likely to be the victims of discrimination and racism. When presented the statement "I have been teased or insulted because of my Aboriginal background", the majority of Indigenous peoples living in Winnipeg responded "yes" (UAPS, 2010a). Indigenous peoples living in Winnipeg also experience higher rates of physical and sexual violence than non-Indigenous peoples (UAPS, 2010a). According to a CBC investigation, for instance, the majority of people who died in police encounters in all areas of Manitoba were Indigenous (Annable, 2018).

Indigenous women and girls in the Winnipeg area are also more likely than non-Indigenous women and girls to be victims of violence. In fact, in the last few years, Winnipeg has become a central site in the growing concern over missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. For instance, the 2015 murder of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine (Sagkeen First Nation) has drawn national attention and fuelled conversation in Winnipeg surrounding the victimization of Indigenous women and girls and the lack of justice for Indigenous families (Macdonald,

2019). Numerous rallies, walks, Indigenous-initiated social media campaigns, and art installations — including a large mural in downtown Winnipeg showing the faces of five missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls — have been initiated by Indigenous and allied peoples in Winnipeg in response, not only to Tina's death, but to the on-going prevalence of violence against Indigenous women and girls. The reality is that violence against Indigenous girls and women is so prevalent in this city that for the last number of years volunteers have been dragging the Red River in search of the bodies of disappeared and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Thunder Bay

The city of Thunder Bay (population 112, 000) is located in the Northwest part of Ontario on the West shore of Lake Superior. Created by the 1970 amalgamation of the cities of Fort William and Port Arthur and the adjacent townships of Neebing and McIntyre, the city serves as the region's commercial, administrative, medical and industrial hub (*The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2015b). While more than eighty percent of the city's residents identify as white, recent data from Statistics Canada show that, at 12.7 percent, Thunder Bay has the largest proportion of Indigenous residents among major Canadian cities (Statistics Canada, 2016).

As Hay (2017) highlights, unlike more "southern and urban locales in Ontario where anti-Indigeneity is predominantly expressed as erasure", Thunder Bay is "a city that is well known for particularly explicit form of anti-Indigenous racism" (para. 1). This explicit form of racism is informed by a close proximity to Fort William First Nation, a community located adjacently to the city (Hay, 2017). Established in 1853 as a result of the Robinson Treaty negotiations, the Fort Williams Reserve was originally situated on the fertile shores of the Kaministiquia River. Consistent with the Crown's initial promise to allow Indigenous peoples complete freedom to

hunt and fish, most of the Fort William's people made their living in traditional ways (Hay, 2017). However, the following years brought more and more restrictive measures, including measures that limited Indigenous fishing rights, being imposed on Fort Williams's people. In 1892, for instance, the annual report of the Department of Indian Affairs maintained that the Fort William band and other Indigenous peoples in the region were precariously positioned on the margins of the fur trade economy. This document argued that "Indians" in the region should be discouraged from hunting and trapping due to the fact the influx of settler to the region would inevitably lead to the disappearance of wild game animals. "Indians", the report noted, should "therefore look to the products of the soil for their subsistence" (as cited in Hay, 2017, para. 1).

In the same year, the Ontario Fisheries Act made it mandatory for members of the Fort Williams band to purchase a fishing license in order to have access to fish in the region. Because the waters in the Thunder Bay were extensively fished by First Nations people for personal, community, and ceremonial purposes, the limitations placed on the fishing rights served to create an economic and cultural crisis for the Fort William band as they relied on fish for sustenance and ceremonial purposes. Indeed, only ten years later, in 1902, the living conditions of the peoples of Fort William were so dire that a letter was sent to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. It read:

> We the Indians of the Fort William Band earnestly beg of you to help us, and we trust you will do so. We do not like how the white people are disturbing us for our property that we have left for ourselves. (as cited in Hay, 2017, para. 2)

Despite the earnestness of this letter, the infringement of the rights and liberties of the Fort William reserve did not cease. In fact, 1905, under the auspices of the *Indian Act*, which granted the Governor in Council the power to expropriate Indigenous lands for the economic benefit of

setter Canadians, the peoples of the Fort Williams reserve were forcibly relocated. The result of this violent relocation and appropriation of over 1,600 acres of First Nation land proved economically, culturally, and psychologically devastating for the residents of the Fort Williams reserve (Hay, 2017).

In 2016, the Canadian government offered a ninety-nine-million-dollar settlement deal to the Fort William reserve for the territory that had been expropriated in 1905. The original lands are also slated to be returned to the peoples of the Fort William First Nation. While both Indigenous and settler Canadians should recognize the need for such measures, some residents of Thunder Bay's disagree with the federal government's decision. More specifically, notes Hay (2017), "complaints about 'handouts' and other well-worn racist tropes have frequented news media comment sections, social media debates, and the everyday conversations that make up public life in the city of Thunder Bay" (para. 3). Such colonial and racist responses to the return of Indigenous homelands point to the existing anti-Indigenous sentiment and colonial hierarchies that exist within Thunder Bay. In fact, similar to Winnipeg, Indigenous peoples in Thunder Bay are more likely to score significantly lower on indexes of community and social well-being — including income and educational levels, access to standard housing, and rates of participation in the labour force —than non-Indigenous residents (UAPS, 2010b). Furthermore, according to the Thunder Bay Coalition Against Racial Discrimination (2017), in comparison to only twenty percent of white settler residents, eighty-two of Indigenous respondents indicated that they or a family member had experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in Thunder Bay. The majority of the police-reported hate incidents in Thunder Bay that occurred in 2015, for instance, targeted Indigenous people — accounting for one-third of all anti-Indigenous hate crimes across Canada in that particular year (Statistics Canada, 2015). The hostility is so rampant that, in

2018, the hashtag #ThisIsThunderBay was created to allow Indigenous peoples to share stories of verbal attacks, racial slurs, police abuse, and physical assaults.

While the Indigenous population of Thunder Bay represents only five percent of the Indigenous population in Ontario, the city accounts for 37 percent of the province's Indigenous murder victims (Jago, 2017). Furthermore, while Indigenous women make up about four per cent of the population of Thunder Bay, they account for approximately 15 per cent of murder victims in the last twenty-five years. In fact, in raw numbers, more Indigenous people are murdered in Thunder Bay than in any other city in Canada, save Winnipeg. This violence is exemplified by the 2017 death of Barbara Kentner, a thirty-four-year-old Anishinaabe woman, who was killed after being struck by a trailer hitch thrown at her by people in a passing vehicle. "I got one!" are the words that her sister Melissa Kenner recalls hearing someone shout (as cited in Porter, 2017, para. 1).

The disturbingly high numbers of Indigenous bodies that have been found dead in the city's waterways also exemplifies the problem of violence towards Indigenous peoples in Thunder Bay. Since 2000, the bodies of more than twelve Indigenous adults and youth, including 17-year-old Tammy Keeash of North Caribou Lake First Nation, have been pulled from the McIntyre River. The victims were either students from remote communities or adults who were frequenting the city for personal and medical reasons. Many non-Indigenous residents disavow the colonial dynamics that contribute to these deaths by pointing to the victims' supposed high-risk lifestyles. However, both family members and Indigenous leaders have made urgent pleas to the Thunder Bay police to increase their investigation into the possibility of racially motivated foul play. Many have also criticized the Thunder Bay police for the lack of attention and resources allotted to cases of violence against Indigenous peoples. For example, in

her book, *Seven Fallen Feathers*, Tanya Talaga (2017) meticulously outlines the failure of Thunder Bay police to swiftly, efficiently, and thoroughly respond to the deaths of young Indigenous students whose bodies were found in the McIntyre River. In fact, mistrust of police response to violence against Indigenous peoples is so deep that, in 2017, Indigenous leaders called for an investigation of the Thunder Bay Police Services Board (TBPSB) to address concerns about systemic racism, discrimination, and police bias (McQuigge, 2017). In 2018, the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) released a systemic review report, entitled Broken Trust, on the relationship between the Thunder Bay Police Service (TBPS) and Indigenous communities. The report identified serious pervasive issues with the police service and made 44 recommendations aimed at addressing systemic racism (OIPRD, 2020). Many of these recommendations have not yet been completed and will require more effort, willingness and commitment of financial resources on the part of TBPS and the Thunder Bay Police Services Board (OIPRD, 2020).

Montreal

The present-day island of Montreal (population 1,704,694) is located at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers. It is Canada's second largest city and is home to nearly half of the province of Quebec's population. Formerly part of the colony of New France, Montreal is now a major industrial centre, commercial and financial metropolis, tourist destination, and one of the main centres of francophone culture in North America (*The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2019c*). It is also a city that is rich in Indigenous history. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that Indigenous people occupied the island of Montreal as early as 4,000 years ago. It is further believed that, by the fourteenth century, the Saint Lawrence Iroquois established the village of Hochelaga at the foot of the Mont Royal. The Haudenosaunee people also began settling in the

Montreal area in the early eighteenth century, moving north from their homeland in the Hudson River Valley.

The first French explorer, Jacques Cartier, arrived in the area now known as Montreal in 1535. A little over one hundred years later, Montreal (also known as Ville-Marie) was founded as a missionary colony under the direction of Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance, but the fur trade soon became its main activity (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019c). At this time, the population of Indigenous peoples in the area remained significant. When the first census was conducted in the colony in 1666, the French population was 659 with an estimated Indigenous population of 1000. However, as an increasing number of immigrants from France and, after 1815, Britain arrived in Montreal, Indigenous peoples in the area quickly became a minority cultural and ethnic group (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019c).

Europeans initially formed alliances with Indigenous peoples based on war and trade. However, the official objective of settlers was to Christianize and assimilate Indigenous peoples in order to attain the colonial objective of territorial control and expansion. The church attempted to achieve this colonial objective through itinerant missions, reserves and boarding schools. For example, in 1642, a group of fifty French citizens representing the Societé de Notre Dame de Montreal pour la conversion des Sauvages de la Nouvelle France set foot on the island with the objective of converting and, therefore, "civilizing" the Indigenous peoples (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019c). Similarly, in 1719, the Kahnawake reserve was created on territory that the French Crown had granted to the Jesuits to protect and nurture Kanien'kehá:kA peoples newly converted to Catholicism — a paternalistic objective that denied Indigenous agency and right to self-governance (*The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2019c). The Jesuits ceased their management of Kahnawake after the British assumption of rule in 1762. However, the cultural

and political autonomy of the peoples of Kahnawake, now under the supervision of the Indian Department, remained heavily circumscribed. In fact, from the late 1880s until the 1950s, the Kanien'kehá:ka peoples were required by the government to make numerous land cessions to railway, hydro-electric, and telephone companies for major industrial projects along the river (*The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 2019c).

Despite Montreal's long history of Indigenous presence, Indigenous peoples currently represent approximately 0.6 percent of the total population — the lowest proportion of overall Indigenous population of any major Canadian city. Further, while Kanien'kéha:kA settlements of Kahnawake (population 8000) and Kansatake (population 2,547) are located south and west of Montreal respectively, the majority of non-Indigenous Montreal residents have little to no contact with these residents. Consequently, unlike residents in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, very few non-Indigenous Montreal residents have regular contact with Indigenous peoples (UAPS, 2010c). They are also among the least likely of any major Canadian city to know Indigenous peoples as close friends, neighbours and co-workers. In fact, in comparison to other Canadian cities, residents in Montreal are least likely to be aware of an Indigenous community in their city (UAPS, 2010c). They are also more likely to report that they are uninformed about Indigenous peoples. Such ignorance is consistent with the colloquial phrase "of out of sight, out of mind". It is also due, in part, to the tendency of Quebec educational, political, and popular discourses to focus on the former French colony's distinct history of colonization by the British rather than to acknowledge the history and presence of Indigenous peoples. In a discussion of race and colonization, scholars Délice Mugabo and Darryl Leroux underline the difficulty, on the part of white Quebecers, to abandon a form of Quebec nationalism that characterizes its white, francophone citizens as oppressed and colonized and fails to acknowledge their white settler

privilege (Staniforth, 2013). In this nationalist narrative, notes Mugabo (2013), "Anglos colonized Native people and did the same with Francophones". It is a "a tale of innocence and victimhood that conveniently omits French Canada's colonization of Indigenous peoples, the practice of slavery and racial exclusion" (as cited in Staniforth, 2013, para. 1). Similarly, Leroux (2015) notes that the master narrative in Quebec history is profoundly shaped by both the erasure of colonization and the de-legitimization of the presence and contributions of people of colour. Francophone Quebecers, he argues, perceive and understand themselves as colonized peoples whose genealogical origins can and should be traced to France. In such a narrative, only "*les Québecois pure laine*" (pure wool Quebecers) are recognized as true founders/citizens. Quebec's history of the colonizing and enslaving racialized peoples is ignored

Consistent with findings in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, there is a very strong perception among Indigenous peoples in Montreal that non-Indigenous people hold a wide range of negative and distorting stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. Also consistent with findings in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, the majority of Indigenous peoples in Montreal report having personally experienced incidents of discrimination based on their cultural background. In fact, according to the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study Montreal Report (2010c), when posed with the statement "I have been teased or insulted because of my Aboriginal background", seventy percent of the Indigenous respondents stated that they agree.

The demographic profile of the Indigenous population in Montreal is closer to that of the non-Indigenous population than is the case in most of the other major Canadian cities, in particular Thunder Bay and Winnipeg (UAPS, 2010c). However, Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented in Montreal's homeless population. While Indigenous people make up less than one percent of the city's population, they represent ten percent of the

population of Montreal's homeless; in particular Inuit (Aboud, 2018). Adrienne Campbell (2018), director of Projets Autochtones du Quebec, argues that this number will continue to rise as Inuit from northern Quebec are increasingly escaping situations of violence and overcrowding in their home communities (as cited in Aboud, 2018).

The Research Process

The ways in which settler girls negotiate and make sense of recently emerging discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous girls and women can either reinforce colonialism or support anti-colonial resistance. Problematically, however, the experience of settler Canadian girls, much like the experience of other dominant identities, remains largely uninterrogated by settler society. Furthermore, in mainstream discourses, white settler girls are often associated with innocence and normality. They represent the standard to which the Other is compared. This silence, this assumption of innocence and normality not only erroneously implies that setter girls are not implicated in the maintenance of colonial violence, it also prevents a critical understanding of how the identity formation of settler girls is intricately tied to the subjugation, violation and containment of the Indigenous female body.

Phase One: Recruitment

I submitted my research proposal to the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (REB) for review in February 2018. This process ensured that a formal ethics protocol was followed when obtaining information from the interviewees. Upon receiving ethics approval, I began the process of recruiting girls from the cities of Winnipeg, Montreal and Thunder Bay. As I discussed in the previous section, the cities of Winnipeg, Montreal and Thunder Bay were chosen due to their particular histories and dynamics of colonial racism and denial.

I initially recruited research participants by utilizing my own network of contacts. Once a number of participants were recruited, I utilized snowball sampling — a method of sampling in which the researcher obtains information from a few members of the target population, and then requests these members to refer other people within the desired population — to recruit more participants. As Babbie (2015) notes, this method of sampling is often used when, like me, the researcher aims to take an exploratory approach to research.

After my initial recruitment efforts, more participants were still needed in the cities of Montreal and Thunder Bay. I, therefore, posted recruitment flyers at McGill University, Concordia University, and Lakehead University (see Appendix A). In the city of Thunder Bay, I also reached out to university professors in both the departments of Women's Studies and History to request their assistance in disseminating information about my research project to their students. In employing these methods of recruitment, I did sacrifice socio-economic diversity as almost all of the participants identified as middle-class. Many of the participants also had access to post-secondary education. However, I was able to achieve a balanced number of girls from Montreal, Winnipeg, and Thunder Bay. Below is a description of each of the participants. To protect the anonymity of the participants, the following names are pseudonyms.

1. **Sarah:** 17. Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba; a grade 12 student in high school. Identifies as middle-class.
2. **Eve**: 17. Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba; a grade 12 student in high school. Identifies as middle-class.
3. **Elizabeth:** 19. Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba; first year University student at the University of Manitoba. Identifies as middle-class

4. **Sadie:** 17. Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba; a grade12 student in high school. Identifies as middle-class.
5. **Brandi**: 18. Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario; a first-year student at Lakehead University. Identifies as middle-class.
6. **Angel**: 18. Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario; a first-year student at Lakehead University. Identifies as middle-class.
7. **Tricia:** 19. Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario; a first-year student at Lakehead University. Identifies as middle-class.
8. **Katie:** 19. Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario; a first-year student at Lakehead University. Identifies as middle-class.
9. **Carla**: 15 (one week away from being 16). Born and raised in Montreal, Quebec; a secondary four student (grade 10) at a Montreal high school. Identifies as middle-class.
10. **Sophie:** 16. Born and raised in Montreal, Quebec; a secondary four student (grade 10) at a Montreal high school. Identifies as middle-class.
11. **Joanna**: 17. Born and raised in Montreal, Quebec; a first year Cégep student. Identifies as lower middle-class.
12. **Jody**: 18. Born and raised in Montreal, Quebec; a first year Cégep student. Identifies as middle-class.

Phase Two: Semi-Structured, In-depth, Interviews

Similar to many qualitative projects, I began this research without a clearly formulated hypothesis. Since the intention of the research was to document the ways in which settler girls understand and negotiate discourses around colonial violence toward Indigenous women and girls how could I presuppose what those understandings would be before I had heard them? I

also made efforts not to develop arguments or categories of analysis prior to conducting the interviews “so as not to create self-fulling prophecies in (my) research” (Reinharz 1983, p. 175). Since my review of the literature and my personal experiences had left me with the impression that settler girls would largely adhere to colonial narratives, I made a conscious effort to suspend this impression so that it would not interfere with my ability to listen to what the girls had to tell me, and to remain open to stories of resistance and transgression.

For the purpose of my research, I chose to conduct individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews allow participants the freedom to discuss and raise issues that may not have previously considered. They further allow participants the agency to express their views in their own terms. Such agency permits the researcher to uncover detailed descriptions of participants' perspectives, feelings, and ideologies. It further encourages two-way communication as participants are able to ask questions of the interviewer. Finally, this agency allows participants to discuss personal and/or sensitive issues that they would not otherwise feel comfortable sharing via a survey (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007).

The goal of the interviews was to get participants to discuss their understanding of emerging discourses surrounding violence against Indigenous women and girls as well as to discuss how their identities were/are informed by the construction of the Indigenous female body as hypersexualized Others. As such, my interventions took the form of raising general themes and questions vis-à-vis the participants’ understandings of colonial violence towards Indigenous women and girls, as well as their understanding of how their identity is formed in relation to settler colonialism and Indigenous girlhood. While I had a set of pre-established questions on hand during the interviews (see Appendix B), to maintain the narrative flow established by the participants themselves as well as to allow myself the flexibility to ask questions that came up

spontaneously in the context of a particular interview, I did not adhere strictly to the order or the exact wording of the established questions.

In accordance with protecting the rights of the individual participants and satisfying ethical requirements, I obtained signed, informed consent from each participant (see Appendix C). In the case of participants who were under the age of sixteen, I also obtained written consent from a parent or legal guardian. I attempted to establish a comfortable environment with all of the participants and made certain they were aware that they were under no obligation to answer any question or discuss any topic that made them uncomfortable. I also informed each participant that they could stop the interview at any time, and I gave them the option of having me use a pseudonym when referring to them by name in my thesis and related writings. It should, therefore, be noted that the names that appear in this thesis are pseudonyms.

Individual interviews lasted between forty minutes to one hour. With consent, I digitally recorded each interview. As the twelve interviews were spread across several months, I worked on transcribing individual interviews as I progressed.

Phase Three: Analysis of the Interviews

I analyzed the interviews using Gubrium and Holstein's (1998) model of narrative analysis. This model breaks analysis down into two categories: what participants are actually saying and how they give coherence to their lives (i.e., how they tell their stories). Together these two categories provided a framework for analysis: a) the active side of storytelling (its artful, creative element), b) the substantive side (the available meanings and social conditions which structure these narratives c) the resources upon which subjects draw on their stories (experience, discourses, stories, etc.) and d) the constraints of their narratives (institutional structures, social practices, etc.) (Gubrium and Holstein's, 1998, Rajiva, 2004).

In choosing the specific order and focus of data analysis, I drew largely from girlhood scholar Mythili Rajiva's (2004) doctoral work with South Asian girls. More specifically, I first analyzed the form of subjects' narratives using concepts from Gubrium and Holstein's (1998) analytic vocabulary of narrative. Second, I examined the content of subjects' narratives through questions that are central to my research problem. This distinction between content and form required what Gubrium and Holstein (1998) term "analytic bracketing." This analytic breaking allows researchers to focus on one aspect of narrative practice (for example the substance, structure, or plot) while temporarily suspending analytic interest in another aspect (for example, how the story is being told).

Section A.

1. Narrative linkages and slippages: the use of cultural categories and storylines to frame a personal narrative and the persistent gap between these cultural devices and how a subject's narrative unfolds in places (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Rajiva, 2004). Ex. a participant's recognition of systems of colonial injustice and oppression alongside her belief that violence against Indigenous girls and women is a simply a result of their "risky" behaviours and lifestyles. Given that colonial injustice is a systemic, social problem, the idea that the individual is responsible for such violence is a contradiction.
2. Foregrounding/backgrounding: the storylines that the subject is highlighting and those she renders less important (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Rajiva, 2004). Ex A subject who acknowledges violence against Indigenous women and girls but avoids talking about the role of settler colonialism in contributing to this problem.
3. Metanarratives and editing: the subject's awareness of the account as her story, and her monitoring, managing and modifying of her account (when she perceives discrepancies,

contradictions or wants to shift storylines). A reflexivity on the part of the participant, who knows she is engaged in a process of meaning making rather than truth telling in some final fashion, and is, thus, aware, on some level, of her own agency and narrative authority as she tells her story (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Rajiva, 2004)

4. Topicality and local reference: The larger cultural/structural context in which the subject's discussion is located, which limits the subject's ability to make claims that have no relationship to reality (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998, Rajiva, 2004). As "practitioners of everyday", subjects call upon cultural resources that provide structural constraints on their narratives (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998, p. 64). They do not tell endlessly creative stories that have no connection to a world outside their own consciousness.

Section B.

What narratives and storylines do participants draw upon to frame their understanding of violence against Indigenous women and girls? For example, do they rely on dominant mythologies that fail to link violence against Indigenous women and girls to historical and on-gong systems of colonialism? Do they "foreground" narratives of Canadian democracy and peacemaking and "background" colonial injustice in order to keep a consistent narrative of Canada as a nation free of colonial baggage or is the narrative of a multicultural, peacemaking society undercut by narrative "slippages"? (Rajiva, 2004).

In what ways do settler girls attempt to position themselves as innocent vis-à-vis colonial violence directed at Indigenous women and girls? For example, do they rely on narratives that position themselves as ignorant vis-à-vis systems of colonial injustice and violence? How do settler girls understand and make sense of their position of power and privilege vis-à-vis

Indigenous women and girls? How do settler girls understand the ways that their identity is shaped in relationship with Indigenous girls and women?

Balancing Power

My interview style was influenced by the work of Ann Oakley (2005, 2013). Oakley writes of the ways that conventional interviewing paradigms tend to position the researcher as an impersonal authority who must balance professional distance with the need to develop a trusting relationship with the research participants. Adopting such an aloof stance when interviewing women and girls, notes Oakley, leads researchers to not only elevate their position as researcher but also to objectify their researcher participants.

With Oakley's arguments as guidance, I consciously attempted to equalize the interview relationship. To that end, I tried to assume a presence that was calm, non-judgemental and warm. I also made a concerted effort to engage in active listening to elicit the types of stories and information that the participants wanted to share. Further, in lieu of the traditional researcher's so-called "professional" distance and feigned neutrality, I attempted to convey my genuine interest in each girl by taking time to build rapport before beginning the interviews. I also did not discourage the girls from asking questions of me. They asked, for instance, about my experience as a PhD student. The girls also expressed a certain amount of interest in the research. For example: What other cities I was conducting interviews in? How many girls I would be interviewing? What would I be doing with the results of the interviews? Rather than deflecting or avoiding these questions, I used these opportunities to build rapport with the girls. Further, rather than maintaining an aloof stance of observer, I chose, at times, to disclose information about myself that I believed served the objective of creating rapport and trust between myself and the participants.

While the aforementioned attempts were made to try to neutralize hierarchical relationships, I recognize the inevitability of power differentials within research and the risks surrounding the illusion of equality in research relationships (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). In fact, while early feminist researchers maintained that power differentials in research could be minimized by developing non-hierarchical and collaborative relationships with research participants, feminist researchers now recognize that researchers and respondents have a different and unequal relation to knowledge (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). For instance, due to the inherent power in identifying the issues to be studied and why they are worthy of study, researchers are situated in a more privileged position vis-à-vis the research participants. Feminist researchers also acknowledge the power of the researcher to decide which questions will be asked, how one behaves towards one's respondents and how the data is treated (Grenz, 2014). Indeed, as Reinharz and Chase (2002) point out, the voices of respondents do not speak on their own. Rather, it is the researcher who ultimately decides how to interpret these voices and which transcript extracts to present as evidence. The manner in which the feminist researcher addresses these concerns related to power determines, to a large degree, whether the research relationship is structured in hierarchical terms or through a commitment to research for and with women and girls rather than simply about them (Grenz, 2014).

In addition to the importance of neutralizing power imbalance, a central tenet to my approach to the interviews was viewing settler girls as the experts of their own experience. I, therefore, chose not to argue with participants or attempt to persuade them to adopt views that I deemed to more in-line with feminist and anti-colonial thought. This is not to say that viewing girls as the experts of their experience was not, at times, fraught with tension. Indeed, there were several times in which participants' assessments and viewpoints struck me as uninformed,

problematic or even colonial. It was at these moments that I struggled with my desire to correct what I deemed to be inaccurate statements and assessments. As a white woman who grew up in this country, I understood how respondents have come to adopt colonial views. At the same time, I struggled with my desire (at times overwhelming!) to "educate" or "enlighten" the participants so that they adopted viewpoints that were less colonial in nature. While such a struggle left me frustrated at times, ultimately, these situations of tension represent rich sites for analysis, reflection and subversion.

As someone who practised as a feminist therapist for over ten years, I also found myself, at times, struggling to find the right balance in regard to the depth of my engagement with the participants. For instance, when one of the participants revealed that she habitually defers to the will and power of the men in her life, I found myself trying to balance my role as researcher with my past work as feminist therapist. That is, my sense of empathy as well as my instinct and training as a therapist urged me to explore further the participant's perceived lack of agency in her relationships with men. I also felt the need to assist her in identifying the skills and strengths required to be able to embrace her sense of personal autonomy and self-worth. I acknowledge the need for feminist researchers "to integrate ourselves into the research project" and "problematize the observational distance of neo-positivism" (England, 1994, p. 87). However, I also recognize that my role as researcher is not to engage in in-depth therapy. Rather, my role as a researcher is to explore participants' feelings and experiences as they relate to the research topic. I, therefore, found myself 'putting the brakes' on more probing, therapeutic responses to refocus on my role and responsibilities as a feminist researcher. At times this left me feeling like I had not done enough to help empower the participants to negotiate the personal difficulties that they were describing in their narratives.

Insider/Outsider

The qualitative researcher's role as an insider or outsider has been an issue of much theoretical debate over the last few decades. The two main questions raised in these theoretical discussions are related to issue of whether the insider status privileges or disqualifies researchers' contributions to knowledge, and whether an outsider status allows researchers to understand a person or group whose experience and position differs greatly from their own. Proponents of insider researcher maintain that insider researchers are well positioned to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of groups of which they are members (Ettinger, 2005). They also maintain that researchers' insider status allows for more rapid and complete establishment of trust and acceptance in the research relationship. Critics of insider research, on the other hand, argue that insiders' similarity/closeness to their research community obscures objectivity and leads to biased research findings and potential issues of confidentiality. They further note that, as an outsider, a researcher may feel freer to ask certain questions given her status as an uninitiated member of the community she is investigating (Ettinger, 2005)

In more recent years, scholars have challenged this strict insider/outsider dichotomy to underline what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) identify as "the space between" (p. 54). According to this framework, the researcher's identity as either insider or outsider is relative and context-based, and all researchers fall somewhere in the space of complete outsider and complete outsider. Researchers must, therefore, assume the responsibility to understand where they are positioned within different contexts and space to explore how these dual, and sometimes shifting, statuses may affect the research process and its outcomes (Serrant-Green, 2002).

Throughout the interview process, I was cognizant that I occupied the dual, context based, and, at times, overlapping positions of both insider and outsider. That is, my gender, race,

and, in the case of Montreal and Winnipeg, familiarity with and lived experiences in, the geographical location of the participants potentially placed me in the position of insider. However, I did not conform fully to the profile of an insider. For instance, the significant (20+ year) age gap between the participants and myself as well as my status of researcher and PhD student distanced me from the participants. For the participants of Thunder Bay, my lack of lived experience in their city may have also emphasized my status as outsider.

While my status as insider was not static or absolute, I nevertheless chose to heed Asselin's (2003) suggestion to gather information with my 'eyes open' while, at the same time, bracketing my assumptions of the phenomenon being studied. I further noted Ettinger's (2005) advice for the insider researcher to take care to ensure that the participants clearly articulate their perspectives and viewpoints. This care, argues Ettinger (2005), is necessary. When the researcher is seen as an insider, participants may be more likely to assume that the researcher will share their beliefs and values, or simply already understand certain comments and terms. Indeed, throughout the interview process, I noted that the participants sometimes failed to fully articulate a response due to what I perceived to be their assumption that as a white settler Canadian, I would implicitly understand what they were trying to express. For instance, when I asked a 17-year-old participant in Winnipeg how she identified in terms of cultural background, she responded "I don't know. Probably just like general Canadian culture". In order to bracket my own assumptions as a white, settler Canadian, I put Ettinger's suggestions into practice by encouraging the participant to explain more clearly and specifically what she meant by general Canadian culture.

In addition to the frequently vague descriptions of their Canadian cultural heritage, I noticed that the participants were often hesitant to describe the representations of Indigenous

peoples to which that they had been exposed. While I attribute much of this hesitation to a reluctance to verbalize negative, colonial constructions of Indigenous peoples, I do not think this is a full explanation. It is possible that a certain degree of the participants' initial vagueness and hesitancy to answer this question can be attributed to the fact that, as fellow white settler Canadians, they assumed that I too was well aware of the stereotypes and inaccurate representations of Indigenous peoples that exist and, therefore, did not require an explanation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I articulated the methodological framework guiding the current research process. More specifically, I described my methodology as feminist, qualitative, narrative research heavily informed by Indigenous methodologies. I noted that, in contrast to quantitative paradigms, feminist qualitative researchers put less emphasis on finding "the truth". Instead, feminist researchers focus on the personal experiences and unique perspective of their participants. Feminist researchers also make every effort to conduct interviews ways that allow for more equitable relationships with their participants. They also attempt to actively involve participants in the research process as much as possible. Finally, I noted that feminist researchers work within wider social justice and liberation movements.

In the second part of the chapter, argued that narrative inquiry is a method of research that is complementary to both feminist and Indigenous research methodologies. Narrative inquiry, I explained, aims to explore and conceptualize human experience as it is represented in textual form. Narrative inquiry allows researchers to work with small samples of participants to obtain rich and free-ranging discourse. It also allows for in-depth explorations of the meanings people assign to their experiences.

In the third part of the chapter, I reflected on my positionality and motivation for conducting this particular research project. More specifically, I spoke of my experience growing up as a white, settler girl in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I also discussed my long journey towards gaining a better understanding of, not only the deceptive nature of national mythologies that tell of a peacemaking Canada, but also of the truth history of Canada's relationship to Indigenous peoples.

In the fourth part of the chapter, I discussed the particular research sites chosen for this doctoral project: Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal. I paid particular attention to each city's unique history of Indigenous erasure. I also explored the unique dynamics that characterize the current relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in each of these three cities.

In the final part of the chapter, I delineated the various phases of the research: recruitment, fieldwork, and analysis. I also explained Gubrium and Holstein's (1998) model of narrative analysis. Finally, I addressed the need for the feminist research to be attentive to power imbalances throughout the research process.

Chapter Five - Negotiating Discourses of Colonial Violence: An Analysis of the Interviews

Introduction

Throughout this thesis, I have contextualized contemporary hierarchies between Indigenous and settler girls by discussing Canada's history of discursive, physical, and sexual violence towards Indigenous women and girls. I have also mapped the recent emergence of discourses related to disappeared and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Moreover, I have argued that the ways in which white settler girls negotiate and make sense of these recently emerging discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous girls and women can either reinforce colonialism or support anti-colonial resistance (Regan, 2010). More precisely, white settler girls can rely on colonial discourses and ideologies that alternately deny systems of injustice or place the onus of responsibility on the victims themselves. They can also engage in a critical analysis of the complex ways in which colonial dynamics contribute to violence against Indigenous women and girls. They can also reflect on their responsibility to dispute and transform these dynamics.

In the current chapter, I provide an analysis of the qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviews that I conducted with twelve white settler girls living in the cities of Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal**.** For example, I discuss the tendency of several of the participants to conflate Canadian identity with whiteness. I also discuss the complex ways that participant responses reveal the extent to which danger is problematically conflated with Indigeneity. More specifically, I argue that the many of the participants' answers foreground the extent to which their sense of personal safety depends on the particular racial and socio-economic context in which they find themselves.

In the second part of the chapter, I examine the ways in which the participants negotiate discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. I note that, despite obvious gaps in their understanding of these issues, Canada's history of systemic violence against the Indigenous peoples has not been entirely overlooked by the white settler girls in this research. In fact, all of the participants speak, to some extent or another, about abuses committed against Indigenous peoples, in particular, the abuses inflicted on children in residential schools. Many of the participants also communicate an awareness, not only of the existence of colonial policies, but also of the violence that characterized them. Such forms of awareness disrupt the problematic ignorance and erasure of colonial violence that characterizes much of non-Indigenous society. It further destabilizes the comfortable stance of ignorant "not knower" that allows settler Canadians to distance ourselves from the truth of colonial violence to "keep in motion the way things are instead of thinking about the way things could be" (Malewski & Jaramillo, 2011, p. 02).

Despite the promising nature of many of the participants' responses, I raise questions regarding whether some of the participants' responses represent settler "moves to innocence" — a term that Tuck and Yang (2012) use to describe the strategies that settler Canadians employ to distance themselves from the responsibility of colonial violence. For instance, I note the tendency of many of the participants to locate settler colonialism as exclusively in the distant past. I argue that, by disavowing current systems of colonialism, the participants risk re-inscribing the myth of setter colonialism as a regrettable period in our country's history rather than an ongoing structure whose maintenance requires settler complacency and active participation.

In the final part of the chapter, I note that many of the research participants communicate a degree of awareness of historical acts of colonial violence. I maintain that such awareness disrupts settlers' comfortable position of innocent "not knower" (Dion, 2007). It also disrupts the dominant narrative of Canada as a peacemaking country free of colonial violence. Despite the promising nature of this disruption, I argue that Canadian educational institutions still fail to provide settler Canadians with the sufficient amount of information to fully conceptualize the colonial underpinning of current systems of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Settler Canadians are also denied the knowledge and critical analysis that is required to make sense of the complex ways that settler colonialism benefits their own lives while simultaneously disappearing and marginalizing Indigenous peoples.

Our Home on Native Land: The Conflation of Canadian Identity and Whiteness

When asked about the question, "How do you identify in terms of culture or ethnicity, several of the participants indicated that they identity simply as "Canadian". For example:

"I am a Canadian woman" (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg).

"Oh my goodness, I am sooooo Canadian!" (Kate, 19, Thunder Bay)

While such answer may, on the surface, appear innocuous, I argue that the participants' ability and propensity to identify her culture and identity as simply Canadian both reinforce and depend on the conflation of Canadian identity with whiteness. That is, such answers reflect the extent to which the white settler body has come to represent the essential criteria for national belonging; the largely unexamined centre of Canadian identity. In contrast, subjects who are categorized under the rubric of visible minorities are excluded from dominant understandings of

Canadian identity and belonging. For, much like whiteness is a socially constructed position of power and normativity that exists in relation/opposition to other locations in the racial hierarchy produced by whiteness, Canadian identity is defined in and through the relationships between white settlers and racialized Others. It further depends on the dispossession of Indigenous land and the often-violent marginalization of the Indigenous peoples. Consequently, white settler girls come to understand their identity of Canadian through the Othering of groups that fall outside socially constructed boundaries of national belonging. Furthermore, as opposed to racialized subjects, white settler girls have the freedom to choose to identify simply as Canadian without having this identity questioned (Carroll, 2014; Waters, 2006). For example, Chelsea makes reference to the fact that her parents were born in Ireland. Yet, when asked how she identifies in term of culture and background she chooses to identify solely as Canadian: "I'm totally Canadian, I consider myself totally Canadian" (Chelsea, 15, Montreal). I find it interesting that Chelsea described herself as "totally Canadian". In retrospect, I wish I had asked Chelsea to clarify this statement. That is, I wish I had gained further insight to whom and what Chelsea perceives as being less than "totally Canadian". I question, however, whether this freedom to choose to identify as "totally Canadian" is due to the continual validation and normalization of white settler identities by both individual members of this dominant group as well as by Canadian educational, political, and socio-cultural institutions. The chronic omission of "land as a contested space" from political and educational discussions of Canadian identity, for instance, continually reinforces the white settler body as indigenous to these lands (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 126). Common settler mythologies that tell of hardworking European immigrants struggling to tame empty land further contribute to the fiction that white settlers were Canada's original inhabitants, and therefore, the most deserved of the benefits of Canadian identity and

citizenship (Razack, 2002). They also re-inscribe Canada as, first and foremost, a peacemaking, tolerant state.

My argument regarding the conflation of whiteness with Canadian identity is well supported. Decades of scholarly work articulate the complex ways in which colonial practices and policies have ascribed particular significance to white settler bodies as well as the different mechanisms through which whiteness has come to symbolize the essence of being Canadian (Boock, 2009; Mackey, 1999; Thobani, 2007). Eva Mackey (1999) examines the historical construction of ordinary, unmarked, Canadian identity as it relates to its representation and regulation of hyphenated Others (i.e., Afro-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, Indigenous-Canadian). National discourses that foreground Canada's fairness and generosity towards Indigenous others, she argues, serve both to reinforce white settler hegemony and to distance Canada from the colonial and racial violence of the United States. In a similar vein, Boock (2009) identities the ways that whiteness has become a national norm through enactments of institutional white supremacy. Through the glorification of white colonial conquest and the erasure of racist and colonial histories, white settler Canadians are continually positioned as the benevolent founders of a nation and the dominant subjects at the heart of the Canadian success story. For instance, the fanfare and the decontextualized nature of Canada day celebrations exemplify the extent to which white settler mythologies have become "intrinsic to the ways in which members of the nation-state understand themselves" (Boock, 2009, p. 35). The centrality of whiteness to Canadian identity is further reinforced through educational discourses that disappear Indigenous histories and reinforce the myth of white settler benevolence. Eva Mackey (1999) argues:

> Historical relationships have been interpreted and re-shaped within national tradition in order to create a mythology of white settler innocence, a mythology

> that exists in various forms today. Such myths do not simply hide qualities and oppression but contribute to *a mythology of national identity.* (p. 26, emphasis added)

It is largely through such mythologies and positive projections of colonial history that white settler girls learn to position themselves as unequivocally Canadian. In fact, these mythologies are crucial to Canadian identity and nation-building. By erasing Indigenous bodies from the landscape and placing European settlers as the discoverers of Canada and the bearers of civility, white settlers are able to imagine themselves as superior national subjects. In this way, "place becomes race" (Razack, 2002, p. 1), as white settlers are situated as the rightful owners of land and the natural arbitrators of Canadian identity and national belonging. In the words of Sherene Razack (2002):

> The origins of white settler society lie in the dispossession and near extermination of Indigenous populations by the conquering Europeans. As it evolves, a white settler society continues to be structured by a racial hierarchy. In the national mythologies of such societies, it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus become the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship. (p. 2)

This myth of white settlement on empty land supports the seemingly natural association between whiteness and Canadian identity. When asked to describe her ethnicity and culture, Sadie gives the following answer: "I don't know. Probably just like general Canadian culture" (Sadie, 17, Winnipeg). I maintain that the association between whiteness and Canadian identity allows Sadie

to identify her ethnicity as simply Canadian without further qualification or understanding of the ways that this identity is constructed through systems of white supremacy and colonial erasure.

In *Exalted Subject: the making of Race and Nation in Canada*, Thobani (2007) articulates what she terms the "exaltation process" — the process by which white settler identities come to represent the embodiment of the "quintessential characteristics of the (Canadian) nation and the personification of its values, ethics, and civilizational mores" (p. 3). For more than a century after Confederation, the Canadian state reinforced white settler supremacy by encouraging white European immigration and limiting, if not excluding, non-white immigration. For example, in 1885, the Canadian government enacted the Chinese Immigration Act. The intention of this Act was stated explicitly in its heading, reading "An Act to restrict and regulate Chinese immigration into Canada." In fact, many of Canada's immigration policies served to both provide land rights to white settler Europeans, as well as to create an enduring understanding of the Canadian as white (Thobani, 2007).

In explicating the implementation of the reserve system as well the *Indian Act*, Thobani (2007) further demonstrates the ways in which white settlers are rendered dominant national subjects through their persistent participation in Indigenous dispossession. She underlines the ways in which, through the legal construction and regulation of Aboriginality, the *Indian Act* served as a colonial tool for securing the identity of the white settler as a true measure of Canadian identity. In fact, the violence of the *Indian Act* governed articulations of citizenship so thoroughly that Indigenous peoples could only belong to the white nation through enfranchisement (Boock, 2009). In this way, notes Thobani (2007):

> The *Indian Act* was as much about enhancing the domain of nationals as it was about controlling Aboriginal peoples...With an evolving sense of national identity,

> possessed of the right to be present on the land, to own it, to work it, to travel across its length and breadth, the national subject constituted itself as such in the knowledge that although the Indian might be of the land, he/she was not worthy of it, had no legitimate or respectable claim to it. The white national subject, however, was worthy of the land, this worthiness being decreed by the very law of the land. Such exaltation entitled the successful national to claim the right to territory, to mobility, and in the process, to experience itself as a juridical, hence fully human. (pp. 51-52)

Similarly, Audra Simpson (2008) questions whether white settler Canadian society, as it exists today, has been made possible through historical constructions of the Indigenous Other. Writing about what she terms the "savage/civilized redux of settler societies" she asserts that: "this binary maintained the ideological might and justification for claimed lands, contained peoples, and the "social problem" of unassimilatable differences" (p. 254). Policies designed to disappear or contain difference were a way of "disciplining Aboriginal and white bodies to a Victorian norm of white settler citizenship or Indian wardship" (p. 254). In other words, the implementation of the *Indian Act* nourished, and continues to nourish, an understanding of relationships to land that supports the construction of Canadian identity as both benevolent and white. Indigeneity is formally recognized only where "it can be appropriated into white Canadian-ness; it is welcomed only to the extent that it bolsters the values and assumptions of benevolence and inclusion through which Canada and Canadians define themselves" (Lozanski, 2007, p. 224).

I further argue that multicultural discourses serve to support white settler girls' conflation of whiteness with Canadian identity by imposing categories of race that place racialized Others outside the parameters of national belonging. More precisely, multicultural discourses

encourage racialized peoples to emphasize, in an ahistorical and decontextualized form, the cultural and religious practices that identify them as not being entirely white (that is, without race or ethnicity — characteristics synonymous with Canadian identity). Simultaneously, multicultural discourses enable white settlers to project ethnicity onto others, thereby naturalizing their own as generically Canadian (Gonick, 2000). The result, notes Philip (1992), is that the definition of Canadian has come to mean the "dominant white group surrounded by micro cultures, some of which are brown, black or yellow" (p. 155). Girlhood scholar Marnina Gonick (2000) qualifies this definition of Canadian identify even further. In her article, Canadian=blonde, *English* and white (emphasis added), she explores the ideologies and practices that constitute Canadian identity. She also highlights the complex reasons why racialized Canadian girls cannot "picture themselves in the nation's image of its citizenry" (p. 95). She argues that, while dominant discourses around national identity lament an absence of any standard of Canadian identity, racialized girls have a very clear sense of who is and is not a Canadian. Through policies of multiculturalism and immigration, non-white national subjects come to understand the identity of Canadian as white, European and, to a large extent, anglophone. Subjects who deviate from this unspoken norm are considered immigrants, non-Canadian, or in the case of francophone Canadians, somewhat deviating from authentic Canadian identity, even though they may be holding Canadian citizenship (Das Gupta, 1999). As Schick (1998) explains:

> In spite of the acknowledgement that Canada is also a land of immigrants, it is middle-class, heteronormative, able-bodied, Anglo life—as it is deeply embedded in language and the law—that has sedimented itself as the norm of Canadian identifications…the white body became the

> culturally organized site of Canadian nationalism and has come to represent what it is to be defined as a Canadian. The essence of English ways is embodied in whiteness; the white body reads as the semiotic for nationality. (Schick, 1998 p.3-4)

This understanding of Canadian as white and predominately anglophone is reflected in the responses of the white settler girls that I interviewed. Consider, for example the following exchange with Carla, a 15-year-old from Montreal who lives in an English-speaking household with a francophone father and an anglophone mother.

> *(Stephanie: How do you personally identify in terms of cultural or ethnic background?)* Honestly, I don't think about it that much. I would identify, I guess, as French-Canadian *(Stephanie: French-Canadian?)* Yeah, but *mostly* Canadian (Carla, 15, Montreal, emphasis added)

I maintain that Carla' s comments reflect the extent to which, unlike Indigenous girls and settler girls of colour, white settler girls have the option of not reflecting on or identifying their ethnic identity. Further, when they *do* choose to self-identify, white settler girls have the freedom to choose which ethnicity to identify with depending on the particular context as well as the overall assessment of socio-political gain. As Waters (2006) notes, this freedom of choice exists for white settler girls because they "belong to the majority group — in terms of holding political and social power, as well as being a numerical majority. The option of choosing among different ethnicities in their family backgrounds exists because the degree of discrimination and social distance attached to specific European backgrounds has diminished over time" (p. 138).

The above cited excerpt further reflects the degree to which those who do not identify as white, European, and predominately anglophone are deemed to deviate somewhat from the norms of true Canadian identity. That is, Carla acknowledges her francophone heritage by initially adding the qualifier of French to the identity of Canadian. However, she is quick to clarify that, due to her mainly anglophone upbringing she is "mostly Canadian". This clarification is intriguing to me. Carla seems to imply that her francophone heritage makes her somewhat less than purely Canadian. In reading this part of the transcript, it occurred to me that I should have asked Carla to explain exactly what she meant by "mostly Canadian". The province of Quebec has a long history of political and social movements that advocate for independence from the rest of Canada. Underlying these movements is the conviction that the province of Quebec is politically, culturally, and linguistically distinct from the rest of Canada (Rocher, 2002). Indeed, many Quebecers, particularly francophone Quebecers, choose to identify as Quebecois before or, in some cases, in lieu of, identifying as Canadian. Hence, it is possible that, in clarifying that she is "mostly Canadian", Carla is evoking the importance placed on Quebecois identity and nationhood in a Montreal context. However, there is another potential explanation for Carla's clarification. As Scott (2015) notes, French Canadians have not always been always constructed as unequivocally white. For example, in the mid-twentieth century the expression "speak white" was commonly used by anglophone Canadians to demean French Canadians for not speaking English — a language that was associated with a white Canadian identity (Scott, 2015). This construction of French Canadians as "not quite white relied on racist rhetoric that defined them as backwards, ignorant and unruly" (Scott, 2015, p. 1290). It is not clear whether or not Carla is aware of this historical construction of French-Canadian identity. Nevertheless, I question whether, by clarifying that she is "mostly Canadian" Carla is

communicating an understanding of francophone Quebecers as somewhat deviating from (white) Canadian identity.

In describing the link between the race and the risk of violence for Canadian girls 19-year-old Elizabeth from Winnipeg states: “Just like, I guess immigrants who are not Canadian will be targeted”. Similarly, Katie maintains that “people of colour and immigrants who are not Canadian tend to be more at risk of violence than regular Canadians”. In making these statements, Elizabeth and Katie seems to be conveying an understanding that immigrants of colour are not Canadian. I argue such an understanding is indicative of the degree to which those who fall outside the norms of whiteness are deemed not Canadian by white settlers regardless of any knowledge of their history or citizenship status in Canada. In fact, as Shadd (2001) points out, if someone is not coded as white in Canada, they are likely to be asked to identify where they are *really* from (Shadd, 2001). This type of question not only implies that non-white Canadians fall outside the norms of national identity but denies them of their “birthright... heritage, and... long-standing place in the Canadian mosaic” (Shadd, 2001, p. 15). It also conflicts with Canada’s official policy of *jus soli* — a policy that grants Canadian citizenship to all those born on Canadian soil. More specifically, while racialized peoples born in Canada are granted official government recognition of their Canadian citizenship, in their day to day lives, their identify as a true Canadian is continually challenged and denied. Conversely, white, English-speaking immigrants are often immediately identified as Canadian even though they may not hold Canadian citizenship (Das Gupta,1999).

Evoking Whiteness as a Cultural Identity

For those who do not benefit from white privilege in Canada, whiteness is blatantly and painfully ubiquitous. White settlers, in contrast, have a high level of control over if, when, and

how we address or acknowledge our whiteness. Most often, we fail to acknowledge or even notice whiteness as a cultural or racial category. This failure is due, in large part, to the fact that whiteness functions as the norm in North America. It is the default standard by which all other groups of colour and ethnicity are compared, contrasted, and made visible. This failure is also due to the fact that it can be deeply unsettling for white people to acknowledge their whiteness since doing so implies acknowledging the benefits one has accrued at the expense of non-white people Hence, for white people, whiteness, "never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its rule as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (Lipsitz, 2006, p.52). It just is. Even the phrase "people of colour" is problematic: It implies that white peoples are a people of no colour, a people of no race or ethnicity.

Given the fact that whiteness is often invisibilized by white people, it is interesting to note that, in addition to identifying themselves as Canadian, several of the participants evoked their whiteness when speaking about their ethnic and cultural identity More specifically, when asked the question, "How do you identify in terms of ethnicity of cultural background?", Joanna, Brandi, Angel, Sarah, and Eve responded with the following comments:

> White. (laughter) (Joanna, 17, Montreal)
>
> So, I am white. Caucasian (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)
>
> Uh, just white. (Angel, 19, Thunder Bay)
>
> Well, I usually just call myself white. (Sarah, 17, Winnipeg)
>
> Um, just like Caucasian. (Eve, 17, Winnipeg)

In reviewing these comments, the following questions arise for me: “What does it mean to the participants to identify their ethnic identity as "white" or "just white", and “Why is it important to them to identify their ethnic and cultural heritage as white”? In retrospect, I wish I had asked the participants those follow up questions. I wish I had asked them to clarify their understanding of whiteness as a cultural and ethnic identity. I understand that, in evoking one’s whiteness, context and intent are everything. For instance, there is a world of difference in identifying, loudly and proudly, as white in the name of white nationalism versus recognizing whiteness as an ethnic and cultural category.

Nothing in any of the participants’ subsequent comments or responses indicate an overt affinity for white supremacist ideologies. In fact, several of the participants’ comments indicate that they are conscious of the privileges they are afforded based on their whiteness. I am, therefore, intrigued by the potential promise that lies within the participants’ responses. That is, I question whether, by evoking an ethnicity that has been largely unacknowledged in Canada, the participants, whether consciously or unconsciously, are disrupting the invisibilization of whiteness as a cultural and racial identity. Indeed, the current generation of white settler girls is growing up in era where the supremacy of whiteness is being increasingly interrogated in both academic and popular discourses. For example, in last few decades, Whiteness Studies — a field of academic inquiry that attempts to make visible the cultural, historical and sociological aspects of people identified as white as well as the social construction of whiteness as an ideology tied to privilege and social studies — has been a burgeoning field of studies within academia. Recent social media videos and hashtags, including #Oscars so white, #white privilege and #whiteproverbs, also bring much needed attention to the ways that white privilege is masked and reproduced (Petray & Collin, 2017). Therefore, it is possible that, relative to previous

generations, the current generation of white settler girls is more conscious of whiteness as both a cultural/ethnic identity as well as a site of dominance and privilege. At the same time, claiming one's whiteness can also serve to reproduce superiority and mark one as innocent (i.e., I claim my whiteness and, therefore, I distance myself from systems of white supremacy). Sara Ahmed (2004) notes that critical whiteness studies scholars often reinforce the erasure of white supremacist systems through declarations of anti-racism. That is, when white scholars claim their whiteness as a way to underline their adherence to anti-racist ideologies, they reinforce the myth that racism is something that can be transcended. Similarly, in her book, *Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity,* Wiegman (1999) argues that contemporary white racial identity is formed through a disassociation from white supremacist ideologies and practices at the same time as it "aggressively solidifies its advantage" (p. 121). Both Wiegman (1999) and Ahmed (2004) are concerned that, by claiming their whiteness and their anti-racist stance, white subjects are attempting to position themselves as removed from the physical, discursive and material conditions of white supremacy and, therefore, as innocent and blameless.

I cannot draw any conclusions on the participants' specific motivations for invoking whiteness based on the interviews in this study. However, I believe that this line of questioning merits further exploration and study. As McKinney (2008) points out, relatively little research has explored how white people in North America think and feel about their own race and ethnicity. Such research is necessary because, although scholars know historically, politically, and socially what whiteness means, to better oppose everyday racism and colonial ideologies, it is crucial that we explore the "experiential dimensions of whiteness …it is crucial that we explore everyday *whiteness*" (p. 17)

Conflation of Danger and Indigeneity

In addition to asking participants about their cultural and ethnic identity, at the beginning of each interview, I asked participants to articulate how often, as a girl living in Canada, they thought about their own personal safety. Consistent with decades of feminist and girlhood literature, their answers reflect the extent to which girls in Canada are hyper aware of threats to their personal safety (Aapola et al., 2005; Hollander, 2011; Rajiva, 2014; Stanko, 1990,1995):

> Like, I don't know how to explain it but, yeah, I do think it's something that I consider on a daily basis for sure. Sometimes like, sometimes I walk home from school, so it is like a 30, 45-minute walk, and I take some backstreets, so sometimes I'm just a little conscious, you know. (Sarah, 17, Winnipeg)

Seventeen-year-old Samantha from Montreal also comments on her feelings of personal safety:

> Well, living in the city, especially because I work late, so you know I'll come home at around 1:00 a.m. a lot, usually at that time of night, and if I work mornings and I'm on St. Catherine street waiting for the bus at 4:00 a.m. that too, so yeah, I mean, usually at those times I walk around with 911 dialled on my phone just in case, and I have my hand in the pocket of my sweater holding my keys in my fingers just in case, especially because on this street there are, you know a lot of drunk men, a lot of them homeless walking around and they try to start conversations with you and you don't know what to do. (Samantha, 17, Montreal)

Both Sarah and Samantha describe the extent to which they are conscious of risks of violence as well as some of the measures they take to help ensure their safety. I maintain that such descriptions support Rajiva's (2014) assertion that: "there is an embodied awareness for girls that their lives are shaped by both societal discourse of fear and risk, as well as the very real existence of danger" (p. 138). They further support the assertion that the omnipresent threat of violence encourages girls and women to engage in multiple safe-keeping acts that have come to be a performative condition of normative femininity (Campbell, 2005). The fact is that, in Canada, girls aged 12 to 17 are violently victimized at a rate of nearly six times higher than that for younger girls, and almost twice as high at the rate for adult women. They are also barraged with violence prevention discourses that reinforce the problematic image of the vulnerable female and the unstoppable male (Campbell, 2005; Stanko,1990,1995). Consequently, all girls in Canada are, to one degree or another, both fearful of the risk of sexual and physical assault and conscious of the societal expectation/need to engage in preventative behaviours.

In addition to supporting the literature regarding girls' vigilance vis-a-vis the risk of violence, the participants' answers reveal the extent to which their perceptions of personal safety are influenced by the geographical and racial context in which they find themselves. Consider the following comments from Angel:

> (*Stephanie: As a young woman living in Canada, particularly in your case Thunder Bay, how often would you say you think about issues of personal safety*?) Um, not a lot unless I'm alone in like a sketchy area, then I'll be more worried. (*Stephanie Okay, so if you find yourself in what's sort of deemed as a dangerous area of the city than you will, then what kind of thoughts will come up for you?*) Um, make sure I lock the car doors, um checking my surroundings

> when I am walking, keeping like my keys in my hands, stuff like that. (Angel, 19, Thunder Bay)

Tara also makes the following comments:

> Personal safety is, for me personally, it's about um, cuz I know there are few situations where I have to walk home alone at night and personally in this city it's very, in some areas it is more dangerous than others so (pauses). For example, I go and rehearse a play every night and every night we leave we make sure we have to walk out together because the area itself is quote on quote "not the safest area" so just for my own personal safety with walking around at night in the city is (pause) I consider a couple of times of week but in terms of like personal safety generally I feel very safe. (Tara, 19, Thunder Bay)

It is clear, from these exchanges, that Angel and Tara identify certain areas of the city of Thunder Bay as more dangerous than others. In these areas of the city, Angel and Tara become hyper aware of their feelings of personal safety. They also take extra precautions, including walking in a group and keeping keys in their hands, in order to better ensure their personal safety. Angel and Tara do not refer explicitly to Indigeneity in these exchanges. Nevertheless, in the following discussion, I raise questions about the complex ways that comments, such as Tara's and Angel's, reveal the extent to which danger is problematically conflated with Indigeneity. More specifically, I highlight the tendency of some of the participants to identify predominantly white, suburban spaces to be relatively safer, "normal" spaces while areas of the city known to have high levels of Indigenous presence are deemed dangerous spaces.

To more fully appreciate my observation vis-à-vis the tendency of some of the participants to, albeit perhaps unconsciously, conflate danger with Indigeneity, it is first important to understand the particular spacial geographies of Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. Indigenous peoples increasingly represent a segment of both Thunder Bay and Winnipeg's middle class. However, they are still greatly overrepresented in relatively impoverished neighbourhoods. In Winnipeg, Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in both the North End (north side of the CN Rail Yards) and the West End (west Broadway and west of Central Business District, CBD) — two of the poorest postal codes in Canada (Webster, 2018). In Thunder Bay, Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in the downtown areas of the former cities of Port Arthur and Fort William (UAPS, 2011b). These areas are the sites of unprecedented examples of Indigenous resilience, social mobilization and community activism. They are also plagued by higher-than-average levels of violent crime, largely due to the result of intergenerational trauma and socio-economic deprivation. The Indigenous peoples living in these areas must also deal with substandard housing as well the discriminatory and adverse attitudes that non-Indigenous peoples hold towards urban Indigenous populations — attitudes that reinforce and reproduce racial and socio-economic segregation (UAPS, 2011b). In fact, while relatively few white settlers inhabit these areas, most are aware where these urban ghettos are and stigmatize them. For example, as Dunk (2007) notes, frequently voiced concerns over crime rates in Thunder Bay's downtown areas, "are coded expressions of an ageing white population's discomfort with the presence of a growing, young Aboriginal population in these parts of the city" (p. 1). Similarly, Webster's (2018) analysis of racism in Winnipeg reveals that settler Canadians living in Winnipeg associate the downtown area with Indigenous peoples. This association, notes Webster, is frequently negative as the Indigenous peoples inhabiting these

areas are perceived as having issues with addiction, poverty, and homelessness. Consequently, girls growing up in Winnipeg are often warned that Winnipeg's inner city should be feared and avoided. For example, 19-year-old Elizabeth from Winnipeg reveals that she previously worked at a clothing boutique located in a shopping mall close to her suburban home. She observes that family and friends did not comment about her safety during her time of employment at this clothing boutique. However, she states: "Now that I work downtown, people are always warning me not to walk alone at night". I can relate to Elizabeth's experience. In addition to being told to lock my car doors, I distinctly remember not being allowed to frequent restaurants or stores in these areas. While such caution is not completely illogical — for a couple of decades now Winnipeg has notoriously been known as "Murderpeg, the homicide capital of Canada" (Jewel, 2014, para. 2) — the inferred association of Indigeneity and danger reinforces and perpetuates the long-standing and highly problematic colonial trope of the threatening, uncivilized Indigenous Other. Equally as problematic is the fact that, while most Winnipeg and Thunder Bay residents can identify their city's so-called "sketchy" areas, little consideration is given to the historical and ever-present colonial dynamics that contribute to the socio-economic and geographical segregation of Canada's urban Indigenous population. In fact, this segregation of Indigenous peoples has become a normalized, albeit deplored, reality in many of Canada's inner cities.

How do we make sense of this normalization and lack of critical analysis vis-à-vis the spatial and socio-economic segregation of Indigenous peoples in many of Canada's cities? As Razack (2002) notes, in addition to national mythologies and multicultural discourses, white settlers gain a sense of themselves as true Canadians through the formation of fixed boundaries that demarcate particular spaces as places reserved for superior national subjects. Such overt

racist ideologies and practices help facilitate the social and geographical separation of white settler colonizers and colonized Indigenous Others. For instance, the creation of reserve spaces was intended, in part, to keep Indigenous people away from settlers (to keep the white race safe and pure) until they were deemed "worthy" of assimilation or died out. The creation of reserve spaces further benefitted the “Canadian project of white domination” (Boock, 2009, p. 32) and normalization as it reified Indigenous bodies as uncivilized and, therefore, unworthy of the more fertile areas of land appropriated by white national subjects. In the more recent era of urbanization the segregation and colonial administration of many of Canada’s inner cities further reinforces spacial and socio-economic divisions between Indigenous and white settler subjects (Razack, 2002). Through the process of violent eviction and the perpetuation of colonial and racist ideologies, Canada’s cities have come to be seen as belonging to white settlers. In the words of Razack (2002):

> The sullying of civilized society through the presence of the racial Other in white space gives rise to a careful management of boundaries within urban spaces…The inner city is racialized space, the zone in which all that is not respectable is contained. Canada’s colonial geographies exhibit this same pattern of violent expulsions and the spatial containment of Aboriginal peoples to marginalized areas of the city, processes consolidated over three hundred years of colonization. Reserves remain lands administered by the *Indian Act*, while city slums are related through a variety of municipal laws. (p. 129)

In other words, the demarcation of the less affluent neighbourhoods of many of Canada’s inner cities as degenerate marks the Indigenous and racialized bodies inhabiting these areas as less human and, consequently, less Canadian, as those living in white suburbia. It also reinforces the

colonial trope of the uncivilized Indigenous Other whose presence is deemed a threat to white settler agendas and well-being. Finally, the delineation of certain spaces as degenerate spaces elides, justifies and normalizes the violence enacted on the bodies of the Indigenous peoples, mainly women and girls, who inhabit these spaces.

While not always made explicit, this problematic conflation between Indigenity and danger is evident in many of the interviews. More specifically, the participants' answers, specifically participants from Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, tend to foreground the extent to which their sense of personal safety depends on the particular racial and socio-economic context in which they find themselves. Consider, for example, the following exchange with 19-year-old Elizabeth from Winnipeg who had recently moved from a predominately white, suburban area of Winnipeg to downtown Winnipeg, an area with a relatively high Indigenous presence. When asked how often she thinks about her personal safety, Elizabeth responded:

> With where I live now, I am always thinking about it because a lot of people are telling me, "Oh, don't go on this street after dark. Don't go in this area", um, and it's definitely on my mind a lot like being out and about every day. (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

Elizabeth backgrounds race and Indigeneity in this excerpt. It is clear, however, that Elizabeth's assessment of her risk of violence is influenced by the social and racial context in which she finds herself. More specifically, the warnings and advice that she receives from other people regarding her neighbourhood render her perceived risk of danger at the forefront of her mind.

Consider also 19-year-old Beth's description of how often she thinks about her personal safety:

> I would say pretty often if I'm out and about, especially downtown isn't particularly the most safe area. So yesterday I was downtown and I was, I had to walk a little bit where I was going alone so I would say it's definitely really noticeable when you are alone, and a young female and in certain areas of Thunder Bay I definitely don't feel as safe as I'd like to…I walk with my keys between my fingers, kind of checking over my shoulder, um so, in some areas of Thunder Bay I would say it's definitely a big concern for me and I do think about it quite regularly but if I'm in a group it might not be as prominent for me to notice …I would say I definitely have the privilege of being able to feel safe most times unless like I said I am in those areas, I would say it's not something that I think of too often if I'm just in a *normal* environment (Beth, 19, Thunder Bay emphasis added)

As this exchange reveals, Beth's assessment of her risk of violence varies greatly depending on whether she is situated in what she describes as a "normal environment" versus less affluent areas of Thunder Bay (i.e., the downtown areas of Thunder Bay) — areas with a relatively high Indigenous presence. Her comment, "I would say I definitely have the privilege of being able to feel safe most times unless like I said I am in those areas" should also be noted. Such a comment implies that she is aware, at least to some degree, of the privileges that she is afforded as a white, middle-class girl. More specifically, her comment indicates that she recognizes that she has the

privilege of being able to identify certain contexts and situations as relatively safe — a privilege that is denied Indigenous girls for whom the threat of violence is omnipresent.

Disrupting the Myth: Settler Girls' Acknowledgment of Colonial Violence

In order to maintain the myth of Canada as a nation of benevolent peacemakers, argues Regan (2010), settlers must deny the truth of Canada's history of conquest, genocide, and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. Regan might be encouraged to know that, in the nine years since her book was published, there appears to be more willingness to admit historical wrong doings, at the very least on the part of the participants interviewed in this research. That is, despite obvious gaps in their understanding of these issues, Canada's history of systemic violence against Indigenous peoples is *not* entirely overlooked by the white settler girls in this research. In fact, all of the participants spoke, to some extent or another, about abuses committed against Indigenous peoples, in particular, the abuses inflicted on children in residential schools:

> They [residential schools] erased culture, they cut off communications with families. There was a lot of physical and emotional abuse. (Eve, 17, Winnipeg)

> They were basically forced to go there, abused, assaulted. (Sadie, 17, Winnipeg)

> [We learned] a lot about the effects of like what colonization brought on them…the *Pensionnats Indiens* [residential schools]. Um, it was just about how they've been abused by white people, by their colonizers. (Chelsea, 15, Montreal)

> That they were basically a place to torture Indigenous children, simply because they were Indigenous and basically strip them of the culture…and what frustrates the most about that is Indigenous people were the first people in Canada and we just kind of came over and said, “Okay, this is our country now", like they were here first and we tortured them and said, “Okay, you can’t speak your language anymore, you can’t do this, you can’t have your cultural rituals” or whatever and this just frustrates me so much…I mean, nothing we did to them was fair, right from the beginning (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

In all of these excerpts, the participants communicate an awareness, not only of the existence of colonial policies, but also of the violence that characterized them. For instance, Eve, Sadie and Elizabeth speak of the physical and emotional abuse that Indigenous children were forced to endure at residential school institutions. Elizabeth also comments on colonial efforts to disappear Indigenous culture and language to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the settler body politic. Of particular note, Elizabeth expresses her feeling of frustration vis-à-vis what she identifies as the unjust nature of Canada’s treatment of Indigenous peoples. She also communicates a recognition of the imposition of settler authority over Indigenous lands and culture, and languages.

In addition to foregrounding the injustice of residential schools, several of the participants communicated their awareness of other modes of colonial injustice. For example, Sarah speaks about colonial efforts to limit Indigenous people’s access to traditional sources of nourishment: “They talked about a period when they were hunting some animal and they made it illegal so that the Aboriginal people would not have any food” (Sarah, 17, Winnipeg)

Of particular note, four of the participants alluded to genocide while discussing Canada's history of violence. Sarah, for example, speaks about an article she read about the stages of genocide. She makes comparisons to the Holocaust while reflecting on the question of the ways that the historical dehumanization of Indigenous women makes them more vulnerable to current systems of violence:

> This is almost like a cultural genocide because they've been [Indigenous peoples], like they've been…they took a culture and tried to like abolish it. So they [settlers] dehumanized them so that it was easier for them to kill. (*Stephanie: Yes*) So, I think when they were trying, when the Europeans were trying to make, to take out the Aboriginal populations and the culture, they were dehumanizing them, then it was easier to treat them horribly. (Sarah, 17, Winnipeg).

In a similar vein, Joanna references the Holocaust to communicate her feelings that Canada, unlike Germany, has never fully acknowledged its ugly history of systemic violence towards marginalized Others:

> Because that's the first thing that came to mind, maybe like um, you know, Germany's acceptance of the Holocaust would be better, because that's a big thing to accept and acknowledge and to teach about so that it won't happen again. (Joanna, 17, Montreal).

In describing what they have recently learned about settler colonial realities in the postsecondary classroom, Brandi and Joanna also employ the word genocide:

> I have heard of it [colonialism] a lot more recently about how when European settlers came over there was a mass genocide of Indigenous communities, Indigenous culture, Indigenous practices and the idea of trying to industrialize Canada and make Canada into something that required the Europeans, a lot of dismantling of Indigenous culture and institutions that were created. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

> But they [teachers/schools] left out so much …like things that they probably don't want to tell us. The amount people who were, like the genocide, the mistreatment, the residential schools, big, big thing. (Joanna, 17, Montreal)

Such comments disrupt the problematic ignorance and backgrounding of colonial violence that characterizes much of non-Indigenous society. They also challenge the patronizing focus on residential schools as a symbol of Canada's benevolent dedication to the "civilizing mission" — a colonial ideology that serves to justify the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the participants use of the words "holocaust" and "genocide" to refer to historical acts of violence against Indigenous peoples foreground an understanding that these acts were not random or isolated occurrences but, rather, strategically employed to destroy and eliminate Indigenous peoples. Such foregrounding challenges problematic discourses that deny the validity of the term genocide in reference to Canada's colonial history by inferring that the suffering of

Indigenous people was not as great as the suffering of Europeans and, therefore, does not deserve the designation of genocide (Million, 2013). For example, Brandi's explanation of colonialism indicates that she is aware that the founding of Canada relied on the physical annihilation of Indigenous peoples. Finally, Sarah's use of the term "cultural genocide" indicates a degree of understanding that efforts to disappear Indigenous peoples were not just physical but cultural, linguistic, and spiritual as well. At the same time, it is important to question the consequence of confining Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples to cultural genocide. Many Indigenous scholars and activists contest this term because "cultural" seems to suggest that colonial policies and practices were designed to destroy cultures but not people (Akhavan, 2017). The term, thus, undermines the violence enacted on Indigenous bodies, including mass extermination.

The fact that the participants in this study foreground historical acts of violence committed against Indigenous peoples is important because it is counterproductive to the maintenance of settler colonialism. It disrupts mythologies of Canada as a nation built on democracy and peaceful relations with Indigenous peoples. It further disrupts the comfortable stance of ignorant "not knower" that allows settler Canadians to distance ourselves from the truth of colonial violence to "keep in motion the way things are instead of thinking about the way things could be" (Malewski & Jaramillo, 2011, p. 2). This disruption illustrates the transformative potential of girl-focused research. More specifically, it provides insight into the ways that the current generation of white settler girls may be engaging with the realities of settler violence in Canada in more informed, and potentially transgressive, ways. Such engagement is necessary to challenging and disrupting the current systems of colonial violence in Canada. However, while promising, the acknowledgement of past dynamics of colonial violence is not, in and of itself, sufficient for disrupting colonial hierarchies. Merely acknowledging colonial

atrocities of the past can serve as a method of denying the continuation of colonial violence in the presence. In this way, acknowledgment becomes more about the colonizer than the colonized, allowing settlers to distance ourselves from the responsibility of challenging current systems of colonial violence. Such acknowledgement is also frequently and conveniently linked to an apology that signifies an end — implying to colonialism is past and over. Hence, to dismantle the spaces, systems and stories of invasion that naturalize settler hegemony, settlers must first recognize, not only past acts of violence against Indigenous peoples, but the complex ways that systemic violence against Indigenous women and girls serves the on-going settler colonial objective of disappearing Indigenous peoples and their ties to land (Battell-Lowman & Barker, 2016). They must also recognize the ways that they benefit from the on-going colonization and violation of Indigenous peoples. Without this recognition, efforts to address this violence remain futile. In the words of LeBlanc (2014):

> Only once begin to explore their settlement narratives, the roles they play therein, and the privileges they enjoy by virtue of these roles they can begin to understand the processes they are part of that make them contributors within colonialism. Once [settlers] recognize how they are contributing to colonialism they can step back and envision how they might re-formulate these roles and privileges in a positive way so that they can stop contributing to colonialism and instead begin contributing to decolonization as settler citizens. (p. 109)

It is, therefore, important to examine whether the participants foreground a clear understanding of, not only the history of colonial practices, but also the annihilative ways that the Canadian state and its citizens are *still* in relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Awareness of On-Going Colonial Violence

An analysis of the interviews reveals that participants are aware, to one degree or another, of the current dynamics of violence, discrimination, and injustice towards Indigenous peoples. The participants underline, for instance, the racist stereotypes that exist about Indigenous women and girls in Canada. While I make the conscious decision not to cite specific excerpts out of concern for not reinforcing already over-worn stereotypes, a few observations must be underlined. It is important to note the recurring themes that emerge from the participants' articulation of existing stereotypes about Indigenous women (e.g., addiction, helplessness). Also notable is the *ease* in which the girls are able to access and identify these problematic colonial tropes. Such ease, I maintain, is indicative of the on-going pervasiveness of colonial constructions of Indigenous female subjects in contemporary settler society — constructions, notes Regan (2010), that tend to be based, not on lived experiences or relationships with Indigenous peoples, but on the need to justify colonial agendas and feelings of cultural superiority.

The participants communicate that they have been exposed, to various degrees, to the realities of colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. For example:

> (*Stephanie: Are you aware that Indigenous girls in Canada are significantly at greater risk of violence than non-Indigenous girls?)* Not surprising. *(Stephanie: Were you aware of it*?) I wasn't aware of it. I mean, I didn't know, I might have guessed if you had asked me the question but uh… (*Stephanie: But you said not surprising?)* Not surprised no. (*Stephanie: Okay, how come it's not surprising to you? How do you make sense of that fact?*) Because you hear all the time, all

these girls and women disappearing off the side of the highway, I guess that's what, because that's what I've heard the most. (Joanna, 17, Montreal)

(*Stephanie: So, are you aware that Indigenous girls in Canada are more at significantly greater risk of violence than non-Indigenous girls?*) I guess that makes sense. (*Stephanie: Can you say a little bit more about that? How does it make sense?*) Umm, well, they've been cast aside a lot, you know, they've been used, they've been abused, they've been much less privileged, like things that are completely unaccepted in our society, like mold in school is just common for them, so it completely changes the, you know, the, the…hmmm. just the way they are treated. (Sophie, 15, Montreal)

(*Stephanie: So, are you aware, because we are talking about girls of colour, are you aware that Indigenous girls in Canada are at significantly greater risk of physical, sexual violence than non-Indigenous girls?)* I did not necessarily know that, but I have heard of a lot of disappearing girls. Like my mom listens to the radio a lot and she has told me. (*Stephanie: CBC?)* I think. I think so, about, about a lot of missing girls, Indigenous girls mostly so I was aware of that. Like she was clearly very sad about that. Like having a daughter herself, honestly, that must have not been great even though I am not Indigenous. Like just thinking of that happening but um, yeah. She wanted to make me aware of that and she's not like scared of talking to me about things like that just so I am aware of like what's happening. *(Stephanie: So you are saying that you didn't necessarily know how*

> *disproportionate it was?)* Yeah, I didn't know how disproportionate it was.
>
> (Carla, 15, Montreal)

It is interesting to note that Joanna, Carla and Sophie all state that they were not previously aware of the fact that Indigenous girls and women in Canada are more at risk of violence than non-Indigenous girls. At the same time, they indicate that this fact makes sense to them based on what they have learned about the mistreatment and abuse of Indigenous peoples. Joanna, for example, indicates that she has heard about Indigenous women and girls disappearing from highways in Canada. Similarly, Sophie communicates an awareness of systemic discrimination and mistreatment of Indigenous peoples (i.e., "they've been used, they've been abused, they've been much less privileged). Finally, Carla notes that she has had conversations about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from her mother.

All of the other participants communicate that, previous to the interview, they were already aware of the fact that Indigenous women and girls are more at risk of violence than non-Indigenous women. For example, 19-year-old Brandi states:

> I would say that over the past few years I've been aware [of violence against Indigenous women and girls]. I would say this past year I've read a lot of books, I took the women and gender studies course and it's been really eye-opening, so having those resources, now I can say I definitely do believe that there is a great level of not feeling safe that is particular to Indigenous women and girls that is something that I cannot experience or be able to relate to because it is so much greater than my own personal, or other Caucasian people that I know, our own of personal safety so, so I've certainly been aware of it I think there is a lot more

> discussion of murdered and missing Indigenous women becoming more publicized. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

Brandi's comments indicate that she is aware, to a certain extent, of her own settler privilege. More specifically, she communicates an awareness of the degree to which her whiteness renders her less vulnerable to violence and abuse in Canada. Her comments also highlight the importance of education vis-à-vis colonial realities. That is, she indicates that her course in gender studies helped to raise her awareness of the various systems of violence that exist in Canada.

Brandi is not the only participant to communicate an awareness of the disproportionate numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada:

> I remember watching a video about dragging the Red River. My understanding that is that they are looking for bodies who may have been murdered and hidden. (Sadie, 17, Winnipeg)

> They [Indigenous women and girls] are often found in the [Red] River, murdered. (Sarah, 17, Winnipeg)

> Indigenous girls um, you know, and I hear a lot of stuff about the Red River, all the girls that have passed away in that river. (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

> So, it seems like a lot of the violence comes from peoples who almost think they deserve it, or like Indigenous women and girls when like, there was the epidemic

> of deaths in the Kaministiquia river, well a lot of people are like saying that Indigenous peoples shouldn't be drinking around the river or that it is to be expected because of reckless behaviour. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

The fact that the participants are able to recognize, not only the problem of violence against Indigenous women and girls, but the specific sites where this violence is occurring is intriguing. It suggests the possibility that, in contrast to previous generations of settler girls, the participants are relatively more exposed to media discourses related to this dark reality. For instance, while the relationship between Winnipeg's Red River and the callous disposal of Indigenous female bodies has been well known in the Indigenous community for decades, it is only in recent years that mainstream and social media have paid any attention to this issue. Similarly, while systemic violence against Indigenous peoples in Thunder Bay has historically gone unchecked by settler society, the recent deaths of Indigenous youth in the city have received local and national media attention. This *relatively* greater media coverage is due, in large part, to the decades-long efforts of Indigenous "warrior" women who have struggled to bring national attention to colonial violence (Bourgeois, 2014).

Several of the participants describe the media coverage of missing and murdered Indigenous women as girls as problematically insufficient, and, at times difficult to access. However, mainstream and social media appear to play a role in raising participants' awareness of the realities of colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. Examples:

> Seeing the paper headline of another missing and murdered Indigenous woman…or Facebook, because you scroll and there's like ads and all that, and you can see it there. (Elizabeth 19, Winnipeg)

> I learned this through, a lot of it through the news itself, my own personal look because I would go on Facebook and there would be campaigns about the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. (Tricia, 19, Thunder Bay)

> Uh, well there was a [news] story a couple of years ago I think where a woman was hit with a trailer hitch just because of her colour because she was First Nations. (Angel, 19, Thunder Bay).

It is clear, based on these excerpts, that some of the participants are exposed to media discourses related to violence against Indigenous women and girls. Elizabeth, for instance, indicates that she has seen newspaper headlines related to missing and murdered Indigenous girls. Similarly, Tricia indicates that she has been exposed to the realities of violence against Indigenous women and girls through the social media platform Facebook. Finally, Angel states that she engaged with a news story related the death of Barbara Kentner, a young Anishinaabe mother who was hit in the stomach by a trailer hitch thrown by a settler in Thunder Bay. Such comments indicate that the silence that has long characterized media coverage of colonial violence is now slightly less deafening. However, the problematic nature of mainstream media coverage of Indigenous lived experiences should not be minimized. Mainstream national media discourses related to missing and murdered women tend to rely on colonial and racist representations of Indigenous identities

(Jiwani, 2006; 2009; Gilchrist, 2010; Bourgeois; 2014). For example, as Bourgeois (2014) underlines, mainstream media tends to portray missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls not as victims, but as prostitutes. Similarly, Jiwani (2009) articulates the fact that mainstream Canadian media tends to reposition Indigenous women "as criminals, victims of sexual crimes, militant rebels and as inassimilable others" (p. 63).

While it was beyond the scope of this study, I maintain that an interrogation of the ways that such racially biased media coverage of colonial violence shapes white settler ideologies merits further research. As Anthony Farley (1997) points out, whiteness is not a colour, it is a way of feeling pleasure in and about one's body. More specifically, discourses that problematize racialized Others allow white people to feel pleasure in their own racial identities. In a similar vein, Sarah Ahmed (2002) articulates how, in hearing stories of violence inflicted on racialized Others, white listeners are elevated into a position of power. Finally, Allen Feldman (1994) notes that the language in which violence towards racialized bodies is presented by the media completely anesthetizes white subjects from the actual physicality and brutality of the event. It is, therefore, important to question how media accounts related to colonial violence help white settlers to feel secure in their existence as settlers. In other words, in what ways does media coverage vis-à-vis the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls serve as a form of race pleasure? In what ways does this media coverage reinforce discourses of problematized Indigenous Others in need of paternalistic care from civilized white settlers? In what ways does it anesthetize white settler Canadians from the actual reality, physicality and brutality of colonial violence? These are questions that merit further in-depth investigation.

In communicating their understanding of the causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls, the participants foreground narratives that disrupt the mythology of Canada as a peacemaking, tolerant country free of colonial violence. For instance, in addition to noting the pervasive stereotypes that exist towards Indigenous peoples, the participants make critical links between racist ideologies and systems in Canada and violence against Indigenous women and children:

> I think they [Indigenous women and girls] are targeted more because racism is an issue, and I guess, stereotypes and how they are seen as less than, because they are different. (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

> It's really much a race factor. Like where I come from, Thunder Bay has so much systemic racism embedded in it that it is absolutely disgusting and it's just that race card in a way where "Oh, you're different from us, we can take it out" (Tricia, 19, Thunder Bay)

> I think, like culture, like Aboriginal people have been looked down upon, and I think that almost influences, like, people to, be violent towards them, like, when they were dehumanized in residential schools, I think that that effect is almost still playing a role today, and since they are dehumanized, it's almost easier to act violent towards them because they are not seen as equals. (Sarah, 17, Winnipeg)

Elizabeth and Tricia both communicate a critical understanding of the systemic racism towards Indigenous peoples that continues to exist in Canada. They also make links between this racism and acts of violence committed against Indigenous peoples. Similarly, Sarah foregrounds the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples that occurred during the residential school era. She further conveys an understanding that colonial views of Indigenous peoples do not merely exist in the past but, rather, continue to impact on the Indigenous/settler interactions. The participants also provide critical insights into the relationship between racist ideologies and the lack of societal response to acts of violence committed against Indigenous bodies.

> The less society thinks about you, the less they'll do when something happens to you, people aren't thinking about minorities going missing, when they think of someone going missing, they think, oh, it's probably a little white girl, they don't think that it's an Indigenous girl, and she's on the reservation, and she got kidnapped, they don't think about that, they don't think about those kinds of problems… it's not something that particularly concerns us, us meaning the general public who are white, Caucasian, any other race basically, because we don't really acknowledge them as much as we should, we don't, like when we list off a list of races we don't, people often miss out Native Americans or, Mohawk people all the time. (Jody, 17, Montreal)

> I think more people would do something if someone like me went missing. Like I think there would be more action taking place if it was someone like me because we are seen more as superior, which unfortunately, is not the way we should be

> viewed so if someone from the superior group is gone missing everyone will be, "Oh my gosh" but when it's an Indigenous girl, "Well, that's unfortunate" and it's brushed off. (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

It should be noted that both Jody and Tricia convey an awareness of the role that race plays in shaping societal responses to violence. More specifically, they acknowledge that the death and disappearance of white women and girls tend to elicit more concern and outrage from dominant settler society than those of Indigenous girls and women. In fact, Elizabeth notes that, unlike "someone like (her)" the death of Indigenous women and girls tends to be "brushed off"

Tricia and Katie also communicate an awareness of the links between race and societal responses to violence:

> Unfortunately, we had an incident where seven youth were found dead by drowning and um, the police did not handle it appropriately and it was a very misconstrued narrative so automatically it was construed as "Oh, you know they're just drunk" …. And it's like, don't say stuff like that because it automatically paints them like, (long pause) it's just really bad here (Tricia, 19, Thunder Bay)

> I read about the kids going missing and coming up in the river or I read about that serial killer thing, but it never really hit home for me exactly, how much racism and stuff, because like you read it in the reports, news, like how this police officer slapped this women on a gurney and it's like, yeah that sucks, but it not really

> personally affecting you so, you sort of brush it off, but then when you go to class and you like realize it's like a systemic pattern, all of a sudden it's like, it become much more like realistic (*Stephanie: Okay, interesting so, you were saying, just to get back, sorry, I just wanted to get a few more of your insights, when you were saying how race affects girls or young women's experience of violence so could you speak again about that, in terms of what you were trying to communicate?)* Yeah, because of the racism problem I think a lot of them, they are more victimized because, they can't go to the police safely and the police aren't even there or some of them that are there are the ones doing the bad stuff, and, also to because, I don't know what it's like in other place, but we don't have a good missing persons so if someone does go missing it's like, there just like gone. (Katie, 19, Thunder Bay)

Both Katie and Tricia's responses indicate an awareness of the prevalence of racist ideologies that construct Indigenous bodies as less human, less valuable and therefore more disposable, than non-Indigenous bodies. They further indicate an awareness of the lack of response, on the part of both the general public and Canadian law enforcement, to acts of violence committed against Indigenous peoples and minority groups. Such awareness is promising. The ability of settler Canadians to make critical links between racist systems and the maintenance of settler colonialism is a key element in the dismantling of these same systems. However, what strikes me about my exchanges with a few of the participants is not only what they reveal about settler awareness, but what they also reveal about the tendency for settlers to remain complacent/indifferent in the face of colonial violence. For instance, Jody observes that violence

against Indigenous girls and women is “not something that particularly concerns us (settlers) because we don’t really acknowledge them as much as we should”. She further reveals her own obliviousness to the fact that “those people were still around basically”. Similarly, Katie describes her former passive awareness vis-à-vis the issues of racism in Thunder Bay. More specifically, she states that when she heard stories of violence against Indigenous peoples but would simply “brush it off” because it did not personally affect her. Finally, in contrast to Katie and Jody, who situate their apathy towards colonial violence in the past, Joanna foregrounds her *current* feelings of indifference vis-à-vis stories of missing and disappeared Indigenous women and girls.

> (*Stephanie: So, when you hear these stories about missing, about disappeared and murdered Indigenous women and girls, how does it make you feel*?). This is going to sound really bad, but I just shrug it off. (*Stephanie: It's okay, I appreciate your honesty.*) I think it’s the same thing, when we hear on the news 50 people died in Syria in a bombing it’s so regular for us, I don’t think about it at the end of the day because it’s the same thing over and over and in my mind, probably the most prominent image is that there are women and girls missing, because that’s most of what I’ve heard, so I guess subconsciously I might be thinking this is the way it’s supposed to be, this is the way it’s been for me, that I have seen firsthand so, (pause) I don’t know, I guess I just I shrug it off (Joanna, 17, Montreal)

Joanna's comment is unflatteringly honest. However, I also question whether her comment is indicative of one of the many unearned privileges that white settlers are afforded in Canada: the

ability to choose how, when and *if* to acknowledge the realities of colonial violence. In fact, it is possible that some of the participants' feelings of indifference towards colonial violence, both past and present, is neither innocuous nor random, but rather represents a common settler strategy; an essential mechanism in the maintenance of settler colonialism. As I outlined in Chapter Two, the disappearance of colonial injustice is fundamental to the maintenance of settler hegemony. That is, settler colonialism, when successful, "effectively covers its tracks" (Veracini, 2011, p. 3). In addition to policies and practices designed disappear Indigenous peoples, this "covering of tracks" requires settler indifference, complacency, and disavowal in the face of historical and current efforts to affirm the dominance of settler peoples over Indigenous lands and resources. Settler Canadians, therefore, employ a number of strategies to distance themselves from the uncomfortable, and potentially threatening, realities of colonial violence —realities incompatible with the moral picture we have of Canada as a self-proclaimed democracy — as well as the guilt and responsibility that comes from acknowledging one's participation in the colonial project. Cohen (2013), for instance, characterizes apathy, indifference, and unresponsiveness to systems of violence as a form of social denial; a mechanism to avoid confronting uncomfortable truths. Similarly, Mills (2007) draws attention to the strategic nature of white ignorance/complacency. More specifically, he argues that ignorance of/indifference towards racial injustices allows white people to live in an "invented delusional world, a racial fantasyland" where they can "misinterpret the world" in ways that are consistent with maintaining their unquestioned dominance (p. 19). Such psychological dissonance, is, in fact, "required for conquest, colonization and enslavement." It allows white settlers to "act in racist ways while thinking of themselves as acting morally" (p. 19).

In a more explicit examination of the Canadian colonial contexts, Veracini (2010) describes what he calls “settler consciousness”, highlighting "a number of paranoiac dispositions characterizing the settler colonial situation" (p.75) The first and most important of these is the disavowal and distortion of Indigenous presence and identity. That is, in the settler imagination, Indigenous peoples are alternately rendered invisible or as peoples whose identities and lived experiences, including their experience of colonial violence, correspond to the mythologies and agendas of the colonizer. For example, Anderson (2016) and Eberts (2018) track the identities and discourses that settler society has imposed on Indigenous women and girls throughout Canada’s colonial history. Foremost among these discourses is the stereotype of the loose, immoral Indigenous female whose so-called “high risk” lifestyle contributes to her downfall. Such stereotypes do not represent actual Indigenous identities and lived realities, but rather the desires and anxieties of the settler, for whom the maintenance of colonial dominance is imperative.

Colonial Violence as Geographically, Temporally, and Situationally Located

In the previous discussion, I highlighted the fact that many of the participants are aware, to one degree or another, of the current dynamics of violence, discrimination, and injustice towards Indigenous peoples. They also make critical links between racist ideologies and acts of violence committed against Indigenous peoples. Finally, several participants indicate an awareness of the lack of response, on the part of both the general public and Canadian law enforcement, to acts of violence committed against Indigenous peoples and minority groups. In the current discussion, I raise questions regarding the possibility that some of the participants identify colonial violence as being geographically and temporally situated. For instance, the

following comments from three participants in Thunder Bay initiated somewhat conflicting thoughts and emotions in me.

> Thunder Bay has a real intolerance. A lot of people are kind of openly offensive, openly sexist, openly racist and I think now the conversation is starting to change… but growing up and having lived here my entire life I can pretty confidently say that there is a pretty ignorant climate for the people who live here…It's not uncommon here to hear really offensive things about race, especially with our Indigenous population. People seem more comfortable speaking more hatefully and more aggressively particularly about Indigenous people than I would say than any other race in Thunder Bay from my experience. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

> Violence against Indigenous women and girls is really much a race factor. Like where I come from, Thunder Bay has so much systemic racism embedded in it that it is absolutely disgusting …Women are getting murdered, women are dying, you got to figure out the root of the problem and solve that. (Tricia, 19, Thunder Bay)

> I know race does play a factor [in women's risk of violence towards violence]. We are the deep south of Canada…Like how we do things up here is very racist, but you know, most people don't really think about that, it's just how we do it. Like again, I was reading a report on the police in Thunder Bay and that is so messed up in so many different ways, and also too, the thing that really bothers

> me that no one is talking about, is a couple, like back in June or something, we had a news report, you know how we have those seven fallen feathers kids?(*Stephanie: Yes, yes, the seven fallen feathers, yes)* There was a report, a news report a couple of, back in like June that said, some guy wrote on a railroad car, "I killed those kids", the police looked into it and they basically said it was a joke and brushed it off (pauses) and even if it was a joke, like, there's been some rumour around here, both in the white and Indigenous communities that there actually is a serial killer up here, but no one is like investigating or doing something, and like, that's just not good, like, I know the police are racist but surely they can get someone from like down east to come in! (Katie, 19, Thunder Bay)

These responses reveal that Brandi, Tricia and Katie have a critical understanding that the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples differ greatly than the lived experiences of non-Indigenous peoples in Thunder. More precisely, these three participants express an awareness of the racist and colonial attitudes that setter residents in Thunder Bay hold towards Indigenous peoples. They are also conscious of the fact that Indigenous peoples, in particular Indigenous women and girls, are more at risk of racialized violence than settler peoples. Katie, in particular, makes critical links between violence against Indigenous peoples in Thunder Bay and the inadequacy of local police response to such acts of violence. The importance of such awareness and critical understanding of colonial violence should not be overlooked. It disrupts the denial of systems of racial injustice that often characterize white settler responses to colonial violence. It also reflects the participants' unwillingness to passively accept the colonial status quo.

Despite their transgressive nature, I admit that the participants' responses also led me to question whether they consider systemic racism towards Indigenous peoples to be a localized problem. For example, Tricia states, "Like where I come from, Thunder Bay, has so much systemic racism embedded in it". Similarly, Katie's comments, "I know the police are racist but surely they can get someone from like down east to come in". Both of these comments seem to imply a belief that Canadians from other, possibly more urban and "progressive" parts of the country, would not hold the same racist ideologies as people from Thunder Bay. Katie's comparison of Thunder Bay with the "deep south" of the United States is also intriguing to me. In the American imagination, the South is often looked to as the backwards site of racism towards people of colour. This depiction allows those living in the North to soothe themselves with false belief that the problem of racism lies elsewhere. The truth is, however, that while the northern states may not have the same history of explicit policies of slavery and segregation, the entire foundation of the United States is built on a racial hierarchy that has deemed white to be superior to black. Similarly, while cities, such as Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, have drawn increased media attention in recent years due to their relatively high rates of explicit acts of violence towards Indigenous peoples, the entire nation of Canada is built upon a system that affords non-Indigenous Canadians more rights and privileges than Indigenous peoples. Therefore, I question whether, by pointing exclusively towards the racism of a particular city, the participants are deflecting attention away from the fact that Canada, as a whole, is invested in the erasure and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. I will, however, leave this question unanswered. I recognize that I cannot abdicate my responsibility as a researcher by assuming that the "data will always speak for itself" (Archer, 1991, p. 141). At the same time, much like Rajiva (2004), I am uneasy about the slippages that may occur between what my participants say

and what I interpret them as saying. I further recognize that I should not minimize the participants' agency by imposing my own conclusive interpretation of the motivations/colonial biases guiding their responses. I also admit that my fear of overlooking and/or unwittingly supporting systems of white supremacy and denial may lead me to be overly sceptical vis-à-vis discourses of resistance.

While I simply question whether Katie and Tricia's comments regarding racism in Thunder Bay reflect a form of settler denial and disavowal vis-a-vis the pervasiveness of colonial violence, other comments strike me as more explicitly problematic. Most notably, Joanna and Elizabeth provide insightful analyses of the role that racist ideologies and practices play in maintaining violence against Indigenous women and girls. At the same time, their responses seem to reveal narratives slippages. That is, they seem to also engage in conflicting discourses that elide these same systems of oppression:

> Well, there is just a lot of child abuse that goes on in a lot of the reserves and I guess, not a lot of access to, you know, like our civilization so much. I guess they're, a lot of them are cut off, especially the one's up north, and so you know probably any taste of adventure for a young girl, you know someone who picks them up on the side of the street and say, "Hey, do you want to try some drugs?", um, as a young girl who kind of has impulsive tendencies like that, I can kind of identify with that. Um, probably they are more likely to because a lot of them come from families that aren't supportive or aren't very present in their lives. Yeah, I guess a lot of stuff like that. (Joanna, 17, Montreal)

> They [stereotypes] play a huge role in that [violence against Indigenous women and girls] ummmm, and the racism issue for sure. And Indigenous peoples just not having the same benefits and someone like me would have, like being paid less or not having a good education because of the residential schools…which would lower their economic status and they would be more subject to the other forms of violence or poverty, which would cause them to go to more desperate measures to meet their needs, like prostitution, or even stealing to get what they need. But I don't think they have bad intentions, not all Indigenous peoples have bad intentions, they are not all drug addicts. (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

In both of the excerpts, the participants' express an awareness that Indigenous peoples in Canada do not have access to the same benefits and privilege as settler Canadians. Elizabeth also foregrounds an understanding of the ways in which racist stereotypes contribute to violence against Indigenous women and girls. This awareness should be commended. At the same time, the two participants engage in narrative slippages that indirectly place the blame for colonial violence on Indigenous "dysfunction", including abusive conditions on the reserve, drug addiction, and problematic family dynamics. For instance, Joanna implies that Indigenous girls would not be so tempted to engage in the so-called "high risk" behaviours if they had had more access to dominant settler ways of living and being in the world. Similarly, Elizabeth calls out the negative stereotypes and educational and economic inequalities that Indigenous peoples must face. However, she also verbally associates Indigenous girls' vulnerability to violence with their alleged poor choices (e.g., sex work) and bad intentions. In engaging in such a narrative slippage, Elizabeth supports the neoliberal ideology that lack of hard work and poor choices are the only barrier to opportunity and success. Such an ideology elides the complex ways in which

violence against Indigenous women and girls serves the ongoing colonial agenda of disempowering/disappearing Indigenous peoples to maintain control of the land (Bourgeois, 2014). This ideology also ignores the ways that non-Indigenous peoples continue to benefit from on-going systems of colonial oppression and dispossession. In fact, while almost all of the participants are able to identify the problematic role that the original settlers played in dispossessing Indigenous peoples or their land and their identities, many of the participants tend to background narratives that make explicit the roles that settlers currently play in maintaining colonial violence. This following excerpt from my interview with Elizabeth exemplifies the difficulty that the many of the participants experience in communicating the complex ways that settler Canadians continue to benefit from the disempowerment and dispossession of Indigenous peoples:

> (*Stephanie: Have you ever heard the term settler to refer to non-Indigenous Canadians?)* Not really. (*Stephanie: When I say the term, what does it mean to you? What does it conjure up for you?*) Hmmm…it makes me think of the people who took over Canada. Who came here and pushed the Indigenous peoples away or just kind of made them their slaves…settled down in Canada and said, "Yep, this is our land" (*Stephanie: Right, so you think of it as in the past, something in the past? If I said to you that there are people who would refer to you as a settler or me as a settler, how would you make sense of that?*) I don't understand. (*Stephanie: Don't understand, okay. So, this project, for example is researching settler girls, even if you don't know what that term means, what does that conjure up for you when I say that?*) It makes me wonder if it's almost like a racist term. (*Stephanie: Okay, in what way*?) Because it's referring to Indigenous people and someone like me as completely different, even though we are both human, we are

> both Canadian girls living in the same way. Like why do we have to be so different? Why can't someone who is doing the research not only interview someone like me, but interview Indigenous people? Like what's the difference? (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

Elizabeth's positioning of the term settler in the distant past, reflects the failure of all the participants, with the exception of 19-year-old Katie from Thunder Bay, to address the privileges they receive from settler colonialism as well as the roles they play in maintaining colonial violence. Also noteworthy is Elizabeth's confusion regarding why a distinction would be made between Indigenous and non-Indigenous girls living in Canada: "We are both *Canadian* girls living in the same way", she asserts, "why do we have to be so different?" (emphasis added). It is possible that Elizabeth intended her comment to promote the need for racial equality. However, in stating that Indigenous girls and settler girls are "living in the same way", Elizabeth backgrounds the very real, and often violent, ways that the lived experiences of settler girls differ from those of Indigenous girls. Lorde (2007) argues that failures to address systems of inequity is an almost inevitable outcome of the persistence of hierarchical difference in racial relations. In her words:

> White women are heavily invested in ignoring the real differences (between themselves and women of Colour). For as long as any difference between us means one of us must be inferior, then the recognition of any difference must be fraught with guilt. To allow women of Colour to step out of stereotypes is too guilt provoking, for it threatens the complacency of those women who view oppression only in terms of sex. (p. 118)

In other words, much like white claims of colour blindness disregard deeply entrenched systems of white supremacy, the assertion that Indigenous and non-Indigenous girls share the same lived experiences elides the ways that the intersections of racism, colonialism, and sexism shape the lived experiences of Indigenous girls. This type of discourses also elides the fact that Canadian citizenship remains problematic for many Indigenous peoples. In fact, as Green (2017) underlines, the Canadian state "is the oppressor of Indigenous peoples. Citizenship, then, is an enforced relationship that subordinates, while it also mediates the most egregious excess of state power" (p. 173). Finally, this type of discourse masks the ways that the privileges associated with white settler girlhood are determined and shaped by the on-going colonization of Indigenous peoples.

Almost all of the participants recognized the relationship between Canada and colonialism. However, all but one of the participants characterized this relationship as being historically situated:

> I would say my understanding of colonialism is the idea of European settlers dismantling a lot of Canadian culture and a lot of Indigenous culture in order to create what they thought would be a more substantial and more successful nation while completely eradicating, in some places, effecting the previous conditions of the Indigenous populations in a grave way. (*Stephanie: Okay. Thank you. So, you heard about it in a historical context?*) Yes (*Stephanie: and in terms of current colonialism, is that something you have been exposed to?*) I would say not too much no. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

> (*Stephanie: Have you ever heard of the word colonialism?*) A little bit (*Stephanie: A little bit? What have you heard about it?*) Um, from my understanding its um, that was around the time of confederation it was the people who came from the other countries who kind of claims the land, and, um, colonized it for themselves. (Eve, 17, Winnipeg)

Brandi conveys a critical understanding of the fact that colonization entailed the imposition of settler ways of knowing and being. Similarly, Eve communicates an understanding of the historical dispossession of Indigenous lands and territories. Such foregrounding of colonial violence and injustice disrupts dominant mythologies of Canada as a country founded on peaceful cooperation with Indigenous people. At the same time, however, the excerpts from Brandi and Eve seem to reveal an understanding of colonialism as something that occurred in the past; a history far removed from the current realities of the Canadian nation. For example, Eve communicates that she associates colonialism with "the time of confederation". Similarly, Brandi admits that she has not really been exposed to discourses that locate colonialism in the current context.

Similar to Eve and Brandi, Angel also articulates an understanding of colonialism as a problematic period in Canada's history.

> (*Stephanie: From your understanding of colonialism would you say it's something more in the past or the present?)* I would say it's in the past (*Stephanie: Okay, can you explain to me also your understanding of what the word means?*) I believe it's about the colonization of Canada, I would say it's in the past because I

> think about the Europeans who first came to Canada and all that. (*Stephanie: So you've not heard someone say Canada still has, is still a colonial country to this day?*) I haven't heard that, no. (*Stephanie: Okay, what do you feel, what are your thoughts in general about Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples, I know you talked about racism, but let's say in terms of the government or Canada as a whole, what are your main thoughts or feelings about how well as a country we treat Indigenous peoples?*) In terms of the government, I don't know, when Indigenous people turn eighteen, I'm pretty sure that they get money from the government, I've heard that they get free education, but I am not sure that that's true, but I think that's good, I know it's can't make up for what happened in the past but, I know there is still like discrimination based on like race or ethnicity. (*Stephanie: Sorry, so when you were talking about the money for education and what not, were you saying that you feel the treatment is good or what's your assessment?*) Yeah, I would say it's good, but it doesn't exactly make up for what's happened still. (Angel, Thunder Bay, 19)

Angel's statements are intriguing. She articulates an awareness that the atrocities committed against Indigenous people in the past are irredeemable. She also communicates an understanding of current systems of racial and ethnic discrimination. The transgressive nature of such statements should not be minimized. However, she implies that, while the government cannot make up for past mistakes, Indigenous people over the age of eighteen now have access to free education. Angel's comments suggest a lack of understanding of the ways that educational funding for Indigenous peoples works — a lack of understanding, I would argue, that is common

to many settler Canadians. Angel's comments also reveal a narrative slippage. That is, she acknowledges current systems of racism and discrimination towards Indigenous peoples. At the same time, she seems to associate the word colonialism exclusively with events of the past.

All of the participants in this research articulated an awareness, to various degrees, of systems of violence and discrimination towards Indigenous peoples. But how do we make sense of the propensity of some of the participants to associate the word colonialism exclusively with events of the past? As I have articulated throughout this thesis, dominant political and popular narratives in Canada elide the on-going structure of colonialism in Canada. In the past decade, for instance, the Canadian State has taken steps to publicly acknowledge historical injustices that have occurred in Canada. As previously discussed, on June 11, 2008 former Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered a long-awaited, but arguably disingenuous, apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system: "The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools", he stated, "is a sad chapter in our history…Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm and has no place in our country." (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010, para. 3). While such an apology represents a significant digression away from Canada's consistent pattern of silence and denial vis-à-vis colonial histories, the motivations behind such types of apologies are problematic. More precisely, settler Canadians seem to revel in apologizing about past atrocities as a method of denying the continuation of colonialism in the present (Wakeham, 2012). Rather than addressing current manifestations of a settler colonial structure, state-initiated apologies characterize colonial practices and policies as carefully circumscribed mistakes of the past. In this way, settler guilt becomes more about the colonizer than the colonized, serving to allow settlers to avoid the truth of colonial injustice by allowing them a false sense of accomplishment and atonement.

Further, such apologies allow settler Canadians to place the blame for colonial wrong doings solely on the Canadian state without any recognition of their own agency and responsibility for maintaining Indigenous subordination (LeBlanc, 2014).

Dominant settler national discourses around reconciliation further focus attention on how Canada has bravely faced up to its errors in order in to position itself as the "source of social, political, and material redemption" (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014, p. 2). Much like state-initiated apologies, such a focus problematically frames colonialism as a historic event rather than an ever-evolving structure firmly entrenched in Canada's political, economic, and social systems. It further characterizes the Canadian government as the primary agent of colonial injustice. This focus on the state as the sole perpetrator of colonial mistakes of the distance past obscures the on-going role that settlers play in maintaining the colonial violence. Consequently, Indigenous peoples' perceived failure to prosper within the nation state of Canada is blamed on their supposed personal and cultural deficiencies rather than to collective and individual settler (in)actions that inhibit their political, cultural, economic and physical well-being.

As I will discuss in greater detail in the next section of this analysis, the participants' narratives also suggest that the information and support needed to help students meaningfully engage with current systems of colonial violence and domination is conspicuously absent from their experiences in the classroom. Missing from the curriculum is an examination of the ways that settler colonialism persists in on-going assimilationist policies and practices, as well as the continued assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control over Indigenous and lands. Indeed, the little information that is disseminated about Canada's relationship to colonialism tends to present a distorted conceptualization of settler colonialism: that of a historic state driven event, which was destructive and unfortunate, but for which the Canadian State has since made amends.

Such a distorted view of colonialism allows settler girls to distance themselves from colonialism because it is over, and the process of reconciliation and reparation has begun.

Education and Colonial Erasure

An analysis of the participants feelings toward and assessment of the quality of education they received about Indigenous peoples was not my primary objective in this research project. But in reviewing the participants' narratives, it became clear that such an analysis was necessary to more fully understand the manner in which participants understand and negotiate discourses related to colonial violence toward Indigenous women and girls. More specifically, my decision to include this analysis was formed through my review of the narratives and my resulting conviction that the education system, while beginning to integrate Indigenous perspectives and lived realities, still does not give young settler Canadians sufficient information to effectively engage with on-going systems of violence. The following discussion provides an overview of the main themes vis-à-vis the participants' observations of their educational experience that emerged from the interviews.

Paulo Freire (2008) argues that educational systems can function in one of two ways: as an instrument to "integrate the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity" or as "the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (p. 16). Similarly, Indigenous and decolonial scholars have long argued the potential of formal education to disrupt colonial ideologies and encourage the recognition of Indigenous identities and rights to socio-political autonomy (Battiste et al., 2002; Couros Montgomery et al., 1999). Despite the transformative potential of education, as well as recent efforts to increase Indigenous content within the curriculum, it is clear that Canadian educational

institutions are still implicated in the erasure of Indigenous perspectives and the maintenance of settler colonial hierarchies. They also fail to adequately prepare settler girls to make sense of current systems of violence that impact on Indigenous women and girls. Here, Tricia's and Carla's comments are exemplary of those of many respondents:

> Elementary school was more about, just like, like every year we had an Indigenous art unit, so we would learn about you know traditional art and the drawings they do because it is very beautiful and we would try to do our ways of it, and then in grade seven or eight I was learning history and then when the settlers came to Canada it was like they were like allies with the Iroquois and the Huron tribe and they set this alliance and then I was like, "Okay yeah, for sure whatever" and then I go to high school and we take a minute of residential schools and it's absolutely heartbreaking that there's this cultural genocide that's been going on hundreds of years and no one cared to talk about it or implemented it in the school system earlier. (*Stephanie: Interesting)* But it wasn't till I was in university that I really got hit in the face as to how horrible this stuff is. (*Stephanie: What hit you in the face Tricia?)* Um, just the realities of it, cuz like as I said before my education was very pro-western and like, Canada never had a race problem…we didn't learn anything about Canadian racial inequality. (Tricia, 19, Thunder Bay)

> Like they'd say, abuses happened blah blah, and then they would just go on about what the French were doing and na, na, na, na, na but they would just like pass

> over it really quickly, like at the end of the year, I organized all the material in categories, and the Indigenous category was like really short compared to the others, it was like really short (Carla, 15, Montreal)

Of note is Carla's foregrounding of the fact that, in comparison to other subjects of importance, little time or attention was given to the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Also of note is the cognitive dissonance that Tricia experiences when finally learning about the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples in residential schools at the age of seventeen. Until that time, little of what she had been taught in school prepared her to conceive of mechanisms of oppression designed to eradicate Indigenous bodies and cultural identities. This newly acquired knowledge, a knowledge that she describes as "heartbreaking", propels her to question why "no one cared" enough to implement information about the history of colonial violence in the curriculum before.

Consider also the following exchanges with 19-year-old Tricia from Thunder Bay and 17-year-old Joanna from Montreal:

> Like, I didn't even know that that was, that those people [Indigenous peoples] were still around basically. Like the way, they present it, especially in elementary school, the way they present that kind of information, it makes them seem ancient people who don't exist anymore, like they are cave men or something *(Stephanie: Indigenous people in general*?) Yeah, like just the ways the textbooks were laid out, the projects we do, it just made it seem very like archaic …We didn't really talk about Indigenous people of Canada in high school at all, like it kind of died

> out after Sec 1. Like we kind of went through the general history of Quebec…I definitely learned more about Indigenous people in elementary school, cuz you have to start from the roots right? But they left out so much that they only learned in the last 2 years, like things that they probably don't want to tell us. The amount people who were (pause) like the genocide, the mistreatment, the residential schools, big, big thing. (Tricia, 19, Thunder Bay)

> Cuz I feel like the gap between elementary and high school, we just kind of leaped over from learning about how, the long houses, the teepees, the way they were hunter gathers and stuff and we just leaped over all that and went to the English and French and the battles and the treaties and the policies. They just skipped over to hey, we're building Canada, look at us this is so great. We are being so smart and productive in this strange country full of snow. They were just talking about the way they did that and they skipped over all the things that they did (pause) all the kind of background information that was happening to the first people that were there. All the stuff they were secretly doing it was kind of just like, it wasn't talked about at all. (Joanna, 17, Montreal)

Tricia and Joanna's comments excerpts reflect the degree to which the participants push back against what they perceive as the failure of their elementary and high schools to teach them about settler colonial realties. Worth noting is Joanna's assertion that she did not know that Indigenous peoples "were still around". This comment reflects the well documented tendency for Canadian educational institutions, when they *do* address Indigeneity, to relegate Indigenous peoples to the distant past. Such relegation reinforces the colonial conception of Indigenous peoples as a

dead/dying, and, therefore, inconsequential, society. It also upholds a vision of the present and future as devoid of Indigenous presence and rights to land and socio-political autonomy — a vision that obfuscates contemporary systems of colonial violence and acts of Indigenous resistance. Similarly, Tricia's comment about the emphasis on settler alliances with Indigenous peoples, as well as Joanna's observation concerning the ways that treaty negations were presented as peaceful, points to the tendency for the Canadian curriculum to erase the realities of colonial violence by exclusively presenting relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers as being based in friendship and cooperation. Such a re-storying of Canada's origins centres the supposed benefits of Indigenous/settler contact and negates settler participation in colonial violence.

It is worth noting that, in this particular excerpt, Joanna offers a thoughtful response vis-à-vis curricular absences. That is, she expresses frustration over fact that her teachers seemed to "skip over" important aspects of Indigenous histories and realities. This is noteworthy since, as I previously pointed out, Joanna also makes comments that imply that Indigenous girls would not be so tempted to engage in so-called "high risk" behaviours if they had had more access to dominant settler ways of living and being in the world. Such comments highlight the fact that the participants' narratives are not always consistent in regard to anti-racist responses to Indigenous settler relations.

Tricia and Joanna's comments reflect their unwillingness to passively accept a curriculum that fails to adequately address Canada's true relationship to colonial violence. They also reflect the failure of educational institutions to adequately prepare them to make sense of current systems of colonial violence and injustice. In fact, as decades of scholarly analysis reveals, Canadian educational systems are grounded in what Donald (2009) identifies as

"colonial frontier logics" — logics that perpetuate Euro-centric epistemologies and perspectives and that reinforce settler ignorance vis-a-vis the structure of colonialism in the nation state of Canada. From what is included and what is silenced in the curricula (Godlewska et al., 2010; Kanu, 2011), through how content is taught (Battiste, 2000; Cannon & Sunseri, 2011; Donald, 2009; Tupper & Capello, 2008), and through the mindsets of teachers and teacher educators (Dion, 2007, 2009; Higgins et al., 2015; Tupper, 2011), schools have functioned to confer greater importance and legitimacy to the lived experiences, world views, and objectives of the dominant settler group. In keeping with this function, provincial curricula continue to portray Indigenous peoples as simultaneously deficient and disappeared/disappearing — a characterization that legitimizes settler dominance and masks colonial systems of injustice and violence. They also fail to provide students with an adequate understanding of the impact of intersecting systems of colonial, racial, and gender oppression on Indigenous peoples.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) called upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples and educators, to "make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students" (para. 5). In the past few years, this call to action has stimulated considerable activity on the part of Ministries of Education to respond to what Justice Murray Sinclair (2015) has identified as a "broad lack of understanding of the unjust and violent circumstances from which modern Canada emerged" (as quoted in Macleans, 2015, para. 2). However, despite these responses to calls for educational reform, Canadian curricular documents still consistently gloss over colonial realties and render Indigenous peoples as archives of a distant past. Canadian curricula also continue to omit

adequate discussions of Indigenous epistemologies, acts of resistance to colonization, and desire for sovereignty and access to territories. The recently revised version of the Quebec's new high school curriculum, for example, focuses on Canada's residential system but fails to articulate the relationship between this act of cultural genocide and the socio-cultural, physical, economic, and linguistic well-being of Indigenous nations. Similarly, critical analysis of Ontario's K-12 curricula reveals that, despite efforts to integrate Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, information related to Indigenous peoples is consistently framed as optional and historical (Schaefli, 2018). The curriculum also avoids the "fundamental issue of Indigenous land and its colonial appropriation…In fact the closest mention of Indigenous lands in the entire K-12 curriculum is a parenthetical aside in Grade 9 Geography… the focus of which is contemporary and delinked from territory" (Schaefli, 2018, pp. 88-89). Likewise, the term colonization is never used to describe the origins of the country now known as Canada. Instead, the violence of colonization is referred to as contact, settlement, or migration (OME, 2004, 2005 as referenced in Schaefli, 2018). Such a framework serves to centre settler benevolence while negating Indigenous word views, knowledge systems, and lived experiences. As a result, the majority of settler girls who graduate from the Ontario high schools, much like other Canadian high schools, are not sufficiently aware of Indigenous presence in, and contributions to, Canadian society nor do they have the necessarily knowledge base to make sense of on-going systems of colonial violence (Schaefli, 2018).

Not all the participants' responses corresponded to the theme of Indigenous issues being overlooked in the educational discourses they were exposed to. In fact, despite problematic exclusions in the Ontario and Quebec curriculum, due to the initiatives taken by individual teachers/parents, two of the participants were exposed to a relatively greater amount of

information vis-à-vis Canada's relationship to Indigenous peoples. Seventeen-year-old Joanna, for instance, speaks of her experience attending a small, independent, alternative school in Montreal:

> We learned a lot about um, because what's interesting, to graduate from high school history class, you don't, it's not in the curriculum to teach about residential schools, to teach about the Oka crisis. None of that's in there. So, my teacher, the guy who runs the place he took it, he said it was very important for him to have the opportunity to teach us about all this stuff. Like I think we spent a whole semester like, on residential schools, I got and um, in my religion class this semester, the teacher asked us, "Who knows what the Oka crisis is?" I was the only one in the class who raised my hand. And that was so surprising to me because, it was like such a huge world news story, how, I mean I only knew about it because James taught me but I just would have thought it would be common knowledge. *(Stephanie: It's really interesting what you say about that teacher, because you're right, in the Quebec curriculum, it is really not part of the curriculum and your teacher supplemented it.)* Yeah, cuz like we had our history textbook that James was using and it was only like one page in this big like 200 page book was residential schools was like half a page, and it was just like a very general. (Joanna, 17, Montreal)

In a similar vein, 18-year-old Katie speaks about her experience being home schooled:

> Well, I'm in a unique situation because I was home schooled, so like, throughout middle school and high school so like, in elementary school um, I think they did a pretty good job in explaining like Indigenous peoples had like, civilizations and stuff before we came in and like screwed it up, but in high school, again, my mom was like my primary teacher and I like watched a lot of documentaries and stuff to finish, to complete like my Canadian history requirement because, while I had the curriculum it sucked so, I kind of taught myself. *(Stephanie: Okay, so your mom, it sounds like you and your mom really supplemented the curriculum)* Yeah, we had other resources to look into. (Katie, 18, Thunder Bay)

Both Katie's and Joanna's comments reflect the possibility for teachers to take the steps to transgress and supplement curriculums of absence in substantial ways — steps which challenge students to "reconfigure their engagement with the history of Canada and their own historical consciousness" (Tupper, 2012, p. 150). However, despite the transformative potential of such acts of transgression, they are not commonplace. In fact, as Indigenous scholars have long noted, settler teachers are often ill-equipped to integrate Indigenous content in the classroom (Dion, 2009; Kanu, 2011; Pohl, 2002). Dion (2009), for example, notes the tendency of non-Indigenous teachers, when writing and speaking about issues of multiculturalism and diversity, to wittingly and unwittingly depict Indigenous peoples as passive victims, historical figures and/or objects of pity, rather than as active agents and sovereign peoples. Equally problematic is the tendency of non-Indigenous teachers to adopt an add-on approach to integrating Indigenous histories and word views into the classroom. Such an approach unwittingly reinforces Eurocentrism by marginalizing Indigenous perspectives and by allowing prescribed curriculum

topics to remain at the centre of class focus (Kanu, 2011). This marginalization is fuelled by "the fear of offending, the fear of introducing controversial subject material, and the fear of introducing content that challenges students' understanding of the dominant stories of Canadian history" (Dion, 2007, p. 331). It is also fuelled by the discomfort that both teachers and students face in recognizing their own participation in the oppression of Indigenous peoples. Finally, and arguably most troubling, many teachers simply lack the knowledge, insight, and willingness necessary to make sense of Indigenous lived experiences. Some even harbour racist attitudes towards Indigenous peoples (Kanu, 2011). It is, therefore, easier for teachers to rely on dominant, colonial models of educating students rather than unlearning "truths", confronting prejudices and engaging with counter narratives. As a result, white settler girls are denied vital opportunities to confront the truth of Canada's relationship to Indigenous peoples as well as their roles in supporting and maintaining colonial violence and injustice.

This failure on the part of teachers to embrace opportunities to address Indigenous issues in the class room is evident in the comments of 18-year-old Jody who attended a high school with several students from Kanesatake — a Kanien'kéha:ka settlement on the shore of Lac Deux Monts. When asked describe her observations of how the Kanien'kéha:ka students in her high school reacted to the history curriculum, Jody responded:

> I've thought about it. Because I've spoken to them before. A lot of them just raised their hands in class and said something that they know from personal knowledge, from their families, from their grandparents, and they would mention it, and the teacher will just be kind of like, "Yeah, not important", just pass it by. (Jody, 18, Montreal)

This response reflects Jody's awareness of the problematic nature of the teacher's response to the students' desire to share their knowledge and experience. More specifically, she indicates that, rather than allowing space for which the Indigenous students to voice their stories, the teacher dismissed their comments, presumably because they did not fit into the dominant curricular narrative. In doing so, the teacher failed to recognize the students' agency in recounting their own knowledge systems. The teacher also failed to provide all of his/her students with a critical opportunity to recognize the dissonance between dominant curricular narratives and the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, including experiences of colonial violence.

Implementing Indigenous Content into the Curriculum

It is clear, based on my interviews as well as a review of the literature, that the Ontario and Quebec curriculums fail to address the reality of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples, and consequently, the root causes of the current levels of colonial violence towards Indigenous women and girls. The powerful impact of such biased representations of Canadian history should not be overlooked. They contribute to a "historical amnesia" by masking the various forms of colonial abuse and inequality experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada (Regan, 2010, p. 10). They further relieve settler Canadians of the need to reflect on our own relationship to the ongoing cultural, political and economic oppression of Indigenous peoples. White settler girls are, therefore, denied critical opportunities to comprehend and negotiate how their own identities, family histories, and colonial privileges have been shaped and determined by historical and current efforts to subjugate and disappear Indigenous peoples, cultures, and experiences. They are also denied the knowledge and critical analysis that is required to make sense of the legacy of colonialism —including systemic violence against Indigenous women and girls — and the complex ways it benefits their own lives while simultaneously placing

Indigenous girls at risk. But what about the settler girls I interviewed from Winnipeg? What do their comments reveal about their exposure to Indigenous content in the classroom?

In 2018, Kairos published an assessment of provincial and territorial governments' responses to calls from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to integrate information on residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous peoples lived histories into the educational curricula (Kairos, 2018). In this assessment, Manitoba received a grade of "excellent" vis-à-vis its implementation of Indigenous content into the curriculum. This assessment lies in contrast to Quebec, a province that received a grade of "significant work required" and Ontario, a province where Indigenous curriculum development was recently making much needed progress before being halted following the election of a Conservative government. Is this increase in Indigenous content in the Manitoba education curriculum reflected in the responses of the settler girls from Winnipeg that I interviewed? Do they perceive that these additions sufficiently prepare them to make sense of current levels of violence towards Indigenous women and girls in Canada? Consider the following comments from 17-year-old Sarah from Winnipeg:

> We talked a lot about, um, there was a whole, there were all these different units, it was all about problems that go on in the world. So, we had one on human rights, and that was the one we talked about Aboriginal women (*Stephanie: Do you think that this class did a good a job at teaching*?) Yeah. Definitely (*Stephanie: It sounds interesting*.) Yeah, it was really engaging too. It wasn't just like lectures all the time. (Sarah, 17, Winnipeg)

17-year-olds Sadie and Angel and 19-year-old Elizabeth from Winnipeg also reflect on the education they received about Indigenous peoples in high school:

> I feel like it's definitely something that has been introduced to us all. I feel like I know a little bit about the variety, like a little about residential schools and a little bit violence against women. (Sadie, 17, Winnipeg)

> Yeah, I know a little about like, the confederation, the treaties the residential schools, that's really it, just the stuff that we covered in school. (Angel, 17, Winnipeg)

Sarah, Sadie and Angel's responses indicate that they are exposed to relatively more information regarding Indigenous lived experiences in Canada, including the reality of residential schools, than several of the girls I interviewed in Thunder Bay and Montreal. This reflects the recent reforms that Manitoba has made to educational curriculums. The province has incorporated mandatory Indigenous content into their Social Studies courses from grades 1-11. The grade 11 course entitled "History of Canada: A Foundation for Implementation", for example, addresses four of the subsections of *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 62.i: residential schools, Treaties, historical and contemporary contributions, and consultation with Indigenous Peoples* (Kairos, 2018). A conscious effort has also been made to provide non-Indigenous teachers support in incorporating non-Indigenous perspectives in the classroom. Such support includes supplying teachers with guides and making professional development opportunities available.

The fact that settler girls from Winnipeg communicate an exposure to Indigenous lived histories and realities throughout their elementary and high school education indicates a move in the right direction vis-à-vis the implementation of Indigenous content in the Manitoba curriculum. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) points out, lack of historical knowledge about Indigenous/settler relations has dire consequences. Such ignorance reinforces racist attitudes and "fuels civic distrust between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians (p. 114). Rendering settler peoples cognizant of Indigenous stories is hence "a crucial first step in establishing fertile ground on which to cultivate an equitable relationship" (Dion, 2009, p. 32).

Despite the promising nature of the Winnipeg participants' observations regarding their exposure to Indigenous perspectives and lived realties, it is clear that problematic gaps still exist within the curriculum. As an example, Sarah asserts, that while she was exposed to information about residential schools, she feels she did not learn about how the "problems that affected people in the past that are still affecting them now….they didn't really talk about the effects on Indigenous people". Similarly, Sadie maintains that, throughout elementary school and high school, she was taught "a little about residential schools and a little bit violence against women…like a little bit about everything". She asserts, however, that the information that she received was not sufficient for her to make sense of the root causes of current levels of colonial violence facing Indigenous women and girls. Finally, while Elizabeth and Angel both observe that their high school curriculum taught them about residential schools, Elizabeth notes that she still does not understand entirely why residential schools happened:

> They didn't really specify, like go into specifics about what happened at residential schools, like for anyway, like my grade 11 history, we talked about it,

> and we watched maybe a few videos on it, but then that was it, and we still had a bunch of thoughts going in our heads, like I know for me I was like, okay, well, this happened, why did this happen? Why are Indigenous peoples still treated differently? Like we got no answers to that, we. like it was history class, it was like, this happened, moving on. (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

Similarly, Angel notes that school taught her that the purpose of residential schools "was really to erase the culture". However, she goes on to state that, "they never told us that that was a good or bad thing, they just said that that's what happened". Angel's comments imply that, although she was taught about residential schools, there was very little critical analysis regarding the colonial ideologies that birthed the residential school policy or the intergenerational impact of such an act of cultural genocide. Angel's comments also indicate that she is aware that the failure of classroom discourses to provide a bridge between historical and contemporary Indigenous issues left her without a full understanding of how history has informed the colonial present. Such a bridge is imperative to dismantling the colonial narrative of settler benevolence and generosity in the face of Indigenous "dysfunction". It is also vital to making sense of current systems of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Sites of Resistance: Awareness of the Problematic Nature of Curricular Absences

The participants' narratives are indicative of the curricular silences that continue to exist, to one degree or another, in Canadian classrooms. These curricular silences problematically reproduce Euro-Western ideologies that devalue Indigenous peoples and their struggles and that push them to the periphery. But what do their narratives reveal about how participants make sense of the failure of educational institutions to adequately prepare them to understand current

systems of colonial violence? An analysis of the interviews reveals that the participants are aware of the highly problematic nature of current curricular absences. In fact, not only did participants express a critical awareness of the failure of educational institutions to adequately incorporate Indigenous perspectives and histories into the curriculum, but more notably, several of the participants articulated a sense of frustration, disappointment and, at times, anger regarding these gaps in the curriculum. This anger is exemplified by Jody and Brandi. In response to a question regarding their feelings of the type of education they received about Indigenous peoples in elementary and high schools these participants responded:

> (loudly and angrily) Oh my goodness, terrible! I'm sorry, like that is the biggest issue I have had since elementary school. (Jody, 17, Montreal)

> (angrily) I look back kind of horrified now…not really even knowing anything about Indigenous people, none of their stories were shared, so that was a fail. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

This same sense of anger, frustration and dissatisfaction is also evident in my interviews with Tricia and Joanna. When asked to describe their feelings vis-à-vis their observation that their elementary schools had not taught them a lot about Indigenous peoples the two girls gave the following responses:

> We didn't learn anything about Canadian racial inequality so it's kind of

> hypocritical where, I find it very hypocritical that Canada says that we welcome our multiculturalism and diversity meanwhile they've swept this under the rug. (Tricia, 19, Thunder Bay)

> I think it's disgusting for lack of a better word for it. Um at least, like you know, a country like England will take responsibility for colonization and a lot countries take responsibility, at least some responsibility. But they left out so much that we only learned in the last two years, like things that they probably don't want to tell us. The amount people who were, like the genocide, the mistreatment, the residential school, big, big thing. (Joanna, 18, Montreal)

These two excerpts convey the sense of disappointment, anger and "disgust" that the participants feel regarding their lack of exposure to racial and colonial truths in the classroom. Such feelings indicate a recognition, on the part of the participants, that the educational curriculum is doing them a disservice by not adequately preparing them to make sense of Indigenous/settler relations. They also indicate great need for changes to Canada's educational curriculum. Furthermore, while they do not make explicit links between this lack of exposure and the maintenance of settler colonialism, their responses reveal an awareness of the strategic function of Eurocentric curriculums. More precisely, comments such as "the things they don't want to tell us" and "swept under the rug" reveal an awareness that the lack of Indigenous perspectives and lived experiences within their classroom content is not a random omission. Rather, participants seem to recognize, to varying degrees, that Canada's history of violence has been purposively excluded from the curriculum because it does not correspond with dominant narratives of

Canadian benevolence, multiculturalism and democracy. In this way, notes Joanna, Canada avoids taking responsibility for historical wrong doings.

Further to articulating a sense of dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the extent to which their school curriculum incorporated Indigenous histories and perspectives, many of the participants expressed a desire to learn more about Indigenous peoples living in Canada. Several also demonstrated a willingness to take active steps to educate themselves in this regard. For example:

> With university, you have to really seek out those classes that talk about Indigenous peoples, like you can't just walk into an English class and you're learning about Indigenous stuff or reading an article about Indigenous women and then. Like you really have to find those courses that talk about it. Cuz you can't just walk around campus and think, "Oh there's so much information about this". So, you really have to go find it yourself. (Elizabeth, 19, Winnipeg)

> But I would say this past year I've read a lot of books. I took the Women and Gender Studies course and it's been really eye-opening. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

> That's kind of why I'm in Anthropology. He (the Anthropology professor) always gives us information about. Like he just messaged us the other day about a Pow Wow happening. Like he's very, very interested in things happening in the

> communities nearby. He's always telling us, he's always giving us little facts about things that have happened. (Jody, 19, Montreal)

Elizabeth, Brandi and Jody all note that their first in-depth exposure to the lived realities of Indigenous peoples was either in CEGEP or university. This exposure was due to the fact that they purposefully chose courses, such as Introduction to Feminist and Gender Studies, Anthropology, and Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, that address the interlocking of systems of colonial, racial, and gender oppression that exist in Canada. Brandi's comments also indicate that she makes efforts to read books that deal with Indigenous issues.

Other participants communicated the conscious efforts they make to seek out information about Indigenous realities through friends, social media, and/or community activities. Examples:

> I would definitely say, it would be a mixture between books and the classes I'm taking now. So, like over the summer when the book *Seven Fallen Feathers* was really prominent, I read that which had a lot of compelling personal stories about missing and murdered Indigenous women in Thunder Bay and I've also looked at other books. So, I've been reading more personal stories. (Brandi, 19, Thunder Bay)

> Yeah, I feel like it's my responsibility as a Canadian, I can't just like choose to ignore this whole group of people because they are not in my environment, I should be learning about this whole group of people who were here before the white people came, who this land really belongs to. The only way I hear about it

> is when I literally google, missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada and then I'll find some information, that's the only time that it has been shoved in my face is when I go out and personally seek that kind of information. (Joanna, 18, Montreal)

> I feel like it's my responsibility as a Canadian (to learn more about Indigenous issues). I can't just like choose to ignore this whole group of people because they are not in my environment, I should be learning about this whole group of people who were here before the white people came, who this land really belongs to. (Jody, 17, Montreal)

Brandi comments on the efforts she makes to read books that deal with the personal stories of Indigenous people who have been victims of violence. In a similar vein, Jody and Joana both communicate the sense of personal and collective responsibility they feel to learn about Indigenous issues. Such a sense of responsibility should be highlighted. Settler colonialism requires settler indifference vis-à-vis colonial attempts to disappear and distort Indigenous lived experiences from mainstream discourses. The first step towards healing Indigenous/settler relations must involve a refusal to remain complacent in the face of colonial narratives that reinforce conceptions of settler innocence and Indigenous dysfunction. It must also involve a desire, followed by actions, to learn the truth of our histories and relationships to colonization and other systems of oppression. The frustration and anger that the participants feel in the face of curricular absences, as well as the efforts they make to educate themselves about Indigenous realities, represent crucial sites of hope and resistance. They indicate the possibility that the

current generation of white settler girls is moving towards a critical awakening vis-à-vis the colonial nature of mainstream educational discourses. The fact that many of the participants are aware of the absence of information they have about both the historical and contemporary context of Indigenous issues in Canada also confirms the need for changes to the curriculum. In fact, the participants are clear in their assessment of the educational curriculum presented to them: there are negative emotional and intellectual consequences resulting from the absence of contemporary Indigenous issues in the curriculum.

Reflections

It is impossible for me to end this analysis without reflecting on how my positionality as a white settler influenced, not only the way that I interpreted the participants' responses, but also the questions that I chose to pose. In fact, I must admit that this was my one of my main concerns as I journeyed through this thesis process. I recognize the need for feminist qualitative researchers to embrace their subjectivity in order to remain present, reflexive, and embodied throughout the research process. I also recognize the need to relinquish any desire to uncover a universal, objective truth. Nevertheless, I was plagued with many questions as I moved forward in my analysis. For instance: in what ways does my white settler identity influence the structure and content of the thesis? What stories do I choose to centre? What stories do I not see/do I refuse to see? What are the nuances of colonial violence and colonial resistance/complicity that I may be neglecting due to my position of privilege within a settler Canadian hierarchy? How would the questions that I generated throughout this thesis differ if I were a person of colour? Or an Indigenous person?

My choice to examine settler identity was greatly influenced by own positionality. More specifically, as I have articulated throughout this thesis, it was motivated by my own process of

coming to terms with my settler identity as well as the complex ways that this identity makes me unwittingly complicit with systems of colonial violence. It was also motivated by my desire to "stay in my own lane" in order to avoid speaking for Indigenous peoples or reproducing the colonial tendency to interrogate Indigenous identity while leaving settler identity unexamined. Therefore, the questions I chose to ask the participants were shaped, at least to some degree, by the questions with which I have struggled over the last number of years. For example, how do I make sense of discourses of colonial violence? How do I make sense of my ignorance, both former and current, vis-à-vis this violence? What role do dominant narratives play in this ignorance? How do I understand my own identity as a settler?

There are many other ways that my lived experiences and positionality influenced this thesis project. For instance, I am a member of an activist/study group in Montreal that examines structures and dynamics of white supremacy in Canada. I have, therefore, learned to question the ways that white peoples' responses to systems of racism and colonial injustice, while seeming innocuous, may actually perpetuate colonial biases. I have also learned to interrogate critically the ways in which my white privilege renders me less effective in recognizing more subtle forms of settler racism and denial — it is "sort of like asking fish to notice water or birds to discuss air" (Kendall, 2012, p. 1). In fact, the members of this group consistently challenge me to question whether it is even possible for white settlers to resist racial and colonial oppression in Canada in ways that do not simultaneously support their own dominant position. The reading materials and group discussions also continually draw my awareness to the strategies, both subtle and explicit, that people who belong to dominant groups employ to maintain their power. I, therefore, frequently found myself anxious about the whether or not I was too easily letting my participants "off the hook". More specifically, throughout the process of analyzing the interviews, I worried

about whether or not I was placing too much emphasis on the constructive nature of the participants' responses while obscuring (or perhaps failing to see altogether) the subtle ways in which the participants deflected, minimized, or rejected the truth of colonial violence. I also worried about the complex ways that my own feelings of settler guilt could unwillingly contribute to colonial biases and agendas. I was often reluctant to underline the ways in which participants were disrupting colonial ideologies and narratives. I searched for the "fault lines" within these transgressive discourses. I questioned whether I was failing to recognize less explicit forms of settler evasion and denial. Perhaps my need to soothe my own sense of settler guilt and colonial responsibility was leading me to overly focus on the positive? After all, despite my efforts to critically examine my own privilege, I grew up immersed in ideologies and narratives that constantly reinforced white settler benevolence. I also grew up in a country deeply invested in the erasure of the systems of white supremacy and colonial violence. I, therefore, felt a heavy sense of responsibility to now "get it right" in order to contribute to the disruption of colonial ideologies and practices.

This aforementioned desire to get it right was most often a welcomed and beneficial emotion. It helped to keep me accountable to my own biases and positionality and it served as a motivating force throughout this thesis process. However, I must it admit that, at times, my fear of unwittingly colluding with colonial systems of denial and erasure immobilized me at times. It was during these times that I looked to the work of Paulette Regan (2010) —one of my primary inspirations for this thesis projects. As she notes, settler Canadians stand at a critical crossroads in our relationship with Indigenous peoples. We, therefore, cannot allow ourselves to get stuck in feelings settler guilt and responsibility. We cannot let these unsettling feelings render us inactive vis-à-vis efforts to interrogate and resist the ideologies and practices that maintain settler

hegemony and colonial injustice. Rather, we must be willing to link knowledge and critical reflection to action in order to challenge colonial myths and restructure our relationships with Indigenous peoples. With this message in mind, rather than giving in to my fear of getting it wrong, at times I chose to step back from my thesis for short periods in order to regain perspective. During these times, I also felt the need to consult with colleagues to make sure I was on the right track and that I was not letting my anxieties take the reins vis-à-vis my analysis. In fact, it was my trusted thesis supervisor, Dr. Mythili Rajiva, who reminded me of the dangers of imposing my own voice and anxieties onto the participants' narratives. Such an imposition minimizes the participants' own agency and obscures the nuanced and complex ways in which girls can simultaneously support and resist systems of inequality and injustice. It also undermines their capacity for socio-political change.

Conclusion

In the current chapter, I provided an analysis of the interviews that I conducted with twelve white settler girls living in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Montreal. I argued that the participants' ability and propensity to identify their culture and identity as simply "Canadian" both reinforce and depend on the conflation of Canadian identity with whiteness. More specifically I noted that many of the participants' responses reflect the extent that the white settler body has come to represent the essential criteria for national belonging: the unexamined centre of Canadian identity. Subjects who are categorized under the rubric of visible minorities, in contrast, are excluded from dominant understandings of Canadian identity and belonging. Consequently, white settler girls come to understand their identity of Canadian through the Othering of groups that fall outside socially constructed boundaries of national belonging.

In the second part of the chapter, I articulated the ways in which participants' perceptions of personal safety are influenced by the geographical and racial context in which they find themselves. More specifically, I argued that many of the responses of the participants, in particular from those participants living in Winnipeg and Thunder Bay, reveal the extent to which danger is problematically conflated with areas of the city that contain a relatively large Indigenous presence. This conflation is due, in large part, to the fact that settlers gain a sense of themselves as true Canadians through the formation of fixed boundaries that demarcate particular spaces as places reserved for superior national subjects. The demarcation of less affluent neighbourhoods in many of Canada's inner cities as degenerate, for example, marks the Indigenous and racialized bodies inhabiting these areas as less human and, consequently, less Canadian, as those living in white suburbia (Razack, 2002).

In the third part of the chapter, I examined the ways that the participants negotiate discourses related to colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls. I noted that, despite obvious gaps in their understanding of these issues, Canada's history of systemic violence against the Indigenous peoples has not been entirely overlooked by the white settler girls who participated in this research. In fact, to some extent or another, all of the participants speak about abuses committed against Indigenous peoples; in particular, the abuses inflicted on children in residential schools. Many of the participants also communicate an awareness, not only of the existence of colonial policies, but also of the violence that characterized them. Finally, many of the participants indicate an awareness of the lack of response, on the part of both the general public and Canadian law enforcement, to acts of violence committed against Indigenous peoples and minority groups. Such forms of awareness disrupt the problematic ignorance and erasure of colonial violence that characterizes much of non-Indigenous society. They further destabilize

the comfortable stance of ignorant “not knower” that allows settler Canadians to distance ourselves from the truth of colonial violence in order to “keep in motion the way things are instead of thinking about the way things could be” (Malewski & Jaramillo, 2011, p. 2).

Despite the promising nature of many of the participants' responses, I noted the tendency of some participants to identify settler colonialism as geographically specific. I further noted the tendency of many of the participants to locate settler colonialism as exclusively in the distant past.

In the final part of the chapter, I argued that the education system, while beginning to integrate Indigenous perspectives and lived realities, still does not give young settler Canadians sufficient information to effectively engage with on-going systems of violence. For instance, dominant educational discourses continue to portray Indigenous peoples as simultaneously deficient and disappeared/disappearing — a characterization that legitimizes settler dominance and masks colonial systems of injustice and violence. Educational discourses also fail to provide students with an adequate understanding of the impact of intersecting systems of colonial, racial, and gender oppression on Indigenous peoples. Settler girls are, therefore, denied critical opportunities to comprehend and negotiate how their own identities, family histories, and colonial privileges have been shaped and determined by historical and current efforts to subjugate and disappear Indigenous peoples, cultures, and experiences. I argued, however, that the frustration and anger that participants feel in the face of curricular absences, as well as the efforts they make to educate themselves about Indigenous realities represent important sites of hope and resistance. These emotions indicate the possibility that the current generation of white settler girls is moving towards a critical awakening vis-à-vis the colonial nature of mainstream educational discourses.

Chapter Six – Conclusion: Addressing the Need to Centre Settler Colonialism

The perspectives and lived experiences of white Euro-western girls have been well represented within both feminist and girlhood studies. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the ways that settler colonialism shapes the lived experiences of girls living in settler colonial nations such as Canada. In fact, while Indigenous identities have long been the subject of patronizing colonial scrutiny, settler identity, much like other dominant identities, remains largely uninterrogated in academic discourse. This failure to interrogate settler privilege and identity is highly problematic. It precludes an understanding of the complex ways that settler identity in Canada was, and is, constructed in relation to the disempowerment and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. It further precludes an understanding of the myriad ways that settler girls maintain, support, and resist systems of colonial violence and injustice.

The current research addressed these problematic silences in both feminist and girlhood literature. More specifically, I brought girlhood studies into conversation with settler colonial and feminist theories in order to interrogate the ways that white settler Canadian girls negotiate and make sense of recently emerging discourses related to colonial violence. In doing so, I disrupted the problematic tendency for non-Indigenous researchers to focus on alleged sites of Indigenous dysfunction in order to shed light on the ways that white settler girls benefit from, maintain and resist systems of colonial injustice and violence. I further challenged the mainstream discourse of "girls in crisis" by providing a nuanced discussion of girls' agency, their capacity for resistance as well as the multiple spheres of oppression and privilege in which they inhabit. Finally, I disrupted neo-liberal discourses of "empowerment" that are prevalent in feminist and girlhood studies. More specifically, I articulated how the construction of white settler girls as empowered subjects and true Canadians relies on and upholds its antithesis— the

construction of Indigenous women and girls as disposable Others. I further shed light on the multiple ways that the intersections of sexism, racism, and colonialism differentially shape the lived experiences and identities and girls living within settler colonial contexts. For example, colonial ideologies, policies and practices persist in rendering Indigenous girls at significantly greater risk of violence than white settler girls and with less access to social, educational and political resources. These same intersections also differentially determine national and local responses (or lack thereof) to acts of violence committed against settler versus Indigenous girls.

My research provides critical insights into the ways that the current generation of white settler girls resist systems of colonial erasure and colonial violence. For example, despite obvious gaps in their education, the participants were all aware, to some degree or another, of historical systems of colonial violence. Many of the participants also articulated a sense of frustration, disappointment and, at times, anger regarding problematic gaps in their school curricula. Finally, many of the participants communicated a desire to take action in order to improve their knowledge of the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. The transgressive nature of such responses should not be minimized. Acknowledging Canada's history of colonial violence challenges national mythologies that characterize Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples as benevolent and unavoidable. Resisting colonial erasure/ignorance further disrupts the comfortable stance of passive "not knower" that allows settlers to continue benefiting from the disempowerment of Indigenous peoples.

My research also provides critical insights into the ways that settler girls contribute to the maintenance of settler dominance. For example, all of the of the participants communicated a critical understanding of violence against Indigenous peoples. Many of the participants also communicated an unwillingness to passively accept the colonial status quo. However, all but one

participant communicated an understanding of settler colonialism as being situated in the distant past. Such an understanding is problematic. Settler colonialism is not a historical event. It is structure that continues to be firmly embedded in Canada's political, economic, and social systems. Constructing settler colonialism as a historical event, therefore, elides the current policies, practices and colonial ideologies that serve to maintain the disempowerment of Indigenous peoples. It further elides the responsibility that all settler Canadians must take in disrupting these policies and practices

In addition to contributing to the field of girlhood studies, the current thesis contributes to the field of settler colonial studies. More precisely, I point to the fact that current settler colonial scholarship tends to be state-centric. My thesis firmly establishes the contemporary Canadian state as an expression of settler colonial power requiring the ongoing domination of Indigenous peoples and lands. However, I maintain that is not just the state that is responsible for the current conditions of colonialism within Canada. As my thesis makes clear, the actions and inactions of settler Canadians, historically and today, also contribute to the on-going dispossession and subordination of Indigenous peoples. Settler Canadians are not merely passive beneficiaries of state-initiated colonial policies and practice. They can also serve as also "active agents within colonialism and therefore beneficiaries of their own actions" (Leblanc, 2014, p. 19). Not identifying and exploring this reality within settler colonial research and scholarship hinders the possibilities of making significant changes in settler/Indigenous relations.

The current research contributes to educational theory and practice. More specifically, this thesis sheds light on the role that educational discourses play in shaping white settler girls' understanding and awareness of colonial violence. It also points to the need to integrate more educational initiatives that challenge setter ideologies and identities. As I articulate throughout

this thesis, provincial curricula continue to minimize and/or erase historical policies and practices designed to assimilate, subjugate and eradicate Indigenous peoples in order to assert settler dominance. Educational discourses further fail to provide an adequate understanding of the systems of white supremacy and settler colonialism currently at play in Canadian society. White setter girls are, therefore, denied critical opportunities to comprehend and negotiate how their own identities and lived experiences have been shaped by historical and current efforts to assimilate and disappear Indigenous peoples to dominant the land. They are further denied the knowledge and critical analysis that is required to make sense of the legacy of colonialism — including systemic

The classroom can and *must* offer a space that challenges the colonial status quo. However, as decades of scholarly research reveals, merely educating settler Canadians about colonial realties and histories, while an essential first step, it is not sufficient to disrupt colonial hierarchies (Davis et al., 2017). In order to transform settler/Indigenous relations, educational initiatives must also challenge settler Canadians to examine how they are implicated in contemporary manifestations of colonial injustice and violence. Problematically, however, the majority of educational initiatives focus solely on "liberal goals of 'raising awareness' or imparting information, positioning settlers as consumers of information, and establishing awareness raising as the end game" (Davis et al., 2017, p. 11). Hence, these initiatives do not allow settler Canadians to recognise how they participate in, benefit from, and maintain colonial inequities. As Tuck and Yang point out, critical consciousness, in and of itself, "does not translate into action that disrupts settler colonialism" (2012, p. 19). In order to have any hope of transforming settler colonial relations, educational initiatives need to actively challenge settler Canadians to examine their role in colonial injustice. For, unless settler identities are

interrogated, educational initiatives become just one more way for settlers to move to innocence, achieving absolution through the act of empathic listening (Davis et al., 2017).

The current research has not just been a journey into white settler girlhood, it has also been a journey into my own identity. Interrogating the complicity and of white settler girls in regard to systems of colonial violence compelled me to examine my own settler complicity as well as my own settler privilege. Researching and articulating Canada' history of policies and practices designed to assimilate, subjugate, and disappear Indigenous peoples forced me to examine my own ignorance/denial, both former and current, vis-à-vis settler colonial relations in Canada. Such an examination was incredibly humbling at times as I came face to face parts of myself that are less than flattering. I could not escape my feelings of settler guilt and culpability. Yet, I remain incredibly grateful for the experience. The process of writing this thesis challenged me in ways that *all* settlers need to be challenged. More specifically, it provided me the opportunity to examine my own colonial assumptions, understandings, and biases. It also allowed me the opportunity to reflect further on the work that settlers must do to disrupt colonial ideologies and hierarchies of colonial power

This thesis journey challenged me to reflect on important areas and avenues for future research. In the current research I chose to focus on white settler girlhood. However, it is also important to examine the ways that settler girls of colour understand and negotiate discourses and realties of colonial violence. Settler girls of colour face violence and discrimination due to systems of white supremacy that position them as racialized Others. Nevertheless, they are complicit in the marginalization and continued dispossession of Indigenous peoples living in Canada. But how do settler girls of colour make sense of these seemingly incompatible positions? How do they understand their role in maintaining systems of colonial dispossession?

To what extent do they foreground their own oppression in order to disavow their role in the maintenance of settler colonialism? Finally, does being complicit in the marginalization of Indigenous peoples necessarily entail that one is also privileged in relation to Indigenous peoples? These are all questions that merit further exploration within the field of girlhood studies.

Throughout this thesis, I underlined the tremendous amount of colonial injustice that continues to marginalize and disenfranchise Indigenous peoples of this country. As Robyn Bourgeois (2014) notes, addressing such injustice "requires a great deal of effort from Indigenous women, Indigenous nations and their political allies" (p. 340). Addressing such injustice further requires the centring of Indigenous rights to "self-determination within state-sponsored violence anti-violence responses" as well as the "creation of community-based anti-violence responses and, thus, enactments of (Indigenous) self-determination" (pp 340 – 341). Finally, as this thesis makes clear, efforts to address colonial violence must include an examination of the ways that settlers benefit from and support, whether knowingly and unknowingly, systems of violence against Indigenous women and girls. The work of decolonization *should not* be the sole responsibility of Indigenous peoples. Settler Canadians must also demand radical change to colonial systems. By and large Indigenous peoples within Canada are already there, settlers have yet to meet them. Only once settlers confront how deeply implicated we are in upholding colonial hierarchies can we begin to stand with (not in front of) Indigenous peoples in their on-going efforts towards decolonization. Thielen-Wilson (2012) puts it well: "settlers cannot change who we are—that is, we cannot begin to engage in human behaviour towards the other—without first recognizing and addressing how land (and its usurpation justified by a rational desire for accumulation) is central to white settler collective

identity" (p. 312). This thesis offered but one opportunity for non-indigenous Canadians to begin to acknowledge and confront our roles and identities as settlers.

This thesis serves as a wake-up call to feminist and girlhood scholars. More specifically, I point to the urgent need to centre colonialism within our research and activism. As I noted in the introductory chapter, it is important for scholars produce work that disrupts the "imperatives of empire" (Mohanty, 2006p. 15) and that "rebels against the permanence of settler colonial reality" (Simpson, 2014, p. 08). In fact, the failure to do so renders girlhood and feminist theorists unwittingly complicit in the erasure of Indigenous women and girls' lived experience and their continued resistance to colonial violence. The ways that settler Canadians contribute to the maintenance of settler colonialism needs to be explored from a multiplicity of active and inactive standpoints (Davis et al., 2017). This approach will provide room for greater complexity of analysis, leading to a more accurate understanding of how colonialism functions and how settler Canadians are an essential part of moving toward substantive changes in Indigenous/settler relations. It is only through such an interrogation that we can gain a better understanding of the educational and social interventions that are required to disrupt colonial hierarchies between settler and Indigenous girls living in Canada.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Are you a non-Indigenous young woman aged 14-20?

Are you currently living in Thunder Bay? Do you identify as 'white'?

If so, perhaps you would be interested in participating in my research project?

My name is Stephanie and I am a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa.

My research is interested in how white, non-Indigenous girls understand and make sense of recent discussions regarding missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. If you are interested in talking about this issue, I invite you to participate in a one-on-one discussion.

I will be tape-recording the interview and you will have a chance to share your opinion and experiences. You don't have to talk about issues that you feel are too personal if you don't want to and, if you decide to withdraw, there will be no negative consequences. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

I also want to assure you that this research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa and will be carefully supervised by Professor Mythili Rajiva, Associate Professor at the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies at the University of Ottawa.

If you or any of your friends are interested in being part of this discussion, we will find a time and place that is convenient for everyone. Participants will be compensated $20 for their time.

Please contact me:

Sincerely,
Stephanie Claude
Doctoral candidate, Institute of Gender and Feminist Studies. University of Ottawa

Appendix B: Questions for semi-structured interview with Settler girls

- Can you tell me a little about yourself? For example, what grade are in school? Where did you grow up? How do identify in terms of ethnicity/culture/background? Are there any other ways you identify yourself?
- As a girl living in Canada, how often do think about personal safety? Do you feel that you are relatively safe or at risk of violence? Explain.
- What do you think are some of the causes of violence against girls in Canada?
- Do you think that things like race and class effect girls' experiences of violence? Why or why not?
- Are you aware that Indigenous girls in Canada are at significantly greater risk of violence than non-Indigenous girls? How do you make sense of this fact? How do you feel about it?
- How much or how little do you feel you know about the history/current situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada? What have you learned about these issues? What were/are your main sources of information related to these issues?
- Have you ever heard of the term "Settler" to refer to non-Indigenous Canadians? What does this term mean to you?
- Do you pay attention to news/social media stories regarding the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada? What have you heard or learned about this inquiry? What is your understanding of what it is trying to accomplish?
- How do these stories about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls make you feel?
- How much contact did you have with Indigenous peoples?
- Have you ever heard of the word colonialism in reference to Canada?
- What role do you think non-Indigenous Canadians have in improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians?
- What are the main messages you receive about what a girl is supposed to be? Where do those messages come from?
- What are the main messages you receive about Indigenous girls? Where do these messages come from?
- In what ways do you think the lived experiences of Indigenous girls differ from yours?

Appendix C: Consent Form

Title of the study: Presencing Settler Colonialism: Settler girls' engagement with colonial violence against Indigenous women and girls

Name of Researcher: Stephanie Claude, doctoral candidate at the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa.

Name of thesis supervisor: Professor Mythili Rajiva

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the aforementioned research study which is being conducted by Stephanie Claude as a part of her doctoral research.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to look at Settler Canadian girls' experience and understanding of settler colonialism and systemic violence directed towards Indigenous women and girls. In particular, the project aims to explore how Settler girls understand and engage with emerging national discourses related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Participation: As a participant in this research process, I will participate in one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 1 hour during which I will be asked to reflect on the ways systems of oppression and privilege influence and shape the lived experiences and identity formation of girls living within Canada. This entails that I engage in discussion where I offer my opinion about the topic of violence towards both Indigenous and non-Indigenous girls in Canada. The interview will take place at a time and place that is convenient for me. The interview will be audio recorded so that the information may be accurately transcribed and analyzed. I will have the opportunity to review a copy of the transcript. I understand that I have the right not to participate in this research process and that I can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the process at any time without consequence.

Risks: I understand that some of the discussion may cause me discomfort and that I could recount uncomfortable experiences/opinions, feel vulnerable, emotional, or triggered. I have

received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks. I understand that I have the right not to participate in this research process and that I can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw for the process at any time without consequence. In this case, any data that has been collected will not be part of the study. I have access to the resources offered below, should the need arise.

Immediate Help Resources:

- Kids Help Phone - Kids help phone is Canada's only bilingual phone and on-line counselling service for youth. It's free, anonymous and confidential. 1-800-668-6868
- Tel-Jeunes: 24/7 support and helpline; phone counseling for kids and teens under 20 [E/F] Montreal 514-263-2266; 1-800-263-2266

Benefits: My participation in this study will contribute to new insights into the changes/ interventions needed to disrupt colonial relations and ideologies in significant ways. Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential and will only be used for this research process. The anonymity of participants is paramount and any personal details offered in the interview process will be altered to protect anonymity. All the information collected will be accessible only to the researcher and the researcher thesis supervisor. In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure confidentiality, the researcher will employ standard safety measures such has password protection and using only secure devices. Any data collected, including electronic copies of the interviews, audio recordings, and the notes from data analysis will be kept in a secure manner, either in a password protected file or in a secure filing cabinet for a period of five years starting from the point when the data is collected.

Voluntary Participation: I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in this project and that if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdraw will be destroyed.

I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Stephanie Claude of the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher.
If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of the study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethica@uottawa.ca

Parental Signature (if required)

I, _____, agree to allow my child _____, to participate in the above research study conducted by Stephanie Claude of the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa. There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date:

Participant's signature

I, _____, participate in the above research study conducted by Stephanie Claude of the Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa.

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: