Spoken from this urban place, from these dark lips: Using space, place and poetry to investigate my lived experience as a woman of African descent in the New Urban Environment.

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<u>Abstract</u>

This paper validates oral histories and micro-ethnographic experience by using the device of Griot poetry and prose to explore the spaces between life history and ethnography. This project sought to destabilize the imagined boundaries between (the multiplicity of) subjectivity/ies and objectivity, and the researcher and researched to illuminate the intersections between human experience, personal narrative, and the New Urban Environment (Caygill, 1998, pp. 5). It is argued that new ways of theorizing about contemporary racialized subjectivities are necessary to address the historic and persistent absence of subaltern perspectives from dominant discourses that intimately and directly shape our lives. Drawing on the legacy of artistic expression as a means to give voice to suppressed perspectives, this paper illustrates that psycho-geography and urban flânerie can be leveraged to make insightful and relevant connections between individual and collective consciousness to inspire critical and discursive analysis and broaden representations of Black womanness; from critiques to possibilities.

<u>Dedication</u>

This project is dedicated to my children whom I pray inherit a world better than the one they were born into. This dedication also extends to all those who share the positionalities and subjectivities explored in the paper and is especially dedicated to those who never considered the lived experience of those who live in the shadow of Otherness- may you be inspired to think on these things.

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        Please view the spoken word videography entitled A Walk in Old Shoes prior to

reading this thesis at the following link: http://1drv.ms/1cTeD1P

A Walk In Old Shoes

I walk through, carry, am part of, embody, construct and deconstruct the urban
I was ascribed an 'urban' identity before I lived it
Bore the weight of histories, memories and ill- fated destinies
Manifested in physical space, filling my psychic universe.
The possibility, the alternatives, the promise of emancipation
The resilience of the oppressed rains hope on a perpetually disturbed harvest
Leeched of its potentiality but where the blossoming and ripening of fruits are
realized
Against all odds

This is my journey, was my journey, will be my journey…

Mapping my journey through the downtown core
St, George campus where my post-secondary student identity was borne.
Wake up
Wait for a ride to Bramalea bus station
Wait for the bus that will take and 1.5 hours to get to Finch station and another
45 to get to St. George
In the beginning, the journey is liberating
I am on my own
My whereabouts determined only by myself, the people who under pay for my
labour and the educational institution
Don't be late for class, though I always am...

I am an exception
Among my peers who look like, talk like, walk like
Feel Africa from a distance
A vision made nebulous through the depths of the waters of the Caribbean
The plumes of exhaust that dance along the trajectory of an airplane that makes
its way to Toronto with my parents

Who else is riding with me?
This tedious journey has many passengers making their way to the urban centre
I wonder who among them will be at my school, a school, a good job?
Under employed, unemployed?
If your on the bus in the suburbs its probably not because you are concerned
about a sustainable future
Although I am…

I blend with the crowd
Realizing that outside speculation will almost too consistently be deductive
Black skin- that's actually cocoa brown
Plus- badges of ethnicity, performative gender and class markers
Dark eyeliner, baggy pants and Air Force Ones

Bubble jackets and weaves
And perms and natural hair
The melody of my voice
Equals ghetto black girl- the popular image of the urban.
Unless urban is to mean modern, cultured, experiencing transience
Cross cultural interaction
Etically
A privileged position
Flirting with the marginal
Celebrating its delicacies and consuming its soul

New spaces, new places- familiar stares from unfamiliar faces
Well… that's if you catch them looking
I must be the subject of another's flânerie
They wonder, what I'm doing in this store
Where I clearly can't afford anything screams my shoes, shouts my skin, laughs
my wallet emptied by school fees
Can I help you?
Just looking…at another world within a new world

Adjacent to the campus is where we aspire to make our own
We go to this school and are told we are among the elite
Are taught the ways of the West and its omnipresent religion
Capitalism…I mean democracy

I used to feel alienated from this bordering space
Rich rich, money money, got none? Sorry honey
But I am redeemed in my cynicism
Unearthing the many epistemologies that make this self, I create, recycle
Revolution- full circle
This becomes the real project I'm working on
Though the institution still wants its tribute
Read and write 'til blood is drawn
And they are still not satiated

The disjunct' between here and there slowly feels less imposed, less threatening
As I realize I am entitled to a different imagined dream than this "Canadian
Dream"
Land of freedom, wealth, democracy
For some, not all
Patriarchal, racist, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, xenophobic
Don't talk like that here or you'll get No respect!

I must carry this eye with me
It must engage with the storm that embattles my very being
A fierce wind that demands that I accept the unacceptable

Normalize the constructed
And naturalize what cannot be freedom, love
But this eye can see the machinery at work here
I am a stranger in this place, but my very presence demands that I belong
I say I am not an exception
Others who look like, talk like, walk like, dress like me belong here too
Don't roll your eyes when I ask how we can discuss the success of the European
Industrial revolution
Implicitly illustrating why Europe and its descendants dominate the world
Without locating the contribution of the slave trade and all supporting imperialist
projects to the continued oppression of 2/3rds of the world

My tongue is cement, heavy to move
Anxiety builds, but I have to speak up
Raise my hand
This is why I am here.
SSSSSSSSSpeak!
For I am who they think I am
Though I'm not who they want me to be

Now, movement from the retail strip to Bloor and St George is no big deal
I feel the stares, but I don't care
Because I decide who I am at this moment and time
Regardless of the identity so intently splattered on my existence
I don't even want your stuff
I smirk at what you think I am, within and without the classroom
And die a little because words manifest without intervention
And She- that archetype they thought I was
Is manufactured daily…generationally…on purpose

This area is zoned and I have a temporary pass
In Brampton, I've already mapped the safe areas
And distance often impedes accidental intrusions into exclusive spaces
I am the urban here and there

The urban condition resonates in many aspects
Although in suburbia abject poverty is not rampant
The caste like status and crosses heavied with the weight of stereotypes,
categories, names
Are carried by people with little political capital
Criminalized, truants until proven innocent
Who have been given an opportunity to rise up the social mobility ladder through
education like everybody else and it's their fault if they waste it!
Though their ladder has few steps, can only fit a handful
And will fail if too many stand on the structure
Though there are always exceptions

The Urban center is the meeting place of a multiplicity of crossroads, zones of contact
I turn onto St. George and I am ambivalent
Robarts library induces this disembodied state
Wherein I am called to put myself back together again as I see fit
In every encounter, in every conversation, in every class comment
And I am pleased with the product

My urban self will never be complete as long as I live
Today, I move past this area in triumph, as though I have done the impossible
Which is to deconstruct and sculpt a new me
This area still symbolizes the centrality of reclaiming self-authorship in my life
Resistance a necessary tool to survival and sanity
The tireless energy necessary to break down and build new forms- détournement
My flânerie *connects to the emancipation of MY imagined community*
For all…

I walk through, carry, am part of, embody, construct and deconstruct the urban
I live in, and the urban lives in me

Forward

Narrative Ideas and Aesthetic Thoughts

An analysis of the narrative ordering of the spoken word videography reveals the centrality of connection to the interpretation and experience of the piece. There are so many themes addressed within the psycho-geographic map that become harmonious or sensible if the audience agrees to take the, what could be seen as a, convoluted journey outlined in the spoken-word piece. The narrative suggests that my subjective experience propels the expression of ideas that move across and through cross- cutting discursive notions; mirroring those that shape my positionality. So, for example, the discussion that can arise from the analysis of the passage, "bore the weight of histories, memories and ill- fated destinies" references a multitude of things that could only become clear through an understanding of my discursive reality, subjective position, and communicative intent. From the yearning for an ancestral home, the legacy of the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, civil rights, Black transnational histories, contemporary global inequities, tragedies and triumphs, this quote speaks volumes about the density of what must be addressed in the subsequent passages.

The spoken-word piece is narrated in such a way as to invite the audience into a conversation. It attempts to personalize and connect with the audience by phrasing passages as though they are responses to an external question, "Who else is riding with me?" as an entry into thinking about the social dynamics of transportation, to envisioning the passengers on public transit, what their journeys look like, and how their identifications and locations demarcate their destinations.

The piece is alive in that it is spoken and is in the spirit of the spoken word and Griot tradition. This allows for the telling of a story as a narrator, for expression in the first person and for an omnipresent voice that speaks to all characters present, past and future. Take for example the following passage,

"I must be the subject of another's flâneurie.
They wonder, what I'm doing in this store
Where I clearly can't afford anything screams my shoes, shouts my skin, laughs my
wallet emptied by school fees.
Can I help you?
Just looking
At another world within a new world." (Peters, 2010)

The first line references a reactionary inference in the first person. The second voice sits outside the immediate experience and muses about the processes of identification that results in the production of a negative representation and interpretation of self. The third adopts the position of third person, speaking from the vantage point of the profiling store clerk who offers the truth about the way I wear my Black representation by way of a disapproving look and rhetorical offer of service. This playful use of voice within the piece is meant to achieve a certain poetic flow that, through its expression, offers a level of clarity in subjective wonderings. By revealing to the audience the author's thoughts about a situation, what the author thinks others are thinking and what was felt at the time and in retrospect, this type of poetry offers a comprehensive picture of the complexities of subjective experience.

Another feature of this narrative is that it seems not only to be in conversation with the audience, but that it speaks to itself and is sensitive to the evolution and growth of the author. Take the following passage:

"I am an exception.
Among my peers who look like, talk like, walk like, feel Africa from a distance.
A vision made nebulous through the depths of the waters of the Caribbean
The plumes of exhaust that dance along the trajectory of an airplane that makes its
way to Toronto with my parents." (Peters, 2010)

This quote is found near the beginning of the piece and figures narratively to reflect the understandings I had of myself as an undergraduate. Who I was as a person, how I interpreted my identification through representations of blackness and what it meant to be a 1st generation Canadian were all subjects I grappled with. The subsequent passages explored these questions and touched on the contemporary image of the Black subject. Further, I examined the idea that I was exceptional and simultaneously sought to show that exceptionality in educational achievement does not necessarily translate into specialized or more equitable treatment for a racialized individual.

In dialogue with the above quote, the following passage found much later in the piece responds to the idea of my exceptionality and rejects the idea that only some people are capable of academic achievement, and that most people are represented by essentialized definitions:

"I am a stranger in this place, but my very presence demands that I belong.
I say, I am not an exception
Others who look like, talk like, walk like, dress like me belong here too." (Peters, 2010)

This particular form of call and answer serves to tie the work together. This creates a sense of continuity in rhythm and idea that can be seen to, again, resemble a conversation where a point is stated, shapes the subsequent discussion and is re-addressed or reconsidered later on.

This piece ventures to infer an autobiographical being (Kadar, 2004). The structure of the psycho-geographic map animates my internal journey towards self-

understanding and purpose. The narrative reading of the piece illustrates my intention to develop my self/character as a protagonist. I have complex issues to address, the ability and reason to act. I have something to lose, something to gain, strengths and weaknesses. A resilient character achieves the highs and overcomes the lows of the piece. I note that women's ethnographic writing is often tied to efforts to establish self-worth and to clarify and authenticate their self-images (Tedlock, 2000). Analyzing the greater narrative of *A walk in old shoes* reveals my concern for presenting a character that engages in every day resistance, who represents the strength and diversity of a differently imagined Black community.

The texts, forms and meanings within the piece are intended to be accessible to the greater public and be especially relevant to racialized subjects (Noddings, 1986 in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000.) Although the aesthetic quality and effectiveness of the piece can only be individually judged, some general comments can be made regarding aesthetics.

Artistic expression in spoken word is rooted in the connections among sound, rhythm and feeling, thought and sensation. Parker (2003) has the following to say about sensation,

Sensation is the door through which we enter into the experience of beauty; and, again, it is the foundation upon which the whole structure rests. Without feeling for the values of sensation, men may be sympathetic and intelligent, but they cannot be lovers of the beautiful. They may, for example, appreciate the profound or interesting ideas in poetry, but unless they can connect them with the rhythm-values of the sounds of the words, they have only an intellectual or emotional, not an aesthetic experience (Parker, 2003, ch. 4).

The work of art is communicable. This piece attempts to draw the listener towards a deeper understanding of the complexities that face me as a Black woman and Black

subject. It endeavours to create more than a superficial engagement with some elements that may conflict with prior knowledge or beliefs about one's Self or Others, stirring up responses in the form of sensation and feeling.

Feelings are the connection between subjectivity and the greater world; giving us the information we need to create sensation, emotion, thought and desire (Robinson, 2013). The opportunity to engage with the piece in the intended manner is only available to those who are in a position to care about and be moved by the sound, words, rhythm and tone. Meaning making can only be attended to after the sensory stimuli, the videography ignites emotional awareness (Robinson, 2013). Sensation is a particular feeling that emanates through the body, where one perceives the world through the senses (Oxford University Press, 2014). In order to have cognitive engagement with the theoretical implications of the poetry, the listeners should allow themselves to hear my voice (does it comfort?), hear the words (are they pleasing?). Further, we often have multiple sensations at once, so feel the rhythm (does it move you?), see the imagery (is it familiar?), taste my fear (is it bitter?), smell my victories (are they sweet?).

There are competing definitions of emotion (American Psychological Association, 2010). For our purposes, we will define emotion as "a complex and pervasive state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence thought and behaviour" (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Feeling, as opposed to dismissing, the sensations and emotions that arise because of the piece is key to appreciating the value of artistic practice; it lays the groundwork for identifying and decoding one's interpretations of the piece. Parker (2003) argues that feelings are objectified when in conflict or when disconnected from an individual's worldview. In this way, the words of a poem can

absorb feeling; words become sad, joyful, angry etc. The aesthetic experience presents an

opportunity for the Self to succumb to these feelings.

The piece aims to resonate with its audience, calling for a high level of attention

to be paid to the subtle and overt, to the colloquial and academic, to the melody of my

voice and the delivery of words: reverberation. I use dynamic, familiar phrases, rhythm,

rhyme, intentional discussion of emotionally arousing issues, an overall exposing of the

soul, if you will, to create resonance and facilitate understanding and empathy, "For art

does not seek to give us nature over again, but to express its feeling tones" (Parker, 2003).

Chapter One

Introduction

　　This project seeks to investigate my subjective experience as a woman of African descent in the New Urban Environment. For the analysis I have used the device of a videography and spoken word poetry as a point of entry into discussions about notions of belonging and subjectivity. The project outcome is to use the research to contribute to the broadening of representations and knowledge about Black women's subjective experience within the context of a dynamic and changing urban environment. It is suggested that the experience of this particular marginalized group, whose identifications range across discursive categories of race, ethnicity, class and gender amongst others, will be instructive in theorizing and understanding the emerging complexities of subjecthood brought on by the products of globalization and rapid social change. The New Urban Environment is marked by global ebbs and flows of people, information and material that seriously undermine traditional boundaries based on local, national and international borders (Amin, 2007). This project seeks to respond to the void in the discourse on Black subjecthood from female perspectives in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

　　There is an emerging corpus of quantitative research investigating the experience of marginalized communities within the New Urban Environment. These studies reveal the persistence of social inequities that negatively influence the lives of those identified as part of the imagined Black collective. This project ventures to take seriously the need to complicate and interrogate static notions of Blackness to make room for the conceptualizing of multiple and diverse ways of being within Black communities. The

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latter desire is equally as important as the centering of the discourse of Blackness in the analysis of spatial and material effects of racialization for those who are marginalized based on phenotypic and/or cultural categorizations.

Context of the Study

Within the last two decades, there has been a rise in academic interest in the 'problem' of Black youth in the GTA. Issues of social decay, poverty, youth crime, gang violence, poor educational achievement and unemployment have been taken up in relation to sites such as the provincial, municipal and federal institutions of education, the justice system and social welfare. In a report commissioned by the provincial government, McMurray and Curling (2008) demonstrated that violence and hopelessness has come to define the experience of minority youth from communities with high rates of poverty and unemployment, systemic racism and inadequate provision of social services (McMurtry & Curling, 2008, pp. 141).

A report by the United Way of Toronto, *Strong neighbourhoods: A call to action* identified an increasing concentration of poverty in specific Toronto neighbourhoods (United Way, 2004, pp. 16). In this report, the identification of these locations characterized by poverty as "priority neighbourhoods" has markedly transformed the current public discourse around urban issues and "Black problems", adding to the dislocation of the material and physical effects of political and social policy from the realities of contemporary conditions of racialized neighbourhoods (Walcott, 2006).

The statistics that speak to the dire position of Blacks in Canada abound. The 2001 Canadian census concluded that about 50% of Black Canadians live on or below poverty line. The documentary, *City of Dreams,* asserts that in 2007, up to 40% of Black

school aged youth were not in school (Abdul, 2009). Duke, in her documentary, *A Deathly Silence,* explores the 2003 statistic that concluded that 30% of Toronto's homicide victims were African-Canadian in spite of their total estimated population of only 8 % (Duke, 2003; City of Toronto, 2006). In exploring the roots of the economic and social disenfranchisement of Black youth, many authors have turned to the exploration of educational institutions to examine how and in what ways discriminatory practices, curriculum, pedagogical strategies and the educational environment aid in the reproduction of social inequality.

Brown and Parekh's 2010 report, commissioned by the Toronto District School Board, found that Black students with an overall proportion of 14% were over-represented amongst students with behavioural issues (36%), mild intellectual disability (33%), developmental disability (30%), and language impairment (24%). These findings on special education also revealed a link between high economic status and the conferring of "gifted" status. These authors assert that further investigation into the connections between racial identities, economic status and academic achievement is strongly warranted, as no immediate explanation for the differing distributions of race and exceptionality presents itself (Brown and Parekh, 2010, pp. 42).

Joshee addresses the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of policy texts in her notion of policy webs. The over representation of African descendants in Identification, Placement & Review Committee (IPRC) Behavioural specialties, and as victims of discrimination under the "Zero Tolerance" policy of Bill 81, illustrate a certain essentialized construction of 'Blackness' that categorically defines people based on

performative markers of race (Brown & Parekh, 2010; Bhattacharjee, 2003 in Joshee, 2008).

Symbolic of the recent attempts to engage educational institutions in transformative shifts meant to provide redress for Black youth and their communities, the year 2009 signalled the re-emergence of calls for a curriculum that centered the experiences of African descendants. In 2009, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) introduced a Black-focused school in response to concerns about the high levels of academic disengagement among Black youth (TDSB, 2008). There exists a great deal of research that traces Black students' struggles in Canadian education systems offered by scholars such as Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine (1997) and James (1990). Like Gordon and Zinga (2012), this project conceptualizes Black Canadian youth's academic disengagement in the GTA "not as a problem of Black youth, but of the inequality perpetuated by Canadian education" (Gordon and Zinga, 2012, pp. 2).

What has become increasingly clear is that quantitative assessments of the experience of the Black population of the GTA are critical to providing information necessary for a sustained investigation into social realities of the New Urban Environment that could otherwise be ignored. However, quantitative figures only provide a partial part of the information necessary for a comprehensive contextualization of Black subjective experience. Qualitative sources are a necessary and rich source that offers the researcher the ability to fill in the gaps left by raw statistical figures; it offers us human, dynamic and complex illustrations of the discourses and macro/micro level structures that shape everyday lives. In this way, research that offers qualitative evidence that draw upon quantifiable studies such as those mentioned above are crucial to explorations of Black

subjects in the GTA; a dynamic, fluid and shifting position located in an equally changing and heterogeneous New Urban Environment.

James, Nyaho and Kwan-Lafond (2011) offer an example of a study that includes micro-level analysis of systemic issues that outlines the perspective of racialized youth in relation to their treatment and experiences with police. This work explicitly brings to the fore issues of discrimination and stereotyping based on race, location, gender and class. The work by Gordon and Zinga (2012) also uses the quantitative realities of Black youth educational underachievement as a starting point to investigate the subjective experiences and perspectives of these young people on the policies and debates around Afrocentric schooling.

This project builds upon this method by employing both artistic and traditional means of representing and expressing cultural critique. Rinaldo Walcott (2006) in his lecture, *What Rap has to say: Black youth, discourses of crime and cosmopolitanism*, shows how creative cultural expression has historically provided a legitimate way to communicate and illustrate the real effects of neoliberalism on Black experience in the Canadian context (Walcott, 2006). Here, Walcott shows how hip-hop, as a political and social tool, can effectively explicate the issues facing Black youth who have been written out of the master narrative of the Canadian nation and forced to navigate a terrain mediated by dominant discourses that render them simultaneously inside (multiculturalism) and outside (crime and repression, ethnically inflected terrorism, economic status) the notion of citizen.

Falling under the category of cultural expression, spoken word is a device that offers critical assessment of the context and subjective experience of Black subjects. This

research project will take as its starting point, the exploration and interrogation of a piece of work shaped by the traditions of politically conscious hip- hop and of Griot poetry, grounded in the historic and cultural continuity of African peoples. The spoken word videography entitled *A walk in old shoes* (Peters, 2010) will be treated as primary data and should be viewed prior to engaging with the print prose of this thesis.

This project will employ artistic practice, auto-ethnography, psycho-geography and narrative inquiry to explore the suggestions, inferences and representations offered by *A Walk in Old Shoes* (2010). Using artistic practice, this project is concerned with the production of meaning and is concerned with the aesthetic effectiveness of communicating the ideas, images and representations found within the primary data as well as throughout the analysis. This project aims to take into account the subjective position of the author and seeks to make every effort to trace the worldview and experiences that shape the interpretations and presentation in this work. The author is a young Black woman, first generation Canadian of Afro-Caribbean descent. Raised within the urban terrain of the Greater Toronto Area, the author is a mother, a partner, a student and an artist.

This project will embrace an auto-ethnographic stance taking up the methodological imperatives of arts-based practices, urban ethnography or flânerie and narrative inquiry. It is noted that any artistic endeavour that is auto-ethnographic must be accountable to its audience and strive to offer unique and relevant connections between personal experience and the greater social context (Dauphinee, 2010; Cole & Knowles, 2001). It is here that psycho-geography, the work of the new urban flâneur, figures prominently; as a method through which I can spatially organize my experiences and

identifications (Jenks and Neves, 2000; Stelhe, 2008). Lastly, narrative inquiry is a method that allows one to locate individual life histories within the context of social memories and histories as well as macro-level structures that mediate all subjective experience (Caygill, 1998; Portelli, 1981).

For the purposes of this paper, the New Urban Environment of the Greater Toronto Area will be the site of exploration. That said, the global and transnational contexts are necessarily a part of the analysis of the New Urban Environment that is marked by the flows of ideas, people and material goods across international boundaries (Amin, 2007, pp. 5). As mentioned above, this project does not seek to arrive at any definitive Truths about what it means to be a Black subject in the New Urban Environment, nor does it purport to reveal any essential elements of Black subjective experience. This project strives to offer one representation of a Black woman's subjectivity within the GTA that is meant to complicate, compliment and enhance the body of knowledge on Black subjecthood in Canada as well as interrogate static notions of Blackness, womanness and nation among other dominant discourses that shape our lived experience. It is argued that new ways of theorizing about contemporary racialized subjectivities are necessary to address the historic and persistent absence of subaltern perspectives from dominant discourses that intimately and directly shape our lives (Spivak, 1988 pp. 295). Drawing on the legacy of artistic expression as a means to give voice to suppressed perspectives, this paper argues that psycho-geography and urban flânerie can be leveraged to make insightful and relevant connections between individual and collective consciousness to inspire critical and discursive analysis and broaden representations of Black womanness; from critiques to possibilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are multiple conceptual points of departure germane to an exploration of subjective experience in the New Urban Environment. In this section, some of the most vital analytic frameworks pertinent to tracing the experience of Black women in the New Urban Environment will be explored. Under examination are works falling under the cross cutting themes of subjectivity, Blackness, diaspora, language and the urban.

de Lauretis (2002) highlights some key points about identity and identification necessary for a worthwhile exploration of the makings of subjectivity of a racialized person. She brings to the fore an understanding of how Otherness and difference comes to shape subject formation. Firstly, identity is posited as being a rigid term that describes the assimilation or essentializing of an individual to a socially constructed and recognizable category. Identity then, flattens out the heterogeneity, possibilities and hybridity of subjective experience (de Lauretis, 2002, pp.54). This piece does well in using identification, rather than identity, as a point of entry into discussions about subjective experience. This allows for concepts usually thought to be closed or beyond inquiry such as class, gender, race, nation, community to be conceptualized and theorized about in a more fluid, shifting and dynamic manner.

Using identification as a framework with which to interrogate questions of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology) and desire, de Lauretis (2002) illustrates how Fanon centers ideological constructions of subject, difference and Otherness located in specific socio-cultural formations, in a space bordering on the conscious and unconscious (de Lauretis, 2002, pp.55). Where difference and Otherness are experienced corporeally, in the social subject as Fanon argues, epidermalization-the inscription of race on the body-

makes the body the 'irreducible material ground' of each subjectivity (de Lauretis, 2002, pp. 57).

This paper wants to center a comprehensive conception of racism that references the fluidity and connectivity of the physical and the psychic. It is argued that no concrete separation can be made between the discursive and material world as our lives are lived and constructed through ideas, discourses and constructs. Fanon's insistence on speaking to the "real effects of racism", the seeing of race discourses and the subjects they create as not merely discursive, leads us to trace the process through which the epidermal schema comes to displace, negate and exceed the corporeal (de Lauretis, 2002, pp. 58). A Freudian reading of the Ego describes the self, the symbolic I, as a mental projection of the surface of the body. The culturally constructed epidermal schema superimposes itself upon the indigenous corporeal schema, instantiating fragmentation of subjectivity through the impossible necessity of adhering to two incompatible frames of reference (de Lauretis, 2002, pp.58). This piece offers the reader a nuanced analytical framework that resonates with the psychoanalytic tradition. From this perspective, one can seriously engage with issues pertinent to the investigation of the lived experience of racialized peoples in a manner that delves into a conceptual space that resides in both psychic space and the place of culture.

de Lauretis discusses how subjectivity and subject formation is shaped by ideological constructions specific to a given social and cultural formation. de Lauretis' (2002) work enhances discussions of subjectivity of racialized people in its conceptualization of racism as a discursively produced system of knowledge and thought. Drawing on authors such as Stuart Hall and Frantz Fanon, she makes the point that

though the elements of race and racist discourse function discursively, they have real subjective and physical impacts.

One of the most interesting discussions in this piece is that of relations of desire. Complicating any essentialized notion of Blackness thought to be expounded by Fanon, this piece speaks to the interconnectedness of being and desire. de Lauretis (2002) encourages the reader to conceive of the arguably misogynist, homophobic elements of Fanon's (1990) *Black skin White mask* as part of a reactionary response to one of many negative stereotypes of the Black man as biological-sexual-sensual-genital. Moreover, in discussing the politics of representation, de Lauretis (2002) makes an important contribution in suggesting that representations of gender, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality are often inextricably performed and ascribed. Conceptualizing the representations of these naturalized categories as overlapping and contextual is particularly helpful to any analysis of subjective experience.

Diana Fuss (1994) invites us to situate the reading of a politics of identification within a genealogy of history and highlights the multitude of influences and confluences that shape any discourse; in particular that of colonial and imperial histories. Also exploring Fanon's writings, at the intersection of psychoanalytic theory and anti-imperial politics, Fuss helps make intelligible Fanon's theory of diacritical identification by reminding us of its birth in the locus of colonial expansion and imperial crisis (Fuss, 1994, pp. 20).

Using Fanon's words as a point of departure, Fuss (1994) quotes, "for not only must the Black man be Black, he must be Black in relation to the White man" (Fuss, 1994, pp.20). She links this logic to that espoused by Edward Said (1978) in *Orientalism*,

where the Orient is made perpetually Othered, as a phobic projection of the Western Imaginary. The Black man thus embodies racial difference. For Fanon, "the Black man becomes for the White man the repository of his repressed fantasies…the real Other for the White man is and will continue to be the Black man" (In Fuss, 1994, pp. 21). The piece offers the reader the opportunity to explore the normalization of Whiteness as Ego, as the basis of sameness.

Fuss offers a theoretical framework through which everyday boundaries and naturalized categories can be read. She offers some helpful tools with which to think about naturalized categories through conceptualizing of race and racism as belonging to a grid of intelligibility, where a multitude of textual and discursive elements converge, inform and become one another. This principle of tracing the genealogy of various categories through a discursive analytical lens offers us a nuanced way of exploring questions of recognition, identification and subjectivity.

Fuss (1994) also points to something Fanon explores, as a second theory of alterity: the colonization of subjectivity. This is the denial of personhood even in the realm of Otherness. Turning to the discussion on Mimesis and Masquerade, coerced to hold the burden of identification the colonized subject thus and always becomes an object. Through this discussion, one is better able to grasp and unpack the complexities of Fanon's notion of existing "triply"; wherein one is simultaneously located in the self, in alterity and in objecthood.

Fuss (1994) explores the possibility of performing and remaining exterior to the performance, thus challenging the imperative of uniformity demanded by discursively drawn boundaries. Just as within a single discourse one signifier can have multiple

significations, one's subjectivity can engage in subversive and reifying work at once.

Hence, Fuss (1994) can argue, as does Bhaba (1994), that imitation alone does not suffice

to produce identification. Thinking about signifiers and representation in this manner

enhances the discussion of the politics of representation pertinent to questions of

subjectivity.

Fuss (1994) argues that Fanon's theory of identification gives us a patriarchal and

racialized conception of sexuality: the pathologized sexuality of White womanness,

homosexuality as primitivism, as essentially White, as castration, as racism. This reading

helps to locate Fanon's theory of sexual perversions as an impassioned response to then-

popular colonialist theories of race and sexuality. She argues that Fanon's resolutely

masculine self-identifications, articulated through the abjectification of the feminine and

the homosexual take shape over and against colonialism's castrating representations of

Black male sexuality (Fuss, 1994, pp. 35).

The Fact of Blackness is one of the most compelling (auto) ethnographic accounts

detailing the dynamics inherent to being a Black man. Fanon (1990) explores questions of

what it means to be human, while simultaneously interrogating notions of race,

nationhood and modernity using artistic expression and an analytical perspective steeped

in psychoanalytic paradigms. His narrative works to fuse the lived experience of one

Black man with a historical genealogy of race and racist discourses, and the legacies of

the transatlantic slave trade, European colonialism and imperialism. The beauty of this is

Fanon's ability to articulate the dilemma that faces racialized people in an intellectual

manner, theorizing in a way that is at the same time an expression of the particular, and

of the raw affective experience of being a subject through whom the theory arises. This

project is heavily inspired by this work and aims to create the same opportunity for theoretical, affective and personal engagement.

Fanon proposes that the subjectivity of the Black man is over determined from without. Here, the Ego and the corporeal schema experience dislocation that is effected by the imperative to adhere to a stereotyped frame of reference: a diacritical existence where the Black man can only be known in relation to the White. Ultimately, it is argued that the Black self is in conflict with an organic desire to be defined not by skin colour but, primarily, as an individual. Exploring the "lived experience of Blackness", Fanon (1990) outlines the process through which the Black man is denied subjectivity even in alterity. Here, the Black man is objectified, rendered an object among others and stripped of all humanity. This theory, referred to as the colonization of subjectivity, truly captures the dialectic between mind and body, being and becoming that are salient in the exploration of Black subjectivities.

Another important aspect of the piece is its transcendence of nationally drawn boundaries. Fanon shows how his theory of Black subjective experience can be applicable across the African diaspora. Exploring scientific and popular discourses and literary critique, Fanon (1990) shows how a grid of intelligibility emerges that supports and reifies color prejudice and the concomitant persistence and proliferation of negative stereotyping of Black people.

The politics of identification, representation and recognition are equally present in contemporary debates around multiculturalism as they figure in the exploration of Black subjectivities. In *Multiculturalism: A critical reader,* Goldberg (1995) examines how identity and difference have framed the theoretical structure for the contests around

multiculturalism. It is argued that an analysis of identity and difference reveals that both notions can be employed to a number of ends. Not only can identity and difference conceptually draw exclusionary boundaries of belonging or group membership, these notions can be used to delineate inclusion by insisting on an essential categorical character or, for example, by requiring solidarity based on racial or ethnic membership (Goldberg, 1995, pp.12).

Attribute theories of culture can often circumvent conceiving of the heterogeneity of subjects seen to belong to particular groups, by delimiting what constitutes the criteria for membership. In *New Ethnicities*, Hall cautions us against employing the term ethnicity without first disaggregating it from its over-deterministic, essentializing and concretizing orientation. In examining the dominant notion of Englishness he writes, "the culturally constructed sense of Englishness [is a] particularly closed, exclusive and regressive form of English national identity [and] is one of the core characteristics of British racism today" (Hall, 1989, pp.226).

Hall (1989) illustrates how opening up the boundedness of closed categories and asserting the fluidity of identity offers us the opportunity to see how the performance of different discursive identities is often done simultaneously and cannot be intelligible otherwise. As such, he argues that the central issues of race appear historically in articulation, inextricably crossed and re-crossed by categories of class, of gender and ethnicity (Hall, 1989, pp. 444).

This piece situates the notion of Blackness as a historical, political and cultural construction. Finding similarity in the evolution of the concept of Black, Hall (1989) posits that ethnicity can be dis-articulated from old associations, recoded and

appropriated to work to re-theorize difference in a way that works with difference and multiplicity rather than against it. Hall (1989) also explores the politics of representation, insisting that a shift in conceptualizing Blackness in dominant narratives means the end of the essentialized Black subject. Here he argues that we can no longer flatten out the heterogeneity of Black subjects in order to counter negative representations of Blackness, but must recognize the diversity of subject positions, social experiences and cultural identities that compose the category of Black (Hall, 1989, pp.443).

Elsewhere, Hall (1990) explores the dominant concept of identity and the more nuanced notion of identification. Here, it is argued that identity as being is a fixed and essentialized notion of belonging based on definable attributes. Identity as becoming refers to the process of identification, which allows for the ruptures and discontinuities of subjective formations that emerge in lived experience. Hall (1990) argues that there is inherent value in the conceptualizing of essential identities, where a sense of oneness, strategic and political unity can emerge. Referring to the case of the Caribbean, he urges us to see the limitations of adopting this conception of identity at the expense of recognizing the diversity of subject experience that constitutes the uniqueness of the diaspora (Hall, 1990, pp.394).

This piece exemplifies the importance of situating the makings of identity within historical, social and political contexts. To explain the process of identity formation, Hall uses Derrida's theory of *différance* to support his claim that the temporary positioning of identity is "strategic" and arbitrary. It is posited that we are both positioned by and position ourselves within narratives of cultural pasts. Here, we can conceive of cultural identities as points of identification.

In exploring the implications of creolization of Black subjectivities in the Caribbean, Hall (1990) finds that there is a dialogic relationship between the axes of "similitude" and continuity with that of difference and rupture that mark the experience of Caribbean peoples. Forced migrations and slavery, transcultural flows, syntheses of cultural knowledges and practices have created spaces for the emergence of hybrid locations shaped by historic and contemporary dynamics. This notion of hybridity, articulated by Homi Bhaba in the *Location of Culture* (1994), is one that allows for a conception of identity and processes of identification that lives with and through, not despite, difference. Diasporic identities are those that are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall, 1990, pp. 401).

Contrasting the old imperialistic, hegemonic form of ethnicity with diaspora, Hall (1990) shows how diaspora is a metaphoric notion that describes the meeting, colliding, shifting and syncretic elements of cultural becoming. Using the example of language, Hall (1990) discusses how Caribbean peoples have dissolved dominant linguistic boundaries, disarticulating given signs and re-articulating their symbolic meaning. Most apparent at the level of language, the diaspora decentres and destabilizes the linguistic domination of 'English' through strategic inflections, re-accentuations and other performative moves in semantic, syntactic and lexical codes (Hall, 1990, pp. 236).

In concert with Stuart Hall, we turn to Yon (1999) who highlights the limits of holding on to a classical anthropological conception of ethnicity. The author shows how the dominant conception of ethnicity precludes discussion of how various categories such as ethnicity, nation, race, community etc. intersect and become one another. Adopting

this rigidity impedes our ability to interrogate seemingly fixed representations of belonging that work to exclude diverse ways of performing, being and becoming mediated by naturalized discourses.

Yon (1999) reminds us that in mainstream thought, "discourses of culture and identity continue to be rigidly fixed as the attributes of social groups and 'community' is considered to be stable, neatly bounded and capable of being represented by its spokespersons and role models" (Yon, 1999, pp. 623). Here, attention is called to the relationship between identity and the notion of community it instantiates. This piece also illustrates how a representation can at once signify and delimit nation, ethnicity, race, gender and community. Yon (1999) investigates how the young people whose experience is documented in this article marked the boundaries of their community. They disavow images that challenged norms of sexuality and gender, reject 'negative' images in order to project an "innocent essentialized Blackness" and "Jamaicanness", by invoking a nationalist discourse to shape community agendas. Thus one witnesses the boundaries between/ among these naturalized categories converge repeatedly (Yon, 1999, pp.632-634). Further, Yon's (1999) work does well in showing how ignoring the ways in which a focus on difference between rather than within groups can lead to new forms of discrimination; the nation, the normal, the majority and Whiteness can become the invisible and inescapable point of reference for all (Yon, 1999, pp. 623-635).

It is possible to intersect processes of identification and their spatial configurations. McKittrick (2006) offers a new way to think about the production of space and place, the practices of mapping and the geographic locations of Black subjectivities. She suggests that we can destabilize the rigidity of the language of

traditional geography to account for the overlapping of its metaphorical, physical, theoretical and experiential elements to facilitate conceptualization of alterable geographic understandings. Thus, it is possible to locate a fluid notion of diaspora as an important analytical tool in the exploration of Black geographic subjects. McKittrick (2006) addresses and explores the implications of tracing genealogies of Black subjective and geographic experience historically situated in a legacy of erasure and despatialization that renders Black experience ungeographic. McKittrick (2006) argues that Black lives are necessarily geographic and engages with a rich heritage of Black women's geographies and geographic knowledge.

Pointing to the persistence and limitations of cartographic, positivist and imperialist functions and formulations of "traditional geographies", McKittrick (2006) argues for the need to conceptualize artistic expression as a legitimate part of geographic locations. Here, the artistic medium is especially important in the tracing of subaltern subjectivities. Though all humans negotiate, produce and come to know space, geographies in the Black diaspora are historically punctuated by racist paradigms that are reproduced and reformulated into various contemporary forms. McKittrick (2006) offers us a particularly open theoretical framework that reveals Black geographies as a compilation of negotiated geographic and textual landscapes of exploitation, exploration, displacement, movement and conquest.

In her exploration of artistic expression, McKittrick's (2006) identifies the possibilities and promise of communicative acts of expression. Such acts name the world, conceptualize the world and give access to new ways of knowing, uncovering the multiplicity and particularities of Black cultural experience. After engaging with the ideas

in this piece, one can see how poetry can be a spatial device, as a new geographic form that allows for new expressions of space, place, race and gender. This point in particular resonates with the artistic methodology and devices used in this project.

Throughout, McKittrick (2006) shows how our environment, borders and maps- mental and material- work to naturalize the exclusion and displacement of difference and maintain spatial hierarchies, making inequitable spatial arrangements part of the normal and mundane unchanging realities of our everyday lives. She insists on the possibilities of re- imagining geographic space, putting into question current geographic arrangements and inviting investigation of the processes through which they came to be.

Overall, this book offers a point of entry into a new way of thinking about human geography in recognizing the alterability of geography. Invoking a philosophical calling for the re-spatialization of contemporary and historical geographic patterns, McKittrick (2006) posits that exploring the sites and spaces between Black women's geographies and geographic domination reveals that more humanly equitable geographies are possible, are imagined and are realized. Ultimately, McKittrick (2006) permits alternative ways of looking at seemingly concretely understood terrain.

De-stabilizing seemingly concrete understandings of race and representation, Twine (1997), in *Brown-Skinned White Girls,* suggests that Whiteness can be a useful theoretical concept with which to interrogate spatially discourses of race, ethnicity, gender, class, community and nation. Exploring Whiteness as a process embedded in historical and socio-political context highlights the very ways in which race and representation is implicated in the makings of any body (Twine, 1997, pp.13). The naming of the subjects in this study, "White women of African descent", challenges the

symbolic representation of White womanness and questions the frameworks through which signifiers of what it means to be a White woman are produced. The very coupling of a racial and gendered identity points to the convergence of race and gender in policing identification. Twine (1997) ingeniously offers a clear picture of how racial identities can be ethnic identities, and how both are practiced and performed; these women self-identified as White because they saw themselves and were recognized as constituting the discursive space of White womanness. They defined themselves primarily in class terms and enjoyed the material privileges of Whiteness being of a high socio-economic status.

It is noted that Whiteness as a system of meanings may be deployed within a range of context. Here, these women (who would be later recognized as 'Black' when immersed in a African American environment) conflated Blackness with being oppressed and defined race in economic terms, whereby to be Black was to be poor (Twine, 1997, pp.216). As such, this construction of Whiteness did not include poor Whites.

What is striking about this article is how the boundaries of Whiteness were delimited and excluded these women from intimate relationships with male members of the White group. The interwoven nature of discourses of heterosexuality, White womanness and (middle) class illustrates how representations of community and nation are culturally White. The lived experience of racialization means to be lower or under-classed and high socio-economic status is equated to the White cultural experience. Inter- racial (where race becomes biological) dating becomes inappropriate, as a move towards miscegenation. All tropes come together to carve out a liminal space for all women (Twine, 1997, pp. 231). For some, not- White awareness coupled with comfort in

an exclusively White environment invalidates homogeneous representations of race as an essential cultural character and a prescribed way of being gendered.

Bush (2004) further explores the development of Whiteness studies in the 1990's. Bush notes the emergent notion of Whiteness as a powerful analytical tool with which to investigate institutional and systemic social inequalities that appear unconnected to discourses of race and racism (Bush, 2004, pp. 6). The shifting meanings and groups associated with the historic genealogy of Whiteness delineated here prove to illustrate the fluidity and social constructedness of Whiteness as a concept, revealing that race is not an ascribed but achieved status. Bush (2004) argues that Whiteness as a subject of inquiry emerged out of the broad range of scholarship with roots in the social movements of the 1960's for equality, justice and inclusion. The paucity of research on White supremacy and the taken-for-grantedness of racial categories impede the ability to interrogate the normalizing and invisibility of White privilege and the processes through which it is maintained and reproduced. Theorizing Whiteness makes visible the racial dimensions of social inequality that can otherwise be obscured by colour- blind discourses of nationalism or the recoding of ethnicity that frames race in cultural terms (Bush, 2004, pp. 15).

The latter point is illustrated in tracing the historic shifting of White identity: from Whiteness unifying the White Americans against the Othered, racialized African and Native American populous in the 1676 Bacon Rebellion, to the flattening of ethnic affiliation called for by the universalization and consolidations of White American culture that emphasizes assimilation into an essentially (Whiteness-centered) Anglo-American pan-ethnicity (Bush, 2004, pp. 13). Bush (2004) offers relevant reviews of

literature on Whiteness, exploring Whiteness as it figures in topics as diverse as political economy and labour history, White identity and cultural representations, institutionalized and global forms of Whiteness among others (Bush, 2004, pp. 24-28). This piece truly gives a comprehensive look at the processes and reconfigurations of race and the dynamics of a racialized society. These illustrations are necessary for a worthwhile exploration of systemic inequality and understanding of the subjective experiences of those who live within and against the limits of these discourses.

Gilman (1986) further enriches our understanding of race constructs in an exploration of the iconography in portraiture and discourses of medicine and literature in a specific historic moment; 19th century English society. He explores questions of aesthetics and the iconographic nature of all visual representation while paying close attention to the interrelations and overlapping systems of conventions between the aesthetic and the medical. Closely examining some of the most well known works of art from Francisco Goya to Georges Manet, this article shows how the sexuality of the Black subject, both male and female, becomes a signifier of deviant sexuality. The intelligibility of the associations between the figure of the Black servant in European art is made possible by historically proliferated discourses that linked Blackness with concupiscence (Gilman, 1986, pp. 228).

Gilman's (1986) contribution shows how discourses of Blackness converge with those of gender and sexuality, instantiated through the reification of notions of deviant sexuality in various discourses. In particular, scientific and medical discourses provided support for the differentiation of Black females as more primitive and sexually intensive based on observable physiological and physiognomic uniqueness (Gilman, 1986, pp. 232).

The systematic examination of the so-called "Hottentot" female's sexual organs legitimized the oversexualization of Blackness, in which the Black female comes to represent Black sexuality in totality. Investigating the case of Sara Baartman, or Saartjie Baartman, Gilman shows the processes through which Baartman became the central image for the Black female throughout the 19th century (Gilman, 1986, pp. 235). It also points to what Raymond Corbey (1993) called "ethnographic showcases" in which the ephemera of colonization came to be exhibited for the imperial European gaze. The complex interrelation of signifiers and shifting meanings of parts of the Black female anatomy is well documented here. It is argued that female sexuality is linked to the image of the buttocks and other secondary sexual characteristics.

One of the most interesting discussions in this piece is the way in which the medicalized discourse of deviant White female sexuality was compared to that of Black female sexuality in a discourse that likened Black female sexuality to that of prostitutes, lesbians and sexual deviancy in general (Gilman, 1986, pp. 245). Here the Black female represents not only the sexualized female, but also the female as the source of disease, corruption, degeneration and miscegenation understood through the pathological model of sexuality that marked 19th century Europe.

Here, we now turn to tracing the relationship among identity, representation and language. Examining the implications of language dynamics to subjective experience and identity construction requires a multi-discursive analytical approach, crossing the fluid bounds of race, ethnicity and language. Pon et al (2003) shifts our conceptual attention to how the dynamics of language socialization in the classroom can make learning events the sites of linguistic and racial tension. Investigating the case of Chinese Canadian

students, these authors elucidate the particular implications of language use, speech and silence in the Chinese Canadian diaspora. Well documented in this article is the way in which language and race is implicated in academic and subjective identity construction. Moreover, revealing the multiplicity of perspectives and experience within a given ethnic group in the Canadian context proves to destabilize essentialized notions of group membership often taken for granted in authoritative discourses of ethnicity.

Citing sources that trace the contemporary expression of racialized and colonialist discourses in daily happenings in educational institutions, these authors show how Orientalist discourses continue to shape the experience of the Chinese diaspora in the Canadian urban environment. Pon et al. (2003) takes up Edward Said's (1979) *Orientalism*, which describes the exotification of the Asian subjective experience that is, within the realm of a mythical culturally polarized Orient, imagined within the limits of Otherness. *Orientalism* is coupled with the authors' insistence on highlighting the multiple locations of incitement to discourses of race. Most salient for our purposes is *Orientalism's* role in social reproduction, which demands that the prevalent dichotomous thinking about race within a binary Black/White paradigm be interrogated and deconstructed. This piece is valuable in its tracing of the role of oral language use and standard English in the making of successful academic and social identities in the Canadian urban context. Here, the authors argue that understanding the silences of Asian Canadian students requires a fundamental re-shifting of Western views of speech, where standard English speech is associated with students' academic success (Pon et al, 2003, pp. 117).

Another important issue explored is the plurality of experience within the Chinese diaspora in Canada. Exploring silences of linguistic minority students revealed the expression of discourses that pathologized 'quiet' Asian students, the reification of dominant negative stereotypes of Asians and the tensions between academic achievement and cultural continuity/belonging. Further, it problematizes what is dominantly constructed as appropriate Asian demeanour, particularly as this construct intersects with racialized tropes of Asian woman-ness. Ultimately, this work brings to the fore the development of analytical thinking around language, power and racism that operate in the New Urban Environment; relevant to questions of subjectivity, discrimination and the politics of identification and representation (Pon et al, 2003, pp. 126).

I continue emphasis on new urban language use in the bi- and multicultural workplace. This focus is especially relevant to studies of language in the urban environment, where globalization, movement and immigration make the multi-racial and multi-ethnic workplace ever more common. Language is described here as not only being a conduit for communication, but the means through which meaning, identification and social relationships are made. In this way, language mediates the spatial and imagined movement from periphery to centrality in communities of practice and serves to reify the boundaries of belonging and positionality.

Investigating the case of a bilingual (French/English) workplace, McCall (2003) highlights the linkages between language use and the exercise of power and control. Here, the presence of language in various work processes of production is delimited and the locations of language frontiers are traced. One of the most interesting points is the discussion of historic shifts in the ethno-linguistically structured labour market of the

Montreal metropolitan area. Investigating the relationship between language groups and multi-ethnic/multinational populations reveals that language is central in the competition over control of the labour market or particular territories within it (McCall, 2003, pp. 240). Where the Francophone population in Quebec previously fought to gain access to better paying jobs dominated by Anglophone language communities following World War II, changes in immigration patterns and the emergence of a Francophone majority witnessed in the 1980's and 1990's instantiated competition between Francophone, or "pur laine", and immigrant communities for access to protected areas of the job market. McCall explores the case of the aerospace industry and insists that the power dynamics inherent to the maintenance of a language frontier rest not in the power of language itself but in the occurrence of dominant language groups exercising control, through language; resulting in the workplace exclusion and/or subordination of an other group.

Cazden (2001) turns to a comprehensive look at how language operates in the classroom. Throughout, the author argues that classroom language is not only the means through which meaning is communicated, but that it is through language that meaning and identities are constructed. Chapter 7, in particular, addresses some issues pertinent to our questions of equity and equality of access to learning opportunities in classroom settings.

Cazden compares and contrasts differential treatment and cultural difference perspectives, where differential treatment critically refers to the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities to already socially advantaged groups. The cultural differences perspective highlights the under- differentiation of difference and asserts that qualitative differences among students should be taken into account when distributing

educational goods and resources. The author does well in presenting the dynamics of educational language experience within the greater context of social, political and historical realities. Speaking to data gathered in U.S. studies, Cazden (2001) illustrates how socio-economic differences among students manifest within the classroom in spite of the prevailing commitment to maintaining an "even playing field" with schools from districts with lower income and minority families receiving less financial support and fewer and lower quality educational resources (Cazden, 2001, pp. 138).

Reporting on the data from quantitative and qualitative research on language in student-teacher interactions, Cazden (2001) shows how the practice of streaming students into homogeneous academic levels can be both advantageous and disadvantageous to low achieving children. She notes that streaming does not necessarily benefit high achievers and can work to seriously impede the academic development of lower-streams where the focus on recitable information can lead to lower level intellectual engagement with materials. Cazden (2001) insists that classroom talk is the most vital part of the enacted curriculum. She argues that teachers must be ethnographers of their classrooms in order to trace the impact of preconceived negative stereotypes and stop their reification in classroom interactions. This is especially pertinent to our discussions of the culturally diverse urban classroom where ethno-racial differences between teachers and students can lead to the proliferation of stereotypes and the maintenance of historically unequal relations of power. Creating a classroom environment that values peripheral participation, more student- centered talk, and builds upon the knowledge students bring to the classroom are all ways to work towards positive differential treatment. This work is

important in envisioning possibilities for improving the experience of racialized students in the education system.

Ash Amin explores the New Urban Environment, where the politics of language, identity and representation manifest spatially and shape the subjective experiences of its inhabitants. Amin (2007) speaks to the transnational flows of ideas, information, knowledge, money and people. He argues that trans-local networks of organization and influence, including multinational corporations and global financial institutions, international governance regimes and transnational cultural networks are defining the New Urban. Moreover, all of this new urban "commerce" is mediated by language systems. The New Urban Environment can no longer be conceived of as an abstract entity when it is a symptom of globalization and of modernity (Amin, 2007, pp. 101). This work posits that the boundedness of local, regional, and national and global territories is coming undone, as boundaries are increasingly blurred.

Amin (2007) argues that a new urban ontology is required; one that reconceptualises the geographic and social composition of the New Urban Environment that is marked by dynamically shifting spatialities. The city is said to be a site of spatial circulation, radiation and difference in close proximity. Here, connectivity, a notion of community that does not require spatial continuity, mutual dependence and global and cultural exchange shape the new urban experience. Questions of belonging, nationhood and community are explored. This piece illustrates the importance of recognizing diasporic identities as a key feature of urbanity. Exploring sites of analysis, such as neighbourhoods, public spaces, and housing, Amin (2007) illustrates how themes such as inequality, housing segregation, crime and disorder transcend the bounds of the mapped

city. He argues that social inequality in the urban environment is a deficit of place, where distance, isolation and other phenomena impede social cohesion and the bridging of difference necessary to tackle systemic and translocal sources of injustice (Amin, 2007, pp. 106). Amin (2007) advocates an expanded conception of the urban social to allow for the inclusion of technology, infrastructure, and objects that regulate all aspects of urban life and are given expression in urban subjectivities.

Beck and Sznaider (2010) are in concert with Amin in the call for a re-conceptualization of social science by asking for a shift from methodological nationalism to a paradigm of cosmopolitanism. Here, the entrenched dualisms assumed under dominant nationalist discourses such as domestic/foreign or national/ international are said to impede our ability to interrogate and explore the multi-dimensional processes that have changed the very nature of the social world (Beck, 2010, pp. 382). The contemporary practice of methodological nationalism takes for granted notions of society as being equated with national society. The emergence of a methodological cosmopolitanism, though we are far from reaching a universally accepted definition of what this encompasses, is a response to the collapsing of boundaries where the nation can no longer be the orienting reference point for social scientific analysis (Beck, 2010, pp. 382).

This piece posits that new social realities such as the re-spatialization of sites of social and political action cannot be fully examined by a rigid methodological nationalism that cannot recognize where the national has become denationalized; and where the international is no longer international. In this way, it is argued that a more nuanced methodological framework rooted in cosmopolitanism can be used to re-

examine the fundamental concepts of modernity. The authors make a point to distinguish between cosmopolitan normativity and the cosmopolitan as reality-instantiated through unintended but real interaction that emerges from within. In contrast to a notion of globalization that occurs from without, cosmopolitanization includes the proliferation of multiple cultures, transnational forms of life, global movements, the emergence of multinational states, etc. (Beck, 2010, pp. 390). The cosmopolitan outlook is foundational to the development, support of notions of diaspora, and global awareness of the new forms of social life, ushered in by historical and contemporary migrations, imperialisms and colonialisms, re-patriations and wars, and global economic systems.

Exploring the theory of World Risk Society, this piece illustrated that the experience of cosmopolitan interdependence arises in a climate of heightened global threats-ecological, economic and terrorist, that demand cooperation among developed and underdeveloped countries. These authors argue that methodological cosmopolitanism can examine these newly emerging social conditions from multiple perspectives: the local, translocal, global and others. They posit that accounting for the increasing permeability of boundaries between the national and international, and insisting on a theoretical framework that looks to work with subjects beyond imagined stable homogeneous groupings opens the horizon for cosmopolitan realism that recognizes the transformation of the nation.

Zeroing in on the urban centers of the Canadian nation, Teelucksingh (2007) turns us to a critical adoption of the environmental justice framework and endeavours to re-conceptualize environmental racism in the Canadian context. The author seeks to account for how race is socially and spatially organized in large Canadian cities. Defining the key

terms used in the paper, environment justice refers to maintaining healthy, sustainable

environments in communities by improving the quality of life of marginalized peoples.

The more narrowly defined environment injustice of environmental racism refers to the

exploitation of racialized people and the exploitation of the environment where these

racialized individuals bear a disproportionate burden of environmental risk (Teelucksingh,

2007, pp. 646).

Teelucksingh (2007) does well in situating the concept of racialization in

historical processes, highlighting the fluidity and social constructedness of the discourses

of race. It is argued that the notion of environmental racialization involves the cross

cutting of multiple sites of oppression such as race, class and recent immigrant status

(Teelucksingh, 2007, pp. 647). The author posits that the case of major Canadian cities

illustrates that framing racism in a non-essentialist framework allows for the exploration

of racialization that would be otherwise subsumed under the dominant narratives of

multiculturalism, or ignored due to of the actual racial composition of a neighbourhood.

Her case study on Mid-Scarborough, Ontario, Canada revealed that although this

space is multi-ethnic and heterogeneous, it is a racialized spaced in terms of the dominant

social construction of the community and the lived experience of its inhabitants

(Teelucksingh, 2007, pp. 658). It also reveals that more recent immigrants were more

likely to accept increased environmental risks and poorer living conditions, while long

term Anglo-Saxon residents saw racialized individuals as a threat to their economic and

social well being. Institutional racism is defined as a subtle and systemic process that

perpetuates racial differentiation and inequality. Making the point that intended and

unintended consequences must be accounted for in environmental justice research, this

piece insists that attention to both outcomes and processes of environmental racialization

and injustice be traced in order to attain a more comprehensive look at the facts

unfettered by a framework of intentionality.

In this section, we have explored some key analytical points that enrich the

examination of the experience a Black woman in the New Urban Environment. Literature

on subjectivity that is informed by (post)colonial discourses on the experience of

racialized subjects suggests that we recognize the discursive nature of race discourses

while remembering their real, psychological and material effects. We are also encouraged

to conceptualize representations of naturalized categories as overlapping and contextual

and to recognize how race discourses operate diacritically, disciplining both Black and

White bodies[1]. This point is crucial to interpreting the primary data in that it sets the tone

for reading the message of the piece through the connective lens necessary to highlight

the links between personal experience and social representation.

In literature on ethnicity and diaspora, we are called to, again, recognize the

inextricable link between categories that are often simultaneously performed. We find the

Black subject situated as a historical, social and political construction and we are

implored to emancipate ethnicity from its historically rigid bounds to make room for

difference and multiplicity. Here, a central point is made to focus on identity as becoming,

as a process of identification, and to resist the essentializing constraints of a static notion

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[1] I want to make a note about the use of 'we' and 'I' in the work. These pronouns are
sometimes used interchangeably to reference my sense of subjective location. When
speaking to inferences that result from our analyses, I often use 'we' to capture both
my and the audience's journey and engagement with the work. I also use 'we' when
referring to my membership in an imagined community- local, regional, gender,
racial, cultural, and national. When speaking in a more personal and subjective voice,
I often use 'I'. This inconsistency in voicing is reflective of the ambivalence that
surfaces in my exploration of belonging, identification and recognition.

of identity, ethnicity and belonging. This fluid orientation is important to this work as it permits us to engage with notions such as nation and community in a way that identifies the deficiencies within their current conceptualization; paving a way for a conversation with and about subjects whose lived experience embodies multiplicity and making the argument that, they too, belong.

The possibilities of locating a fluid notion of diaspora are made evident in exploring Black geographies, where the overlapping of metaphorical, physical, theoretical and experiential elements facilitate conceptualization of alterable geographic understandings. We find arguments in favour of the use of artistic mediums to trace subaltern subjectivities. Moreover, using Whiteness as an analytical point of departure for studying race discourse offers a nuanced perspective on the subject of race, revealing how a racial system of meanings can be deployed within a range of contexts including gendered and sexualized realms. These writings validate the use of artistic expression and human geographic understanding as starting points for tracing my experience within layered location (local, regional, national, international, historic, subjective, imagined). Conceptualizing discourse as systems of meaning is of incredible value to this thesis as it is central to our ability to see and read everyday encounters and notions as examples of manifested ideas that embody historic continuity or rupture.

Language and race are convincingly implicated in the construction of academic and subjective identities; the implications of language use reveal the multiplicity of perspectives and experience within a given group destabilizing essentialized notions of membership. We are reminded that language is the means through which meaning, identification and social relationships are made. These works illustrate how the

operationalization of power, exclusion or inclusion is enacted through language, in the culturally diverse urban classroom or the multi-lingual workplace. We are concerned with the relationship between language, representation and the deployment of power in its adoption of artistic orientation. This thesis recognizes the absence of important voices in authoritative discourses and the concomitant need to value alternative platforms and the alternative representations these subjects embody. Conceptualizing how language operates in the building of constructs and subjectivity also lends us a greater understanding of the relationship between language, representation and subjectivity necessary to the analyses in this thesis.

Defining the New Urban Environment, the literature insists that we recognize the increasing fluidity of urban, local, regional, and national and global territories. An expanded conception of the urban social requires a new ontology that enables the exploration of multi-dimensional processes that shape the new urban. Here, the diaspora is a central feature of the new urban, which is itself a symptom of globalization and cosmopolitan interdependence. We find that race is socially and spatially organized in large Canadian cities and that urban ethnography can be used to demystify and deconstruct the spatial and psycho-geographic boundaries that mediate the lives and experience of urban subjects.

The central argument of this work is that new ways of theorizing about contemporary racialized subjectivities are necessary to address the historic and persistent absence of subaltern perspectives from dominant discourses that intimately and directly shape our lives (Spivak, 1988 pp. 294). Drawing on the legacy of artistic expression as a means to give voice to suppressed perspectives, this paper illustrates that psycho-

geography and urban flânerie can be leveraged to make insightful and relevant connections between individual and collective consciousness to inspire critical and discursive analysis and broaden representations of Black womanness; from critiques to possibilities.

<u>**Chapter 3: Methodology**</u>

Exploring the New Urban Environment required new methodological approaches that account for a revised urban ontology and provided an expanded understanding of the urban social (Amin, 2007). Taking up this call to students of social and urban ethnograhic inquiry, we explored the use of the concept of the flâneur and the practice of flânerie as an important and sophisticated methodological tool for exploring urban spatial, psycho-geographic and physical configurations of the New Urban Environment.

Jenks and Neves (2000) attempt to recuperate the metaphor of the flâneur into social research practice. These authors illustrated the difficulties inherent in removing the concept of the flâneur from historical confinement to enable its theoretical and methodological application elsewhere (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 2). Born out of a specific historic moment in modernity, the flâneur comes into being in the European urban space. A masculinized concept and privileged urban creation, the flâneur's archetypical character sought particular ways of organizing the city with a critical eye sensitive to the ills of high capitalism, and a celebration of high culture.

The flâneur is one who walks without haste, who sees without being seen (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 1). He/she endeavours to know the subaltern, creating alternative discourses, engaging in research practice not bound to the objectives of pre-determined theoretical imperatives. Deconstructing and demystifying social realities guided by a reflexive orientation in the 'stroll', the flâneur presupposes an urban epistemology that makes the fragmentation of experience and observation of the passing and seemingly trivial aspects of urban life relevant micro-social events; this disposition allowed for the critical analysis of structural features of the New Urban Environment that arise from

analysis of the partial and observable experience of particular lives (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 2).

Flânerie also involved the examination of social contexts, especially those hidden in inaccessible areas of the city. Jenks (1995) instructs us that the city is ultimately possessed zonally and that the diversity of urbanity has brought the urban under a new lens of study that was once reserved for the examination of the distant, and so-called 'exotic' elements of other continents and peoples (pp. 156).

For our purposes, applying the metaphoric potential of the flâneur to urban ethnography required embracing the practice of *dérive* and *détournement*, and conceiving of a new understanding of the *spectacle*. The *spectacle* is a monopolizing enterprise that presupposes interpretation by wholly appropriating the visual form into fixed representations mediated by dominant discourses (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 9). According to Jenks and Neves (2000), *dérive* is more than its literal definition, meaning to drift; it encompasses the response to enticement, invitations and barriers that draw the researcher into unscheduled, spontaneous exploration (pp.8). A more nuanced concept than the notion of the stroll, which is often critiqued for its connections to idle and privileged dandyism (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 1), *dérive* is acting on spur-of-the-moment impulses that draw the researcher into events which may not have otherwise been subjects of inquiry (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 7).

It is through *dérive* that psycho-geographies are made. A psycho-geography is the mapping of uncharted routes, a mental cartography of spatial intentionality,

> (A psycho-geography) uncovers compulsive currents within the city along with
> unprescribed boundaries of exclusion and unconstructed gateways of opportunity.
> The city begins, without fantasy or exaggeration, to take on the characteristics of
> a map of the mind (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 8).

A psycho-geographic map reveals symbolic relationships between elements of the urban environment. We used these symbolic meanings to decipher the significance of spatial orientation. Uncovering the signifiers and symbols of a psycho-geographic map allows for *détournement*, or the reimagining of space proposed by McKittrick (2006). Using artistic practice offered a perceptual tool with which to see the juxtapositions of seemingly mundane and concrete urban dynamics in new ways. *Détournement* required the deconstruction and abstraction of an object/subject from its original context to enable creative and original conceptualizations.

As such, the types of data produced by the flâneur as urban ethnographer tend to be original in articulation. Flânerie is shaped by the particular subjective experience of researcher, the complex interrelation of elements experienced and particular practices and theoretical influences that inform the researcher's conceptual disposition. The practice of flânerie gave me a space for imaginative re-formations and reorganization of the post-modern New Urban Environment. In this way, the concept of the flâneur can be emancipated from its historically situated origins and applied to contemporary urban critiques.

Central to the flâneur's methodology is interpretation. The era of post-modernism, and the capitalist society in general, is marked by the *spectacle*. The fixidity of representation and form insists that the spectator under-differentiate between political and aesthetic qualities, undermining the process through which the relationships between the signified and signifiers are understood. Yet, inherent to the practice of flânerie is the imperative to deconstruct and dymystify social reality. The flâneur and urban

ethnographer both resist embracing the *spectacle*, opting instead for reflexive observation and explicit political/aesthetic positions (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 10).

Stelhe (2008) explores the pedagogic potential of psycho-geography for examining the politics of space and highly political issues of class, gender, race agency and the body (Stelhe, 2008, pp.2). Citing the work of Guy Debord who envisioned a psycho-geographic research practice that studies the effects of geographical environments on the behaviour of individuals, Stelhe (2008) recounts how she structured the flânerie of her students. Following Debord, Stelhe asks her students to engage in "active wandering, the derive as the practice of a passionate journeying out of the ordinary through a rapid changing of ambiances" (Debord, 1975 in Stelhe, 2008, pp.3).

Stelhe (2008) illustrates the importance of examining how space and movement are mediated, how this mediation is political and the ways in which spatial orientation shapes our subjective experience (Stelhe, 2008, pp.3). The conceptual apparatus of the flâneur is applicable here, where the making of space and relations of belonging are the focus of analysis. These issues are critical in the context of post-secondary education, where class structure is generally perpetuated in its educational institutions (Brooks, 2005 in Stelhe, 2008, pp. 4). This work takes up the challenge of investigating spaces of power, violence and exclusion that strive to equip students of psycho-geography with critical and analytical tools with which to explore understated intersections; in our case, particularly the interstices of race and class.

Following the flâneur in using *dérive* and *détournement* to create new understandings of the urban social, Stelhe (2008) sought to engage her students in addressing the question of voice and empowerment. Flânerie as a practice was expected

to produce data that could challenge and incite thoughtful reflections and mind maps that outlined the binary impulses of the urban; revealing the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion and the spatial organization of the city (Stelhe, 2008, pp. 6). Using a combination of artistic and theoretical approaches to performing, reading and writing space, psycho-geographic research offered Stelhe's students the opportunity to engage analytically with issues of diversity and the privilege of belonging.

A most revealing point explored in this article was that the potential for transformative and critical thought within psycho-geographic practices is not always realized. A researcher's conceptual orientation and subjective experience ultimately shape the interpretations and re-interpretations of the relations between elements of the urban social. As Stelhe (2008) illustrates, exploring theoretical issues where class, race and power intersect, did not easily translate into the ability to engage thoughtfully with issues of class and race privilege located inside the bounds of student experience. The importance of reflexivity and tracing the worldview of the urban ethnographic researcher as flâneur was highlighted here; for a number of students, their position of privilege impeded their ability to see the workings of racism and how race discourses structure spaces that shape everyone's experience (Stelhe, 2008, pp. 11).

The spirit of the flâneur is one that seeks to explore the lives of Others while being wary of the possibility of appropriating the voice of the subaltern, and of becoming/remaining a privileged voyeur rather than a passionate observer (Spivak, 1988; Jenks and Neves, 2000 pp.10). Stelhe (2008) illustrates some of the limitations of psycho-geography, but does well to show that the potential inherent in this practice is worth its application. Even though the students did not always critically engage with some of the

most contentious issues of race and class that require sensitive exploration of issues of power and privilege, psycho-geography enabled them to engage with issues more accessible to them discursively such as sexuality and the body. This article shows how the uniqueness of a researcher's identity will produce original data from one's flânerie, uncovering tensions, contradictions and spatial orientations previously muted and mediated by the dominance of the '*spectacle*' (Stelhe, 2008, pp.13).

Ultimately, this article illustrated the importance of having a strong theoretical and reflexive analytical approach when interpreting and experiencing the *dérive* and *détournement* of flânerie. The ability to connect exploratory and experiential approaches to space, with solid analytical approaches, is key to realizing the potential of psycho-geography and flânerie to research. Like any methodological approach, flânerie is a tool that can be used to uncover and deconstruct and or it can be used a way to reify social boundaries and "obscure positions of power and privilege" (Stelhe, 2008, pp. 16). Our integrated research structure sought to engage with the theoretical and practical implications of the flâneur's mind map and observations to emphasize the connections among place, space, identities and experience.

Narrative inquiry is a complementary research method to the flâneur's methodology. Many proponents of the flâneur's method point to the importance of artistic approaches and creative human-centered orientation to realizing the potential of the flâneur as urban ethnographer. Narrative inquiry provided us a reflexive framework with which to explore the ways humans experience the world represented by their stories (Webster, 2007, pp3). In his work on Walter Benjamin, Caygill (1998) illustrates this reflexive similitude between narrative and the flâneur's dérive. In examining the

experience of a flânerie through past and present moments, Caygill notes that we can only apprehend that which engages us: "In the face of the rapid change of the city, the flâneur remembers, and folds his memory into the experience of the present. This changes the experience of the city, making the lived moment into a citable moment" (Caygill, 1998, pp. 67).

Narrative allows for the reflexivity required of the flâneur by illustrating the temporality of lived experience and in recognizing that people's interpretations of relationships and events change over time (Webster, 2007, pp. 2). Consistent with the aims of ethnography in presenting aspects of many truths in an unspectacular manner, narrative inquiry does not attempt to produce conclusive and comprehensive certainty, "Narrative research does not claim to represent the exact 'truth', but rather aims for *verisimilitude*" (Webster, 2007, pp.3). Like psycho-geographic research, narrative inquiry has the scope to engage with complex human issues while centering the impact of experience on its subjects. In this way, stories often told informally through a multitude of texts and artefacts can be seen to be mediums through which we construct meaning in out everyday lives. Narrative inquiry facilitated the exploration of myths and discourses that mediate our social interactions and shape our spatial orientations (Webster, 2007, pp.7). Gough (1997 in Webster, 2007, pp.6) was also helpful in illustrating how narrative theory applies to most discursive and even theoretical encounters, arguing that the natural, human and social sciences are ordered as narratives.

For the purposes of examining a psycho-geographic map, narrative inquiry revealed the nature and emotional content of lived experience by giving access to the ways in which we choose to order and interpret our stories as text, fiction and discourse.

In the spirit of the flâneur as urban ethnographer, the practice of narrative inquiry provided a space in which to explore the unexamined connections among our attitudes, values, and subjectivities made possible by situating our stories within the context of the greater social world.

Relevant to this methodological marriage of flânerie and narrative inquiry is the work by Hanrahan and Coope (1995) that comments on the rise of explorations of the dimensions of narrative inquiry in the writing of research dissertations. Exploring the reflective analytical processes of qualitative research methods, these projects use personal writing to present individual experience in a study, making the reporting of research into the development of an iterative narrative.

To engage properly with some of the objections to the use of narrative inquiry as method, we explored the notion of validity and reliability that prevail in positivist discourse. Traditional empirical research is dominated by the scientific method that requires standardization of form, instruments for assessment and use of samples and procedures that can efficiently reproduce results. Here, validity rests in a method's ability to reproduce identical results, void of subjective interference, that reaffirm a particular finding or truth. This measure of validity cannot be readily applied to an evaluation of narrative inquiry. Within this conception of research validity, the partiality and incoherence of individual or collective narratives are incompatible with the scientific paradigm. Goodson (2001) takes up this point by noting the pervasive movement of academic disciplines towards abstract theory that has side- lined methodology and narrative data sources that could enhance sociological research (Goodson, 2001, pp. 12).

Portelli (1981) contends that the value inherent to oral histories and personal narrative is that they offer the researcher access to alternative versions of reality and history that embed human experience into recorded histories (Portelli, 1981, pp.97). Like urban flânerie, narrative inquiry is particularly helpful in creating a space for marginalized experiences and perspectives to find articulation in urban research. Portelli (1981) also speaks of the non-objectivity of oral sources as part of its "artificial, variable and partial" intrinsic nature while simultaneously pointing to the fallacy of "objective" science; he contends that quantitative data is subjective in nature as evidenced when exploring the realm of data collection, as well as interpretation (Portelli, 1981, pp. 103). A researcher's theoretical agenda, methodology and subjectivity necessarily shape the conclusions sought and drawn from all research findings.

While narrative sources are a resource for verifiable historical information, they are most valuable in that they offer us a unique passage into personal experience and meaning (Kadar, 2004, pp. 242),

> What is important to note is that autobiographical practices do reference verifiable historical information, but they also work with personal experience and the rich character of personal responses to that experience…what is important is what it felt like, not exactly what it was like (Kadar, 2004, pp. 243)

From this perspective, the mixing of the historic and poetic, legendary narratives with the breaking through of imagination, symbolism and desire all find credible and informative positions in a qualitative methodology that seeks to uncover meaning, affect and the many truths of the New Urban Environment.

The work of centering subaltern experience and histories is political (Spivak, 1988). Adhering to a strictly positivist research paradigm can subvert transformative or critical engagement with social reality by discounting the findings of narrative inquiry for

insufficiently meeting scientific standards or for being unreliably truthful. Yet, works by

Weiler (1998), Norquay (1999) and others speak to the idea that the quest for historical

truths must be journeyed to through a lens, equipped to see the unsaid as communicative,

to see conflict and dissonance as telling, to see truth in every story, and to see stories as

history. Here, remembrance is said to be highly mediated and though partial and

fragmented, memory and narrative infers an autobiographical being; a unique subjectivity

whose microcosmic world can reveal alternative knowing about greater society (Kadar,

2004, pp. 242).

Narrative sources allow a researcher to present individual experience in all its

complexity. This is possible because re-memberances, the re-construction of fragments of

the past, are restructured in light of the present in addition to being influenced by past

experiences and larger social narratives and discourses (Webster, 2007, pp. 3). It seems

that a research structure that employs both the flâneur's method and narrative inquiry has

the potential to shift the methodological focus from information gathering to seeking to

understand the explanations, locations and positions of histories on the margins. For both

practices to realize fully their potential for bringing suppressed voices to the fore, they

must make space available for the interrogation of socio-political norms that would

otherwise be taken for granted (Anderson, 1998, pp. 168). Such is the work of this thesis.

By reconfiguring the questions we ask in and of our research as well as opening

up the frameworks through which these questions are mediated and posed, we can move

past the positivist imperative to order knowledge into pre-existing theoretical frameworks

(Anderson, 1998, pp. 163). In this spirit, we found value in every word as content, value

in the spaces left open and the questions left unanswered. Marrying the flâneur with

narrative inquiry allowed us to emancipate stories and histories from the linguistic and intellectual confines of the academy, while still being informed by relevant modes of thought. Keeping with the tradition of recentering human experience in artistically informed practices, we follow Anderson (1998) and suspend and subordinate the processes of analysis in favour of listening and attending to the stories being told.

This brings us to a final methodological framework that enriches both the flâneur's method and narrative inquiry; arts- based methodology. For arts-based research, recording how the investigator experiences the stimuli to which he/she attends produces the major source of data. Centering human experience by focusing on affect and emotional content as meaning, arts- based research is in essence an iterative process that is built on reflexive approaches. Eisner (1981) illustrates some of the elements in art based practice that reverberate throughout flânerie and narrative inquiry,

> In artistic approaches to research, the role that emotion plays in knowing is central. Far from the ideal of emotional neutrality sought in a great deal of social science research, the artistically oriented researcher recognizes that knowing is not simply a unidimensional phenomena, but that it takes a variety of forms. (An art-based) orientation to knowledge embraces an epistemology that rejects the positivistic view, which holds that only formal propositions can, in principal, provide knowledge. It rejects the view that affect and cognition are independent spheres of human experience (Eisner, pp.7)

Geertz (1973) asks us to reimagine the hegemonic notion of validity. He says, ''It's meaning I'm after, the enigmatic character of the webs of cultural life'' (Geertz, 1973, pp. 43).

Social research is often premised on the movement from analysis of the particular as it represents the general. What is common to the flâneur's method, narrative inquiry and arts- based practices is that generalization is possible because of the belief that the general resides in the particular, "(Art approaches) attempt to shed light on what is

unique in time and space while at the same time conveying insights that exceed the limits

of the situation in which they emerge'' (Langer, 1957, pp. 4). Researchers like Cole and

Knowles (2001) argue that life history research and narrative inquiry are fundamentally

rooted in the relationship of the general to the particular and in the idea that the general

can be best understood through analysis of the particular. Cole and Knowles (2001) point

to the idea that to understand some of the complexities, complications and confusions

within the life of just one member of a community is to gain insights into the collective

(Cole and Knowles, 2001, pp.11).

Validity in the arts is about the extent to which research can "confer, illuminate and

penetrate meaning through the use of persuasive artistic vision" (Eisner, 1981, pp.3).

Expressiveness and the ability to communicate the aesthetic and affective qualities of

experience give meaning to the central location of any art- based research endeavour.

Validity in artistic practice is about getting the observer to agree to situate himself or

herself in the experience of another, to attempt to open themselves to feel what is being

felt in the narrative and to grapple seriously with the meanings presented in both narrative

and analysis.

Leggo (2008) suggests that the evaluation of the knowledge generated in arts- based

research includes a critical examination of many points including,

> Investigation of the craft and aesthetics of artistic practices; a creative examination
> of how art evokes responses and connections; a careful inquiry into the methods
> that art uses to unsettle ossified thinking and provoke imagination; a conscientious
> consideration of the resonances that sing out to the world from word, image, sound
> and performance (Leggo, 2008, pp.17)

Overall, arts- based practices can be seen to strive to bridge the imagined gap between

science and art by promoting the coming together of the rational-emotional and subject-

object dichotomies that require the disavowal of feelings in research (Leavy, 2009). Richardson (1992) speaks about this elimination of boundaries when he argues that writing in the poetic method makes the researcher both the reader and writer, subject and object, Self and Other (Richardson, 1992, pp.55).

According to Woodley (2004), we come to the artistic form with a high level of interpretive expectation; "we assume we will have to engage with complex cultural associations and pay particular attention to subtleties, sub text and implicit messages" (Woodley, 2004, pp. 52). Artistic expression, form and content are inseparable. It is argued that cultural forms shape all experiences and these forms are inextricably linked to "history telling" and poetry (Richardson, 1992, pp. 57). In this way, the poetic form brings with it the benefit of conveying facts and information as well as the ability to express emotionally meaningful discourse.

The reasons to incorporate arts-based practices into research design are multifold. The poetic form, in essence an aural medium, is the closest way to mimic speech and as such, can bring an audience "closer to the emotional and visceral than prose" (Sinner et al, 2006, pp. 120). Sinner et al (2006) posits that the artistic form is better able to engage with audiences because of the immediacy and humanity of artistic presentations (Sinner et al, pp. 1252). Capturing and sharing the positive elements of arts- based practice has been increasingly feasible. Leavy (2009) notes the rise of new technologies, such as social networks, digital software and computers that have allowed for the dissemination of art forms that could not otherwise be shared with various audiences across temporal and spatial bounds.

Employing arts-based practice, the flâneur's method and narrative inquiry, we

called on the rich tradition of the Griot. Like the Bucknell University Griot Institute for Africana Studies (Gillespie, 2011), we want to draw on the figure of the Griot as a metaphoric device for our academic and creative exploration of spatial, discursive and cultural constructs in the urban environment.

The Griot is a central figure in many West African cultures. Historically, the Griot held many functions, including as a community historian, cultural critic, indigenous artist, and collective spokesperson. According to the impressive work by Hale (1998), *Griots and Griottes: Masters of words and music*, a Griot was a vital part of society and worked to preserve the genealogies, historical narratives, and oral traditions of their people. A Griot was a "historian, genealogist, advisor, spokesperson, diplomat, mediator, interpreter/translator, musician/composer, teacher, exhorter, warrior, witness, and praise-singer" (Hale, 1998, pp.14). Hale (1998) insists that we conceive of the Griot's role as not merely instrumental, but to acknowledge the reflexivity inherent in Griot practice that provides a reading of the past for present audiences. Here, what is remembered is shaped by what has been forgotten and what is valued today, "illuminating the present by means of the past" (Hale, 1998, pp.16).

A Griot then, is a symbolic bearer of the cultural, of the social, of the human, of stories and histories. The incarnation of poetry, sophistry and political agitation (Suso, 1996), the Griot practices the artistic form, breathing life into history and expanding the bounds of what is knowable. Like the Griot, the flâneur's method, narrative inquiry and arts- based practice allows us to be many things at once and inseparably; a subject and object, the teller and observer, the theoretician and the experientialist. The interconnectivity and complexity of life is reflected in such an interdisciplinary

methodology that holds human experience at its core.

Using a complicated flâneur's method, we engaged with, deconstructed and analyzed, the psycho-geographic and spatial organization of the primary data, the spoken word videography *A walk in old shoes*. We conceptualized geography and history in ways that revealed the connection between individual experience and greater social phenomena and illustrated that narrative inquiry can produce unique perspectives on the relationship between life histories and macro- level contexts. We examined the ways in which we order the narratives of our lives and enhanced our work by the use of arts-based practice to explore meaningfully the emotional dimensions of the data and present analysis that is artistically and theoretically intelligible. Grounding the research method in the auto-ethnographic allowed for the blurring of the boundaries between the researcher and the subject, making the importation of the Griot tradition sensible in tracing the interconnectedness of individual histories to our cultural knowledges. This thesis attempts to push the boundaries of what is knowable and broaden the landscape of the locations where history is made and spoken.

Ethics

He, the artist, cannot abrogate himself from the constitutive effect his actions have had on the American people. All forms of auto/ethnography, written, performed, acted out (play, documentary, movie), and otherwise communicated are inherently ethical acts (Roth, 2008).

In his work on auto-ethnography and the question of ethics, Roth (2008) argues that any work of ethnography is necessarily within the realm of ethical relations. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1986) discussion of the differences between autobiography and auto-ethnography, auto- ethnography said to be the writing and describing of a people of

whom the author is a member of that group (Roth, 2008). Jacques Derrida (1998) reminds

us that there can be no identification of Self without knowledge of the Other.

Consciousness arises as a result of the relations between individuals, making

consciousness of the Other a pre-condition for self-consciousness (Vygotsky, 1986).

Writing about one's Self is always writing about the Other who constitutes the

social world and with whom the Self is ethically connected. Roth (2008) insists that we

conceive of the ethical dimension of auto- ethnography as a responsibility to those whose

social and material world is influenced through participating in our research as audience

and observer. Even though auto- ethnography speaks to the world from particular

subjective locations, the methodology implicates the author in a position of ethical

obligation to the wider public. Considerations of whose voice is being represented,

questions of multiplicity and diversity always figure prominently when engaging in auto-

ethnographic work.

Further exploring the question of the auto- ethnographic voice as it connects to

academic voice, Dauphinee (2010) demonstrates the ethical value of auto- ethnography in

exploring the limitations of academic voice. Purposeful auto- ethnography is able to open

up the boundaries of voice by revealing the ways in which monopolizing discourses and

positivist practices can circumvent new perspectives when the academic voice silences

the self (Dauphinee, 2010, pp. 25). For auto- ethnography to realize its potential to offer

an ethical and legitimate alternative, it must contribute to the broadening of

representation and truths.

Although ethnography must concern itself with the impact of research on public

audiences, Doloriert and Sambrook (2009) bring our attention to the ethical impact and

concerns related to the author situated in academia. The complexity between self-disclosure and writing for an academic audience can result in a struggle to portray a "vulnerable, intimate auto-ethnographic self", whose representation is sensitive to states of anonymity,

> [There is] vulnerability experienced by the auto-ethnographer in revealing him- or herself, of not being able to take back what has been said, of not having control over how readers will interpret what is said, and of feeling that his or her whole life is being critiqued (Ellis, 1999, pp.16).

The above tension has been theorized to be particularly relevant in the writing of female auto- ethnographers. Tedlock (2000) notes that women's ethnographic writing is often tied to efforts to "convince readers of the author's self-worth, to clarify and authenticate their self-images" as a response to the male centered/ positivist paradigm of writing that permeates the academy (pp.468).

In an effort to engage an audience morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually, an auto- ethnographer employing arts- based practice and narrative inquiry unfortunately runs the risk of not satisfying academic expectations (Richardson, 1994). Authors like Wolcott (1999) argue that reconsidering traditional ideas about objectivity can reveal that "every view is a way of seeing", the primacy of traditional research methods generally exclude the use of researcher memory as primary data.

Wall (2008) described the pressures that arise from use of auto- ethnographic methods. When preparing for her oral examination, her supervisory committee asked her to justify her use of memory as data. She argued that the distance required by scientifically shaped academic methods make the proximity of the auto- ethnographic researcher to the research a location of discomfort. An interesting argument put forward

is that data informed by personal experience is illegitimate unless interpreted by another person. She writes,

> If a researcher had interviewed me about my experiences as an adoptive mother and had recorded and transcribed it, it would have legitimacy as data despite the fact that both the interview transcript and my auto- ethnographic text would be based on the same set of memories (Wall, 2008, pp. 47).

Coffey (1999) posits that all ethnography is an act of memory because fieldwork and the resulting texts cannot be separated from the memories that shape them (pp. 127). We find that auto- ethnography, though situated within a particular subjective location, is inherently a method that comes with ethical obligation. Writing about the Self necessarily implicates Others, and describing the complexity of these relations requires consideration of ethical questions of voice and representation. Moreover, auto- ethnography demands that ethical obligations be addressed, which requires the examination of the social and cultural limitations that must be negotiated to engage in a purposeful auto- ethnographic work.

The ethical consideration in narrative inquiry can be understood to be relational responsibility. It requires the researcher to be responsive to the fact that personal stories and narratives encompass the identification processes of the subject, outlining who they are and who they are becoming (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry then requires the researcher to be constantly reflexive in the negotiation of the texts and representations of the subjects, communities and locations illustrated in the research to ensure the ethical treatment of those being represented (Huber, Clandinin & Huber, 2006). Authors like Clandinin & Huber assert that, "issues of anonymity and confidentiality take on added importance (in narrative inquiries) as the complexity of lives are made visible in research texts" (Clandinin & Huber, in press, pp. 15).

Engaging in a research process that is concerned with the distribution of authorial authority and issues of voice, narrative inquiry should strive to include in its texts, forms and meanings that are relevant to the subjects of the research project (Noddings, 1986 in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 17). This project aims to satisfy this responsibility by ensuring that an arts-based analysis of the primary text, *A walk in old shoes*, is provided along side theoretical and more abstract inferences. In this way, the texts and the cultural expressions inherent to the primary data can be explored in a way that values and is attentive to some of the many cultural mediums of Black subjects in the New Urban Environment.

Issues of audience are also central to narrative inquiry and arts-based research endeavours. Chase (2005) tells us that narrative inquirers need to be "attentive to the features of the discourse communities where research texts are shared so that the lives represented are respected" (Chase, 2005, pp. 655). In this way, the project aimed to provide an intelligible conceptual framework and criteria for engaging with narrative inquiry and arts-based practice, in an effort to ensure that audiences treat with respect the representations and stories of research subjects.

Jenks and Neves (2000) provide an ethical framework for the retooling of urban flânerie (Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 10). As is mentioned above, applying the metaphoric potential of the flâneur to urban ethnography requires embracing the practice of *dérive* and *détournement*, resisting voyeuristic tendencies and conceiving of a new understanding of representation. Central to the flâneur's project is working through an urban epistemology that shifts the traditional focus on the macro-level social context to making the fragmentation and partiality of the urban social relevant sites of inquiry

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(Jenks and Neves, 2000, pp. 2). Like the issues pertinent to ethical research in narrative inquiry and arts-based research, this project was constantly reflexive in orientation and attentive to issues of representation, voice and audience.

This project explored the spoken word videography entitled, *A walk in old shoes* (2010). From here, a recursive process was engaged where relevant literature is reviewed, the videography analyzed, contemporary and historic social inquiries were made that informed the conclusions and interpretations of this research. What follows is an examination of responses and connections, and the unsettling, provocative and aesthetic elements of the videography. Attention will be paid to the resonances of word, image, sound and performance that emanate from the piece (Leggo, 2008, pp.17).

Chapter 4: Analysis

Introduction

I wrote this piece cognizant of the power of spoken word as performative ethnography. Here, experience, memory and history converge, becoming the audible cadence of a historically suppressed voice. I am both flâneur and subject here, exploring the fragmented experiences of my self and the spatial reality that surrounds it; this in the project of engaging in a critical analysis of the structural features of urbanity and modernity (Jenks and Neves, 2000.) Through spoken word, I created a psycho-geographic map of my past and present self as I journeyed through a time that is itself subject to the changing whims of my memory; the ever evolving positions and tools used to make sense of my present inevitably reaching back in time, breaking teleological laws.

Engaging in urban ethnography demands that the researcher move into uncomfortable territory. It demands that we make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Wilson, 1991, p. 5). Those who venture to unearth historically silenced voices will be seen, sticking out of the monotonous and contrived uniformity of dominant narratives, like a rainbow in a clouded sky. This makes me vulnerable. I must remain reflexive in experience and memory, sight and citation (Jenks and Neves, 2000), for I am exploring highly political spaces, places and their relationality to my face. My very being demands that issues of class, gender, race, agency and the body be questioned (Stelhe, 2008). The narratives of my life- the here and now, lived and future- require deconstruction and demystification to reveal what makes me, me.

This project references the narratives, geographies and social locations described in the poetic expressions found in the spoken word videography. In the above section on methodology, I explored the triangulation of arts- based practice, narrative inquiry and ethnographic work. Central to the successful use of these methods is persuading the audience to situate himself or herself in the autobiographic self, to feel what being felt and to engage seriously with the meanings presented. Choosing to encapsulate this reading of my social world in spoken word is to speak to the affective, the aesthetic, the cognitive and emotional. In a subtle way, I defend against rejection by the abstracted and cerebral approach to social science that dehumanizes and generalizes. The one that grows weary of dealing with these old issues; the one that rolls its eyes when I bring them up. I ask instead for you to see the world through the lens I carry, and if only for a moment, feel me.

In the following section I analyzed the primary data, using secondary sources and a triangulated methodology to deconstruct and address salient points that arise in the text. This work sought to make visible the connections between the particulars of my individual experiences to generalizable social dynamics that play out in the real world. In effect, I revisited the communicative intent of the spoken word passages and expanded upon the ideas therein, unpacking the overt and subtle messages I sought to convey. I intended to engage theoretically with the themes that arose and simultaneously make reference to relevant contemporary manifestations, illustrating the implications of the analysis to my lived experience.

What follows is an examination of the aesthetic, of the evocation of responses and connections, and of the unsettling and provocative elements of the videography. We

explore identification, becoming, representation, movement, racialization, belonging, citizenship, democracy and justice.

Urban Identification

On my Urban becomings

"I walk through, carry, am part of, embody, construct and deconstruct the urban.
I was ascribed an urban identity before I lived it." (Peters, 2010)

Reading this, we are forced to define urban. Drawing on Twine's work outlining the multilayering of seemingly inextricable categorizations of Black, the urban is conflated, flattened, confused, is Blackness, is poverty, is ghetto, is under- classed, is underprivileged, is misunderstood (Twine, 1997, pp. 216). The urban is simultaneously abstract yet physical, elusive but tangible. The narrative presents the conceptual image of constant fluidity; here, I am at once creating, destroying, hosting and being urban. The urban is an explosion of ideas, conceptual landscapes, possibilities and an implosion of the obvious, the naturalized, the historical and limited (Amin, 2007, pp. 6). The passage expresses the idea that our subjective locations predate our consciousness of self and that this, to some extent, determines whom we can be and how we are recognized. The piece muses about the idea of pre-determined urban identities, suggesting that before many of us had an opportunity to carve out a space, before we could for ourselves, set a referent of who we were or wanted to be, we are already known. The colour of my skin, the music in my earphones, my hair, and my language- this was urban. Dialogically conceived, I belonged to the urban, a condition of not belonging anywhere else. In this way, my difference, my uniqueness as an individual, is impossibly subsumed deep within the historically imagined space of urban Black womanness. The reality of the hybridity of my subjective experience is taken for granted and silenced (de Lauretis, 2002, pp.54).

"[I bare] the weight of histories, memories and ill- fated destinies manifested in physical space, filling my psychic universe." (Peters, 2010)

Bearing the weight of my history forces me to confront the fallacy of the homogeneous Black woman. This attire simply does not fit because I am many things…I am different. I perform in other ways not considered possible, normal or natural for my role on this stage. Despite this knowledge, I sometimes play to the power of the discourses that discipline my body and I wear this urban mask. I yearn to belong and being recognized is often a precondition of acceptance. It seems then that I accept my fate at times however marred, ugly or jaded, while rejecting it at others (Goldberg, 1995, pp.12).

"I blend with the crowd
Realizing that outside speculation will almost too consistently be deductive
Black skin, that's actually cocoa brown
Plus badges of ethnicity
Performative gender and class markers: dark eye liner, baggy pants and air force ones,
bubble jackets and weaves, and perms and natural hair,
The melody of my voice equals ghetto Black girl
the popular image of the urban." (Peters, 2010)

Hall reminds us that temporary positioning of identity is "strategic" and arbitrary. Although we are positioned by the narratives of cultural pasts we exercise agency over our identification by positioning ourselves within or without these narratives (Hall, 1990, pp.394).

Unpacking identity is a complicated and messy business. I strive to undermine the rigid foundation of the walls erected by a grid of intelligibility that interprets my humanity in terms of gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation by simply being. Against all odds, crossing a multitude of intersections that classify and arrest my becomings, I blossom and outgrow the bonds that define me, creating new sensations and

new urban understandings. The underlying narrative in this passage unravels key historical contexts for the reading of my body, self-understanding and possibilities of self-authorship. The legacy of the Atlantic slave trade, colonization and imperialism, all figure prominently in the contemporary social and political locations of my ancestral family and the ancestors of those who subjugated us. As distant as it may seem, urban flâneurie opens the possibility of tracing the historical in the present, seeing the old in the new (Jenks and Neves, 2000).

Unfortunately, the stereotyped understandings of Black bodies and the discriminatory ideologies that reinforced their discursive production remain hegemonic today. To hide this reality beneath discourses of colourblindness or premature celebrations of gender equality is to render me voiceless. The president of the United States may be recognized as a Black man but my body is read as Saartjie Baartman was a century ago, and this knowledge shapes my performance in this body (Gilman, 1986, pp. 233). This body was "to be seen and not heard as a child", has satiated the Empire's desire for Otherness, disgust and attraction in womanhood and continues to be a dominant symbol of the hyper sexual-genital-Black woman in contemporary representations. I wear my history on my skin, you can hear it in my voice, and you can see it through my eyes. In the passage, I express how what I am and who I've been in historical context fills my psychic universe, and attempts to shape what I can know and who I can be. This piece moves us to understand the Black woman in historic articulation in order to envision the construction of that archetype today.

On representations of my Black sex

"I feel the stares, but I don't care
because I decide who I am at this moment and time

regardless of the identity so intently splattered on my existence." (Peters, 2010)

The discursive production of sexuality as it intersects with discourses of Black womanhood centers around historically embedded symbolics of the deviant sexualized woman. Gilman's (1986) work on the 19th century marriage of the iconographies of White female sexual deviancy and the essence of Black womanhood (embodied in the infamous image of the 'Hottentot') remains relevant to exploring my Black female experience (Gilman, 1986, pp. 213). Cultivated during a time where female genitalia came to define discourse on the female, the Black woman was caricatured and reduced to a primitive sexual appetite. Evidenced by her protruding buttocks, her lascivious and voluptuous shape, her pathologically described sexual parts, her fecundity, the Black woman is imbued through and through with sexuality; the two inextricably linked and indivisible. The latter represents a shift in the iconography of the Black female, which from slavery to the middle of the 20th century was represented by the Mammy. Reincarnated in the image of Aunt Jemima on the pancake box, the Mammy is an icon of Black womanhood antithetical to aesthetic beauty, physiologically and physiognomically hideous, sexually aberrant (Pilgrim, 2002; Riggs, 1987).

Reinforcing the logic behind the popular Black 'Jezebel' stereotype is the legacy of Baartman's dehumanizing exhibition of 1810. North American material culture is peppered with traditional codifiers of the Black female, depicting women of African descent as naked, ugly, loose, perpetually pregnant and sexualized as children (pickaninin) (Pilgrim, 2002; Riggs, 1987). In the early 20th century, these one-dimensional images appeared on ashtrays, postcards, fishing lures, drinking glasses, stir sticks; you name it. From the sale of colonial travelogues about wanton African women,

to the forced prostitution and unfettered raping of Black women by White slave masters, the historical commodification of Black female sexuality finds new ground in contemporary representations. Today, my Black womanhood is routinely appropriated, displayed, disavowed and consumed for profit and pleasure and it is draining.

"Baring the weight of histories…."(Peters, 2010)
"Baring the weight of histories…" (Ibid)
"Baring the weight of histories…" (Ibid)

An inflamed debate taken up by intersectional feminists (a feminism that accounts for the connectivity of multiple positionalities such as ethnicity, sexuality and race to expressions of gender) has gained attention in mainstream media. What began as a negative reaction to a young woman's performance at the 2013 Video Music Awards, became a point of entry into contemporary exploration of discourse around Black female sexuality in popular entertainment. A critical analysis of Miley Cyrus' career development and performance reveals the endurance of racist discourses of Black women. Showcasing Black women without agency over their bodies, the likening of deviant and unrestrained sexualisation with Black womanhood and the objectification and commodification of the Black female, Miley slaps the fat asses of faceless Black women, dances like a Black stripper, grinds on an older, married male artist, and uses big Black women as literal props in her quest for public attention and wealth. This artist has explicitly sought to re- create herself in the image of the urban (homogenized Black sound) Black woman (inherently sexually deviant) who is by definition "ratchet" (ghetto) by entertaining reductive and racist rhetoric that supports existing racist narratives about Blackness (Ninjacate, 2013).

"A privileged position
Flirting with the marginal
Celebrating its delicacies, and consuming its soul." (Peters, 2010)

In a surreal way, I find myself existing triply, as Fanon aptly put it (Fanon, 1990).
At once, I am an object, an Other, delimited by the web of knowledge that discursively
creates me, and my self, whose actualization is perpetually at bay. Through the lens of
potential employers, teachers, law enforcers, neighbours and other agents of social
institutions, I am unwittingly judged and classified according to prevalent notions
reproduced and disseminated across a multitude of mediums. If high rates of poverty,
unemployment and systemic racism have lead to increased violence and hopelessness in
racialized communities then these very symptoms of discrimination become the causes of
social decay; reinforcing negative stereotypes of me and perpetuating inequitable social
conditions (McMurtry & Curling, 2008, pp. 141).

These are my realities in the New Urban Environment. This is the leeching of
potential referenced in the piece. We are all capable of greatness, of becoming; yet
seemingly insurmountable barriers face our youth. Without alternative discourses that
offer the possibility of diverse ways of being, 'who am I?' easily becomes 'who do they
expect me to be?' This phenomenon is enormously important to me as a knower in
studies in urban education where the classroom is a critical space of knowledge
production, including self-identification (Luke, 1996). It has been noted that prevalent
discourses of race can influence the dynamics of teacher- student and student- peer
interaction. Some scholars argue that teachers often avoid engagement with students who
do not look, act, or talk like them. They may categorize such students as being "at risk",
having behavioural problems or being unteachable. This can create classroom

environments that are not rooted in learning and high expectations, but in control and management (Landsman, 2011). The result often manifests in the overrepresentation of racialized students in IPRC behavioural programs or the streaming and labeling of these children as incapable students; they are seen as low academic achievers whose self-expectations are equally as low as the institution's expectations of them (Cazden, 2001; Brown & Parekh, 2010).

"Am I an exception?
Among my peers who look like, talk like, walk like
feel Africa
from a distance." (Peters, 2010)

On Urban Representations

I could be thought of as an exception. Despite having to face the complicated demands of being- the imperative to perform my ascribed role, the instinct to forge my own path, to owning the parts of me that feel intrinsic- I excelled academically. I spoke "properly" at will; I identified with greater possibilities than those associated with representations of young Black women. I blossomed despite the knowledge that the society I was born into would be surprised if I did.

Teelucksingh's work illustrates how communities are written and understood in terms of the dominant social construction of the community and the lived experience of its inhabitants (Teelucksingh, 2007, pp. 658). In the context of the New Urban Environment of the GTA, the seemingly intuitive naming and localizing of spaces like "priority neighbourhoods" reveals how effectively negative and repetitive images of gang, drug or violent activity perpetrated by a few come to homogenize and represent the whole (United Way, 2004, p. 16; Walcott, 2006, in lecture). If our physical and psychic maps can work to naturalize and maintain spatial hierarchies, they can work to undermine them

as well (McKittrick, 2006). Changing the images and representations of community are integral parts of creating alternative geographies and possibilities for those of us who reside within them.

"Resistance a necessary tool to survival and sanity
The tireless energy necessary to break down and build new forms
Détournement." (Peters, 2010)

These alternatives create possibilities and these possibilities incite hope. The ability to negotiate your subjective position is empowering and key to breathing life into diversity in representation. The latter phenomenon comes to the fore in the June 2013 raids of Toronto's Dixon-Somali community known as "Project Traveller". Using mass media to contest the flattened image of their environment, this community that historically faced racism and Islamaphobia destabilized the concretizing stereotypes of their space in the public discourse (Criger, 2013). The public who would not otherwise question the dominant representations of this community was presented with an opportunity to challenge essentialized notions of this space and recognize the possibility that it was targeted, stigmatized and criminalized.

In fact, it was found that that the motives behind the raids may have been indeed connected to efforts to procure a video- tape containing evidence of the Toronto mayor, Rob Ford, using illicit drugs (Walcott, 2013). The damning evidence has since been retrieved, made public, and has put the city of Toronto on the international radar of political scandal. This scandal has confirmed that Rob Ford is a drug user, that only some kinds of people deserve "the benefit of the doubt", and that Toronto law enforcement continues to engage in differential treatment of citizens as evidenced in their blatant mismanagement of the Ford investigation (Walcott, 2013).

Creating alternative discourses is important for external identification of diversity and hybridity within communities. Highlighting the possibilities inherent in constructing heterogeneous group identities gives way to expanded individual horizons. In everyday encounters, a person whose authorship is usurped must grapple with and consciously or unconsciously reject or assume the position placed before them. These are the lives referenced in the piece- those who confront and dismantle the barriers of discrimination, of false representations, of essentialized portrayals of themselves. I am not Somali-Canadian nor am I a resident of the Dixon community. However, I am subsumed within the stigma, the target and the criminalization.

"…[W]here the blossoming and ripening of fruits are realized against all odds (Peters, 2010)."

Against all odds, facing social discrimination, inequitable distribution of social services and goods, internalization of negative stereotypes, language and other barriers, people rise; realizing their potential and reclaiming their self-authorship. I journey to this space everyday.

Journeys

On Urban Movement

Amin (2007) speaks of the transnational flows of ideas, information, knowledge, money and people. He points to trans-local networks of organization and influence, including multinational corporations and global financial institutions, international governance regimes and transnational cultural networks. The urban environment can no longer be conceived of as an abstract entity when it is a symptom of globalization, a microcosm of the amalgam the world always was and is now- more than ever. This is a space characterized by the meeting of peoples, histories and ideologies. It is here fluidity and 'zones of contact' blur the boundaries of Self and Other, of binary categorization (Pratt, 1987). The urban identity is borne by a subject situated historically and geographically in space and time, constituted by discursive processes but not reducible to them (Nelson, 1999, pp. 55). An increasingly cosmopolitan urbanity- cosmopolitan in the sense that it is marked by cross-culturality, intersectionality, transience and movement-makes the consciousness of that society alive with multitudinal desires, perspectives and experience.

"[Visions] made nebulous through the depths of the waters of the Caribbean
The plumes of exhaust that dance along the trajectory of an airplane that makes its
way to Toronto with my parent." (Peters, 2010)

Movement and migration mark this passage. Speaking to the fluidity of boundaries, the urban reveals itself as a shifting space where the influx of people and things ensure constant change. My travels to the urban center coincide with my independence, coming of age. This freedom that was so desired in my youth, was unexpectedly circumvented, delimited by previously hidden forces. Mirroring the

invisible forces that shaped my identification and recognition, where I worked, where I lived and where I played all referenced the boundaries of my ascribed identity. I find myself part of an imagined community facing oppression by and resistance to an extant, invisible homogenizing, exploitative force. My face is a representation of a disadvantaged community, my eyes the window to a history of genocide, enslavement, oppression, disenfranchisement.

The heart of the urban is located in many places, for migrant people bring their sense of belonging with them wherever they may go. Movement helps to define us. It is through movement that our experience can be located and contextualized. The centrality of the fluidity of boundaries in my mind map is readily apparent.

"This area is zoned and I have a temporary pass.
I've already mapped the safe areas and
distance often impedes accidental intrusions into exclusive spaces.…
The urban condition resonates." (Peters, 2010)

I move through areas thought to be bound by name with physical ease; yet internalization of the boundedness of territories creates psychic barriers, dislocating the realities of structural inequities and issues shared by the people like me of the GTA. In *Unpacking Cosmopolitanism* Beck and Snzaider assert that boundaries are continuously erected to signify and maintain difference. Here, the conceptualization of autonomy is defective and subverts the reality of interdependence. Those who seek to maintain the status quo resist interrogation of the bounded entities they vehemently try to naturalize (Beck and Snzaider, 2010).

The ills of the products of neo-liberalism and its supporting discourses inscribe and confuse what faces me. In the piece, I noted that the passengers who shared my ancestry all dismount at the factory,

"I wonder who among them will be at my school, a school, a good job- under employed, unemployed- if you're on the bus in the suburbs it's probably not because you are concerned about a sustainable future." (Peters, 2010)

Although all individuals have differing strengths and talents to share with the world, it is statistically peculiar that I cannot find one face that looks like mine among a university class of over 500. I wonder how much of a coincidence it is that many of my peers did not graduate from high school, with few attending post-secondary schools or securing employment that offered the potential for upward social mobility. Why are too many young people I know trapped in a cycle of arrested development: under- and unemployment, impoverished, resorting to criminal activity, violence or stuck under a glass ceiling? Why am I alone on this journey to school when so many like me have the intellectual potential to be here?

On racialization and schooling

"The possibility, the alternatives, the promise of emancipation, the resilience of the oppressed rains hope on a perpetually disturbed harvest." (Peters, 2010)

Unfortunately, seemingly particular illustrations of micro- level phenomena are in fact evidenced quantitatively as very real and disturbing social realities. According to recent findings by reports on Toronto funded by the TDSB and the TD bank group, groups historically categorized as being "at risk" continue to fair poorly in high school graduation rates and post-secondary attendance. In fact, only 29% of Caribbean-Canadian students went to college or university compared to 56% of the Canadian-English students. With a 45% high school drop out rate, Black students- particularly males of Afro-Caribbean descent- were twice as likely not to graduate from high school. Moreover, when these students did attend post-secondary, 17% attend college while only 12% enrol in a university (Brown, R., 2009; Miner, 2011 pp.10). The persistence of school failure

among students of colour and those of low socio- economic (SES) backgrounds is a palpable reality in North America. School failure is characterized as the persistent, pervasive and disproportionate low academic achievement of a substantial number of low-SES students and those of colour (Valencia, 2002). There are a number of contrasting theoretical perspectives proffered to account for this phenomenon.

The cultural difference framework (Lebo, 1970; Valentine, 1971) posits that a disconnect exists between the home culture and school culture, leading to issues in the cosmopolitan context such as communicative misunderstandings between teacher and student. The late John Ogbu advanced a "caste theory" model that situates immigrant minorities and "involuntary minorities" (whose social positions are rooted in slavery, conquest and colonization) as recipients of inferior education, confronted with social and political barriers and excluded from true assimilation into mainstream society (Ogbu, 1991).

The systemic inequality model points to macro-level structures that influence schooling conditions leading to school failure (Pearl, 2002). Social reproduction theorists argue that the role of schooling is to shape the dispositions of students to ensure the maintenance of asymmetrical power relations (Dejesus, 2005). The deficit model resonates with many key elements constitutive of contemporary educational policy and popular thought. The legacy of the deficit model, an endogenous and parsimonious treatise (Valencia, 2002), has been to validate the "blaming of the victim" (Ryan, 1971); where scholars and policy makers attribute school failure to internal deficiency of the student and community.

Exploring labels such as "at risk" that proliferate in contemporary educational thought reveals its foundation in deficit thinking. Scholars argue that "at risk" is a classist, racist, ablest and sexist term that locates pathologies in the individual, family and community rather than focusing on systemic factors that generate and perpetuate inequality (Valencia, 2003). Nevertheless, the individuals classified in this manner are "at risk" of being profiled, discriminated against and oppressed. Schecter and Bayley assert that mainstream educational policy attempts to control the variation and difference that characterizes modern urban classrooms. Here, language socialization meets language ideology for it is assumed that, "…people who speak this way, who are located in this social space and place do this and therefore learn that" (Schecter & Bayley, 2004).

Labels like "at risk" can have the discursive power to construct negative constructions of identity and representation, making them intrusive and capable of flattening the psychosocial space that houses peoples' sense of self- worth, self- expectation and self- definition (Rimstead, 1997). Although a critical view of the social construction of identity recognizes both the powerful influence of dominant ideologies in delimiting people's sense of themselves and the possibility of struggle for alternative definitions (Bloome, 2004), the heterogeneity of racialized populations ensures that the manifestations of systemic discrimination are felt disparately among minority groups; making the struggle for socio-economic and political capital more difficult for some.

A paper by Pon, Goldstein and Schecter (2003) explores how literacy, language socialization and language ideology can be used to create racialized and ethnocentric learning experiences that exclude Chinese immigrant students. Although they faced

ethno-linguistic discrimination, these students enjoyed academic success. What accounts for this?

It has been argued that by the middle years of secondary education, self-image as academic failure or success is cultivated and to a large extent determines the experience [and outcome] of schooling (Stables, 2003). As such, we contend that among other factors, the popular stereotypes that confer innate intellectual and hardworking abilities upon the group of Chinese immigrants in the above study instantiate group and individual identities as high academic achievers. Conversely, the popular representations of Black Canadians adversely portray them possessing criminal tendencies, anti-social behaviours and having innately poor academic potential; thus creating the conditions for the development of negative academic identities. Brown's (2009) study explicitly shows that among minority populations East and South Asian students excelled academically, while Latin and Black students (Caribbean and African) whether born in Canada or not are struggling (Brown, R., 2009).

In *Cracks in the Classroom Walls* (1975), Peter Shrag comments that the great dream of universal opportunity originated in an era when school was one of several options for social mobility. Contemporary notions hold that all advancement must extend from schooling and there is, therefore, "one avenue for entry into mainstream dignity" (Shrag, 1975, pp. 90). It can be inferred then, that generalizations that reinforce troubling representations of Blackness undoubtedly rob students classified in this way of the equal opportunity for success in education therefore hindering their social mobility, access to political influence, engaged citizenship and potentially lowering their overall quality of life.

A 2003 report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Paying the Price: The human cost of racial profiling* outlines the deleterious effects of racial profiling in educational policies such as the Ontario Safe Schools Act and other similar zero tolerance policies. Among the most salient noted are loss of education and educational opportunities, negative psychological impact, increased criminalization of children often for conduct that does not threaten the safety of others, and the promotion of anti-social behaviours (OHRC, 2003). Moreover, studies on the experience of Aboriginal students in education reveal that issues such as poverty, competing family responsibilities, delayed benefit and irrelevance of education, finance, and isolation within post- secondary institutions compound issues of discrimination (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006 pp. 58). Although the obstacles in the path of many racialized youth are multiple and complex, they are not immutable, insurmountable nor are they naturally occurring. The relations of power through which hegemonic inequalities arise are socially produced and are subject to realignment and redistribution (Foucault, 1978, pp. 94). As for me, must I remain the educational "exception" that proves the rule?

<u>Highly Classified</u>

On Ethno-Racial Profiling

"New spaces, new places- familiar stares from unfamiliar faces…
Well, that's if you catch them looking.
I must be the subject of another's flâneurie." (Peters, 2010)

Demystification and deconstruction reveals what lies beneath. Unearthed in my micro-ethnographic experience is the salience of many isms that unless held up to a microscope, go unnoticed; how difficult it is to gather empirical evidence of discrimination of any kind in a society that overtly claims to value difference. I am identifiable through performative markers of gender, race, sex and class, and I am insidiously and quietly excluded and displaced from spaces and places. Discourses of race converge and shift, yet repetition ensures access to an organized method of classification that becomes so ingrained and effective, its mechanics become simply reflexive; part of everyday subconscious goings and comings. I need not speak to be identified.

"They wonder what I'm doing in this store, where I clearly can't afford anything
screams my shoes, shouts my skin, laughs my wallet emptied by school fees.
Can I help you?" (Peters, 2010)

In the above passage, I have been profiled. I could have changed my clothes to reflect a certain social position before entering the high- end store referenced above, but I wore what I wore. In retrospect I wondered, 'If only I had looked more 'presentable', then I could have been valued as a potential customer. But I surmise that it was not my outfit that intruded; it was me. And yet I am told these issues I claim to encounter are antiquated, belong in the history books (where they are not), have been completely overcome (See Ontario Human Rights Code Sec. 5, Charter of Rights Sec 15), and are

ultimately the last pitiful cards before an 'empty deck'. The faces upon which I read

disapproval for my presence, suspicion of my movements, the bodies that follow and

survey the threat of my potential criminal activity compound exponentially *the* "fact of

my Blackness" (Fanon, 1990). I know in my soul that I cannot be defined in this way, but

in the moment, in all moments like these I cannot escape the grasp of these ideas, the

countless stories about who I am- the blueprint of profiling useful for dealing with people

like me.

"I am a stranger in this place, but my very presence demands that I belong.
I say, I am not an exception
Others who look like, talk like, walk like, dress like me belong here too." (Peters, 2010)

Yon (1999) illustrates how a representation can at once signify and delimit

multiple positionalities in discourses of nation, race and community (Yon, 1999, pp. 623).

In this way, racism can be and is often recoded and smuggled into nationalist and cultural

terms (Frankenburg, 1993, pp. 9). Racial profiling is one of these chameleonic

phenomena that can hide under the guise of necessity in the 'war on drugs, gangs, crime',

ensuring community safety and national security, protecting those who belong. Since

September 11th, 2001, the mandate of securing national interests and the citizenry has

resulted in the rights of innocent people being circumvented, their freedoms denied.

Religious, ethnic and racial biases have been built into popular consciousness and

enacted in law, exacerbating distrust, fear, and xenophobia. Seemingly perpetual forms of

mental violence are exacted on those populations surveyed and criminalized,

reverberating in the lives of those who can never feel comfortable with 'those people'

living in their neighbourhoods.

Engaging in critical analysis of the discursive, epistemological and ontological makings of me makes visible the systemic discriminatory paradigms that permeate my lived experience. We must confront our own colonization. The system is not merely structural. It's also inside us, through the internalization of oppressive cultural norms that define our worldview. Our minds have been colonized to normalize deeply pathological assumptions, discriminating and classifying at will (Reinsborough, 2004). I am embarrassed at my fear of a man of Middle Eastern descent (or so I deduced) with a 'suspicious bag' sitting near me on a train, "Why does he keep standing up, what's in his bag, did they search him?" I am blown away at my own internalization of this madness, but like all proponents of profiling will say, "I rather someone be uncomfortable than be negligent and have innocent people get blown up…right? Right?" (Melchers, 2006).

"I must carry this eye with me
It must engage with the storm that embattles my very being
A fierce wind that demands that I accept the unacceptable, normalize the constructed,
and naturalize what cannot be freedom, love." (Peters, 2010)

In the name of safety, I relinquish the right to protest when I am escorted to a more secure area to be thoroughly searched, patted down, my baggage tested for unknown substances for the second time on plane trips departing from and arriving to Toronto's Pearson airport. I would be remiss in wondering why the random selection always chooses the browned skin, dreadlocked, the hijab wearing, the 'usual suspects'- this is supposed to be behaviour detection programming not a systematic deployment of a racial profiling model in airports across North America.

But, it is what it is. There has been an outpour of complaints by those enforcing these procedures, uncomfortable with the odious scent of Islamaphobia and racism this profiling covertly and unnecessarily exercises daily (Schmidt & Lichtblau, 2012). Noted

by many scholars commenting on racial profiling within contemporary discourses of terrorism is the fact that the productivity and efficiency of the US Customs Service escalated dramatically when ethnic profiling was abandoned and behaviour-based programming adopted. Within 1 year, the number of searches declined 74% while the percent of searches that yielded contraband rose 8 percent (U.S. Customs Service, 1998).

Racist discourses of terrorism and extremism have come to shape how we think about belonging in our communities, institutions and nations. Taking stock of popular thought around sensitive issues found in these discourses is not an easy task. However, social media has made itself into a valuable information machine, giving social scientists access to the thoughts and sentiments of millions of people researchers would not otherwise tap into. Blogs, Tweets and Facebook updates offer the researcher the possibility of getting answers to the kinds of questions it would be hard to ask, and difficult to answer, face to face.

In 2013, we find the crowning of the first South Asian Miss America met with disrepute from thousands of thoroughly vexed and disgusted Americans who could not fathom the thought of a veritable terrorist, an immigrant, a non- American Muslim Arab representing them internationally. They were in total disbelief at the message embodied by this woman, infuriated and disappointed that she would be permitted to mock their grieving nation in this way; right after the anniversary of 9/11! The constructedness of the terrorist identity is readily apparent when an American born woman of South Asian descent becomes identifiable under dominant representations of the Middle Eastern 'enemy', the Other who can by definition never belong (Pitts, 2013; Judkis, 2013)

As for me, I do not belong. I was birthed and raised in this country, yet my naming reveals my difference, my skin confirms my difference and this difference is disavowed in the process of my perpetual identification as an alien, "Where are you from, Africa?" "Well yes, I suppose my ancestors are…but.. I was born here and my parents from Trinidad." Social interactions, textbooks, history lessons, television shows, beer commercials, day to day mutterings of 'there goes the neighbourhood' when minorities move in, the media and other mediums taught me what it is to be *authentically* Canadian, and that most importantly, I could never be that.

The New Urban Environment is a locus of diversity, multi-linguistic and multi ethnic, holding within it many different ways of being Canadian. The celebration of our differences and our union, not in spite but in respect of these differences, is what is held in esteem in our constitution, is what defines us as Canadians internationally. What accounts then for the 'growing unease and whispers of *White flight*' in the city I grew up in (Grewal, 2013)? What are the implications of this sociological term to the psychosocial positioning of racialized peoples, the unwanted ' Other' colours from whom those in flight desperately seek to avoid? Walcott (2000) resonates here, making my claims to these social spaces intrusive and "rude".

"Land of freedom, wealth, democracy, for some not all." (Peters, 2010)

On community and belonging

I observed a group of older women of European descent whispering about the influx of different cultures in the previously Anglo- dominated suburban regions. They were uncomfortable discussing this topic, they glanced around before they spoke, and they saw me walking by. I listened closely as they stated their discomfort with the

invasion of new people; they described how their peers have left for the obvious reason of refusing to be a stranger in their *own* neighbourhood. Grewal's (2013) article echoes this line of thinking, with those considering migration attributing the causes of *White flight* to being simultaneously a result of cultural tensions and poor urban planning that results in ethnic segregation and tension. They whispered because they don't want to be accused of being intolerant or racist and laughed as they jokingly described each other as "non visible" minorities.

Statistics show that while Brampton has increased its population by almost 60% in the last 10 years the White population has declined by 13% (Statistics Canada in Grewal, 2013). In Canada, this picture of demographic shift is embedded historically with settlement patterns that see Anglo Europeans succeeded by Southern and Eastern Europeans followed by Asian and African descendants settling last. With the succession of territory comes the loss of social infrastructure, local economic networks and political capital, changing the face of the region each time a group migrates. Though the motivations behind these massive ethnic flights may be multidimensional, and on the surface we can attribute migration to upward social mobility, the piece asks us what discourses of community and nation proliferate as a result of these patterns.

Central to the logic of White flight is the dichotomous logic of us and them; we distinct from the Others. Here, the notion of community is considered to be a stable, neatly bounded entity, capable of being represented by (self) appointed spokespersons and role models, and is in crisis when called to reinvent and accommodate new visions of itself (Yon, 1999 pp. 623). The predetermined alteriority of those not identified within the boundaries of acceptance precludes the possibility of community membership within a

discourse of monolithic community identity. We must reiterate the fact that difference lies within and without groups, that multiplicity is humanity. White flight can be seen to be a negative reaction to the unsettling of nationalist and community discourses that center and normalize Whiteness, forcing us to ask ourselves who we are, who is a citizen and who belongs.

"Others who look like, talk like, walk like, dress like me belong here too." (Peters, 2010)

Democratic Dreaming

On Citizenship

"Patriarchal, racist, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, xenophobic
Don't talk like that here or you'll get NO respect (Peters, 2010)!!!"

What of my citizenship? I was schooled, politicized, and disposed to believe that

the invisible machinery that governs (or more aptly, polices) our lives is founded on

democratic principles. Metcalfe posits that the core values of the European

Enlightenment, the centrality of reason, the belief in progress, science and individualism,

drive academia today (Metcalfe, 2008). We are educated to believe that these principles

are reflected in all policies and practices that shape our lives; a message continuously

repeated through a multitude of mediums and institutions until naturalized, historicized

beyond reprieve or critique (Portelli and Solomon, 2001). Yet, my lived experience is

inundated with realities divergent from the contrived national narrative of freedom,

democracy, and equality.

Seeing students of African descent in my graduate and undergraduate programs

was an exceptional occurrence in spite of the fact that 'everyone has an equal opportunity

to access higher education based on merit' but where 'everyone' is not equally represented.

I am, however, among the majority in terms of gender, which is also a persistent trend in

my post-secondary experience. The latter reality does not translate into an over

representation nor equalization of influence and social capital in larger society. That

privilege is still carefully protected by the historically monolithic construction of the

Canadian citizen- White, male, monied, playing hockey, going to Tim Horton's and

drinking beer (Fleming, 2003).

"My tongue is cement, heavy to move; anxiety builds
But I have to speak up
Raise my hand
This is why I am here.
Ssssssssssssssssssspeak for I am who they think I am, though I'm not who they want me
to be." (Peters, 2010)

The above passage references a defining moment in my undergraduate education

where I felt obliged to rebut the systematic neglect of my positionality from the

paradigms professed in nearly all of my education. From European history and Western

literature, to political science and social theory, no room was made for dialogue around

democracy, identity and citizenship that included a critical analysis of dominant

discourses. So there was 19th century Europe with no meaningful discussion of the

Atlantic slave trade, race, gender, nation or imperialism and Canadian history with no

talk of indentureship, Black Canadian or Native histories. In a natural progression from

my 6th grade education where we watched Roots and never spoke of racisms or the

legacy of slavery, my undergraduate education taught me what knowledge was valued

and what questions were permissible.

Referencing Bakhtin, Weiler notes the constraining nature of authoritative

discourses (Weiler, 1998, pp.177). Here, fearing the consequences of adhering to

positions that conflict with dominant discourses can restrict open intellectual debate in

academia (in lecture Mannette, 2011). Sitting in a large class and posing a question that

delves into erased histories, brings up shameful ancestral pasts and instantiates what

scholars have called 'White guilt' is hard: no one wants to talk about that (Stelhe, 2008).

"…this eye can see the machinery at work here." (Peters, 2010)

Stelhe's article discusses the effects of confronting issues of racism, ethnocentrism

and classism on those who receive advantages stemming from the deployment of what

has been called 'White racism'- those who benefit by and are complicit in the oppression of ' Others' (Stehle, 2008). It is argued that any discourse that triggers thoughts about "White privilege" and the concomitant guilt, is easily subverted, ignored, avoided or categorized so that it may be contained. Speaking up- the telling of a narrative that is silenced as a result of inequitable relations of power- is hard. Vulnerable to ridicule, anger, denial of personhood, my speaking up can be interpreted as threatening and 'undemocratic' (Henry, 2002; Joshee, 2009). I was often told that there was no time to explore those issues, had the relevance of my questions downplayed and knew I would be seen as a nuisance, an extremist in extreme interpretations, labeled an angry Black feminist (Walcott, 2000).

Accessing alternative theoretical paradigms with which to articulate my experience meant going outside of program requirements, squeezing in marginalized courses where there was no room. Resonating with Metcalfe's assertion that academic knowledge generation is firmly embedded within political economy, my program choices reflected the extent to which I sought to align my education with marketability, even when I intellectually and spiritually desired emancipation (Metcalfe, 2008). It was in "emancipatory" courses (Portelli & Solomon, 2001) that I questioned my citizenship in a nation that continues to oppress those indigenous to this land; the Others- Othered like me (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008).

Bhaba discusses stereotyping as a major discursive strategy to ensure that differences between people are recognized. Othering is the product of the strategic highlighting of difference where the target of denigration is dehumanized, their positive and desired attributes disavowed (Bhabha, 1994). Difference can only be tolerated or

accepted superficially, compartmentalized and sanitized for consumption as entertainment. Thus we find on display at the Scotiabank Caribbean Carnival formally known as Caribana, summer cultural festivals, foods and fashion, or for strategic politico-economic reasons. Differentiation in this way is exclusionary.

"Unless urban is to mean modern, cultured
Experiencing transience
Cross cultural interaction etically
A privileged position
Flirting with the marginal
Celebrating its delicacies and consuming its soul." (Peters, 2010)

A recent scandal surfaced after a University of Toronto professor declared that he only teaches literature from 'serious heterosexual guys', and has no interest in teaching books by women or the Chinese (Hazlitt Staff, 2013). Berated for their exclusionary tone, Professor Gilmour defended his comments saying they were made in jest and were taken out of context. While it can be argued that everyone has a right to literary and aesthetic preference, a contextualized interpretation of this incident situates this comment in terms of the hegemonic Eurocentric and patriarchal paradigms that dominate the academy. The proliferation of historically embedded discourses of intelligence that exclude marginalized perspectives results in the normalizing of White heterosexual masculinity. So it follows that Gilmour can suggest that if you want those Other knowledges, you can go down the hall and engage with them in their compartmentalized specialty classes where they belong (Hazlitt Staff, 2013).

"I am a stranger in this place, but my very presence demands that I belong (Peters, 2010)."

All histories, and all people belong here too. My parents came here to live the elusive Canadian Dream. They left their socio-economic investments and safety nets

behind, worked their way up the 'ladder', achieving social, educational and financial objectives. They were promised that hard work could afford any immigrant entry into the middle class cultural experience and they sacrificed for that. They played in the discourse of the 'good immigrant' whose boundaries are patrolled by the discourse of the 'ungrateful foreigner'. Like the constraints faced by anyone challenging social norms, an individual can garner the identity of an ungrateful foreigner by interrogating authoritative discourses. Nationalist discourses, often mediated by terms indebted to notions of race, ethnicity and gender, work to exclude individuals who critically examine what was promised to them in their neo-colonial conditioning. Within dominant discourses such as neo-liberalism there is no space for questions on equity or discrimination to be articulated by foreigners (particularly for those historically marginalized and racialized): 'if you don't like it here, go back to where you came from' is what they'll say (Walcott, 2006).

And this is the message being sent to the Others. The shocking tabling of a bill entitled the 'Charter of Values' in Quebec spoke volumes to the disturbing prevalence of discriminatory ideologies and discourses of professionalism, race and terrorism that intersect in the articulation of Quebecois identity. Calling for the visual secularization of the state apparatus, the premier of Quebec and the Party Quebecois proposed a bill that would prohibit public employees from wearing overt religious symbols ensuring the neutrality of those working for the state. The bill sought to "Amend the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms; Establish a duty of neutrality and reserve for all state personnel; Limit the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols; Make it mandatory to have one's face uncovered when providing or receiving a state service; Establish an implementation policy for state organizations" (CBC, 2013).

Seemingly contrary to the fundamental rights and freedoms protected by Section 2.1 and 2.2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, this provincial bill disproportionally targeted religions who have insignia or sacred clothing from Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, and Rastafarian (not mentioned but clearly included) religious groups. It should be noted that the absence of Rastafarianism from the discussion speaks to its general rejection by the public who invalidates and rejects its authenticity as a religion; this connects to the historic devaluation of all things African. According to a diagram from the Government of Quebec, the only articles that are acceptable in public establishments are small crossed necklaces, earrings and rings that seem to be associated with Christianity. Is this not the normalizing and perpetuation of a hegemonic Franco- Christian identity that political leaders seek to capitalize on for its divisive imperatives to achieve politico-economic ends?

Fortunately, this bill has since been abandoned. However, the bubbling up of these discourses into the proposition outlined above reveals the alarming presence and pervasiveness of racism, xenophobia and Eurocentricity on Canada's socio-political stage. All citizens are guaranteed the right to freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication (Canadian Heritage, 2013). How can we possibly assume ourselves enlightened, pretend as though we have finished the business of modernity, when such glaring inequality persists? If Enlightenment ideals of equality have been universally achieved and North America is truly the land of the free, stories that locate immigrant and racialized experiences outside of this narrative are incompatible with representations of the West that proliferate internationally (Walcott, 2006).

"I say, I am not an exception
Others who look like, talk like, walk like, dress like me
belong here too." (Peters, 2010)

        Yet still, lofty representations of North America are continually (re) produced, and disseminated. Through conduits such as the media, education, discourses of development, the IMF and World Bank, Western objects, knowledges and values, are normalized and the indigenous decentered and devalued. This is especially true in post-colonial contexts where the apparatus for cultural imperialism are firmly rooted; its reproduction is entrenched in the structure of things institutional (Itwaru & Ksonzek, 1994). In the face of these obstacles, I demand to find a voice.

Land of the Free?

On Racialization and the Job Market

"I smirk at what you think I am
Within and without the classroom
And die a little because words manifest without intervention
And She
that archetype they thought I was
IS manufactured
Daily
Generationally
…On purpose." (Peters, 2010)

The passage above notes the discursive creation of a contemporary rendition of an archetypical Black woman- the welfare mom, the crude, loud, brawling socially inept ghetto girl, unfit for things sophisticated; not to bring home to your mother. On countless occasions, I contemplated becoming *her*. During a school incident involving my son, I wanted to go to the school and be who they thought I was, and yell, and scream. Instead, I called my son's school and politely requested to have a meeting with the principal regarding my son's admonishment that took place the day before.

I was approached by a woman who told me her daughter did not want to go on the bus to school because my son had bothered her two days prior. I immediately sought to resolve the issue suggesting that we all meet after school and ensure that she feels secure and have him apologize if he was in the wrong. After school, we met, he apologized and all was well, with her dad commenting, 'kids will be kids.' After inquiring further into the incident that day I found that she called the school in spite of our plans for resolution. My son was made to apologize at school, was made to sit in time out and was then sent to the office to speak to the principal, missing his gym class as punishment. The school never called me to corroborate the woman's allegations nor did they inform me that my

son was involved in an incident that required escalation to the point of being sent to the principal's office. I wondered what are the Board policies and procedures for dealing with an offence such as this?

The kids were sitting together on the bus and he poked/tickled her. Invasion of personal space is unacceptable in any form, but we find the punishment he endured to be excessive. He is not a bully, he was not intentionally or persistently abusing anyone- this was an isolated incident. He was unaware that he caused any harm given that he had been interacting normally with the girl on the bus on the way home and during class for two days prior. The focus was not on affirming the little girl's right to agency over her body, but on punishing my son, on humiliating him and treating him like a 'problem child' (OHRC, 2003).

I am sensitive to the fact that as mentioned above, little boys of my son's ancestry often have negative experiences in the education system. My son is a rambunctious 4-year-old boy, who is just beginning to cultivate his student identity. Events like this certainly shape how a child views himself in relation to the educational institution and to authoritative figures therein (Luke, 1996). The circumstances surrounding this incident did not warrant what followed. He told me he is one of two people who have been sent to the office this year, the other child being sent due to kicking, fighting and disrupting the classroom. Analyzing this incident in terms of the intertextuality of available discourses of Blackness, particularly dominant notions about Blacks boys in education and Black parents, suggests that this incident falls within the parameters of disparate and inequitable treatment. Symptomatic of the general absence of children's rights in educational

bureaucracy, my child had no voice and was denied the opportunity to be represented and supported by his parents (Griffith, 2001; Hall-Dennis, 1968).

I am fortunate to have the cultural or 'ethnic capital' necessary to engage with the school and address this situation in the best interests of my child, though it has been argued that many racialized parents do not have access to the language or resources that would make equitable dialogue possible (Borjas, 1992). In my childhood, the legacy of colonial relationships of power manifest in my mother's educational experience framed her participation and interactions with the educational institution. In retrospect, my mother's relationship with my teachers was always premised on the internalization of a particular inferiority; the institution was the expert, and the parent the facilitator for expert doings. However, there was always an underlying awareness of systemic structures of inequality that oppress students of African descent. A common reactionary notion to this oppression by parents is to advise their kids that they must work harder than their White counterparts in order to level the playing field. This can be seen to naturalize racisms and ethnocentrism by characterizing them as immutable phenomena; a thing to be accommodated. This all begs the question: if we are up against 'zero tolerance' in kindergarten, what other obstacles lay ahead?

"[They] have been given an opportunity
To rise up the social mobility ladder through education
Like everybody else
And it's their fault if they waste it!" (Peters, 2010)

There is a paucity of both quantitative and qualitative research that outlines the relationship between race, education (especially post-secondary educational data) and employment. A recent report on labour market outcomes posits that unemployment rates

among second-generation Blacks and " Other visible minorities" are highest in the country, at 9.2% and 8.6%, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2011). To put it in perspective, Black workers have double the unemployment rate of White workers who maintain an unemployment rate of 4.1%. Moreover, of all native and immigrant demographics, second-generation Blacks make the lowest annual income, while the second-generation Chinese tend to earn more than other visible-minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2011). However, unemployment rates among second-generation Canadians of Asian descent are higher than those among third-and-higher-generation Canadians who are not members of a visible-minority group (5.4% vs. 4.9%), even though Asians have significantly higher educational attainment. There can be as much difference in educational attainment between immigrants from different cultural backgrounds as between immigrants and Canadian-born citizens (Junor, 2004).

Scholars argue that there is not enough data to posit confidently that wage discrimination based on ethnicity is a contributing factor to the persistence of inequitable salary earnings in Canada. Much work has been done in exploring what has been called the gender gap, referencing the gap between what women earn and what men earn. Statistical evidence demonstrates that men continue to take home larger incomes than women in spite of the equalization of labour force participation and educational attainment. A report commissioned by the parliament of Canada notes that on average women take home 64.4% in annual salaries with median salaries at around 75%. Moreover, there were twice as many women than men underemployed and working part-time in 2009 (Cool, 2010). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development reports that Canada has the fourth largest gender gap in median full time earning of 22 countries (OECD Family database, 2010).

More extensive quantitative and qualitative work must be done in the area of racial and ethnic discrimination in the labour market. Analyzing the statistics we do have shows that even after controlling for variables, ethnic group differences in earnings persist. Some scholars posit that it is simply a matter of long-term acculturation in a multigenerational process that will ensure the economic integration of racialized people (Aydemir, Chen, and Corak, 2005). It is argued that educated communities are better prepared to acculturate their children to social institutions avoiding historical discriminatory barriers. Yet, we find that despite living in large urban centers and having more education, second generation racialized men earn less than third-and-higher-generation Canadians who are not members of a visible-minority group (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Language is central to social mobility and employment. McCall (2003) asserts that language competence can be a convenient tool for discriminating against other language groups in an apparently 'legitimate' way, due to the imperatives of work processes. Sylvie Roy's research on standardization in the work place offers compelling evidence that those who hold power, and the means of production, are increasingly establishing and reinforcing the standards of spoken language (Roy, 2003) Roy asserts that the global workplace is rivalling the school as the site of defining language norms. Having an "accent" can garner an individual an identity of stupidity, unprofessionalism, backwardness and create barriers to communication between speakers of standard forms and those who struggle to articulate themselves in preferred tonality, inflexion and

vocabulary (Roy, 2003). But as immigrant groups master Standard English, these issues become less relevant in the analysis of the second and later generations experiences, pointing to the systemic presence of discrimination in the Canadian labour market.

It is questionable to assume that labour markets are perfectly competitive. An article by Grant (2011) articulates the economic logistics behind a truly free market. Neo-classical economics would hold that racialized Canadians are paid less as a direct result of lower productivity than the non- visible majority. If they were productive and possessed lower salary expectations, racialized workers would be a more profitable investment for employers and would be hired in greater numbers as a result. The demand for cheaper racialized workers would soon out-weigh their demand, thus affording these workers leverage and the ability to bargain for a higher wages and attain more employment opportunities. Both the gender and race gaps in wages are seen as evidence that these workers are less productive and are ultimately less valuable. The persistence of these gaps indicates that employers are not hiring solely based on educational attainment (an indicator of productivity), or profit but instead consider irrelevant factors unrelated to productivity. Statistics Canada posits that wage discrimination is a possible explication to this phenomenon, but fails to engage deeply with the possible causes or solutions to the issue.

A 2008 study found that job seekers who possessed English-sounding names and Canadian experience were much more likely to be called for an interview than those with foreign experience and Asian sounding names (Oreopoulis, 2008). For the Jung-Taos, the Nguyens, the Tyrones, the Laqueishas, the Surdeeps and Harviders, the Ishmails and

Hazeemas, for my son Neziah and myself Nailah, the barriers to employment we face may surface even before a recruiter sees our faces.

On Poverty, Racialization and Justice

"The urban condition resonates in many aspects.
Although in suburbia abject poverty is not rampant
The caste like status and crosses heavied with the weight of stereotypes, categories,
names, are carried by people with little political capital
Criminalized truants guilty until proven innocent." (Peters, 2010)

Comparatively, Canadian youth face even greater challenges in the labour market than adults. Youth often have access to un-unionized, low wage, dead- end, casual jobs that make it difficult to support themselves and their families independently (Esmonde, 2002, pp. 67). The drastic changes to Ontario's social programming during the 90's are still felt today. In the 90's, the poverty rate increased by 15% with single mother households pegged at 85% (National Council of Welfare, 2000 pp.2). It has been argued that advanced capitalist states have standardized social programs and labour market regulations to produce flexible workers that accept unstable employment conditions (Sears, 1999, pp. 99). Changes to unemployment insurance eligibility saw 40% less workers receiving benefits between 1989 and 1997 (Canadian Labour Congress, 1998). The 1995 conservative government introduced extremely punitive cuts to welfare programs. In addition, changes in the Tenant Protection act effectively obliterated rent control, making it extremely difficult to secure affordable housing (Esmonde, 2002 pp. 68).

Many authors have posited that there exists a connection between poverty and crime. According to a 2008 Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies study, 80% of incarcerated Canadian women are jailed for poverty related crimes. A provincial report

by the United Way notes that, 74% of women were unable to support themselves financially at the time of their arrest. Moreover, approximately 70% of incarcerated women are single mothers (Cassidy, 2007; Addario, 2002 in United way, 2008). Researchers have found that survival and the attainment of basic needs is a primary motivation behind criminal activity (Voices for Children, 2004). We find that people are criminalized before committing any crime and that the crimes they commit are not the result of a biological predisposition to criminality- but are often in direct response to their social and material situation.

That said, low socio-economic status does not indicate criminal activity. The intersection of discourses of class, gender, and race among others makes it problematic to isolate or profile individuals based on these categories in law enforcement and judicial matters. The OHRC (2003) report notes a 2001 U.S. Department of Justice study of 1,272,282 citizen-police contacts in 1999 that found stoppage rates of racialized persons to be exponentially higher than Whites, with minorities having 50% the rate of contraband possession (Harris, 2002 in OHRC, 2003). Even if a group is particularly active in a certain criminal activity, it does not follow that an individual from that group is more likely to have committed a crime. This is especially true in the case of minority groups, where it is more likely that a member of the majority would commit crimes. In Toronto, we know that police have high rates of "carding"; over 400,000 reported incidents of detaining and gathering of personal information overwhelmingly from the young racialized demographic (Rankin & Winsa, 2013). Ultimately, increased surveillance of a particular group will result in higher charge rates despite lower actual rates of criminal activity (Brodbeck, 2013).

"Criminalized truants guilty until proven innocent (Peters, 2010)."

The 2011-12 Correctional Investigator's annual report found that the number of Black inmates in federal prisons increased by 69% increase over 10 years. Representing only 2.5% of Canada's population, Blacks represent just over 9% of the federal inmate population. Aboriginals are over-represented to a greater degree, making up only 4% of the Canadian population and 21% in federal prisons (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2012). The OHRC report on racial profiling quotes criminologist Scott Wortley who posits that, "To argue that racial profiling is harmless, that it only hurts those who break the law, is to totally ignore the psychological and social damage that can result from always being considered one of the 'usual suspects'" (Wortley in OHRC, 2003). The poignancy of the latter quote found resonance during the sensationalized 2013 U.S. murder trial of Trayvon Martin, a young man of African descent killed at 17 years old.

28-year-old George Zimmerman shot Martin as he walked home from the store one night. During the trial, it was argued that Zimmerman found Martin to be behaving suspiciously and proceeded to call the police. Disobeying advice from the police, Zimmerman approached Martin and attempted unilaterally to coerce him to leave the property. An altercation ensued; resulting in Zimmerman using his firearm in what the Court deemed to be self-defence (Tampa Bay Times, 2013). The circumstances are summarized as follows: the victim was unarmed, did not initiate the confrontation nor was he committing a crime that led to the confrontation. The defendant pursued the victim, did not retreat and was not on his property during the incident.

Analyzing the media and discourses that arose in relation to this trial reveals the extent to which this incident incited racially divisive debate. Social media became a platform for racist discourses and notions to flourish uninhibited (The Official Page of the George Zimmerman is Innocent Movement, 2013). Notwithstanding the particular inequities of the Florida 'Stand Your Ground Law', the most unfair and saddening part of this tragedy is that a young man lost his life because he was 'wearing a hoody' (an article of clothing favoured by urban youth) and was assumed to be a threat because of his outward appearance. He fit the description of a 'usual suspect' and paid for that with his life.

"Criminalized truants guilty until proven innocent (Peters, 2010)."

According to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, "Everybody has a right to live and seek employment anywhere in Canada and has the right to life, liberty and personal security*"* (Canadian Heritage, 2013). Everybody. Who is secure when racialized communities, particularly male youth, persistently receive differential treatment by law enforcement and are criminalized as a result? Who can this demographic call to protect them when abuse and inequitable relations of power thrive between police, the judiciary and these young people? Scholars continue to point to the growing list of cases of police violence against racialized communities. Nangwaya's historic compilation of police violence against Canadians of African descent paints a chilling picture (Nangwaya, 2013). The Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) was created in 1990 in response to rising social discontent due to police killings of and serious injury to civilians, with victims being overwhelmingly from Toronto's Black communities (Socialist Action Canada, 2013). A review of the investigations of police

violence against civilians reveals that in the 23 years since its inception, 3,400

investigations have led to only 95 criminal charges, 16 convictions and 3 incarcerations

(Ibid, 2013).

In the summer of 2013, the shooting death of 18-year-old Sammy Yatim was

caught on video, went 'viral' (made popular through the process of internet sharing) and

incited a large protest calling for the arrest of the officers responsible for his death. He

was killed while having an apparent mental breakdown on an empty streetcar, with one

cop firing 9 shots at his person. Surrounded by 22 police officers, he was then tasered and

found to be armed with a 3-inch knife. The media exposure received by this incident

prompted the Ontario ombudsman publicly to seek policy amendments that would allow

for inquiry into police de-escalation procedures (Ombudsman Ontario, 2013)

No officer has ever been convicted of murder as a result of SIU investigation.

Toronto police have shot at least 15 people in the last 2 years, seven of them fatally

(Socialist Action Canada, 2013). One of the casualties of these violent encounters

happens to be a member of my family. On March 17 2013, my 23-year-old cousin Zoltan

Hyacinth was killed while police attempted to arrest him in connection to a robbery.

Unmarked cruisers blocked both sides of a drive-thru, trapping his vehicle. Plain-clothes

officers dragged him out of the car while 2 officers proceeded to pin him down on the

ground, immobilizing his hands. The first reports stated "there was an interaction

between police and a man, and a short time later, the man sustained a gunshot wound

(The Toronto Star, 2013)." It took the SIU four months to conclude that Zoltan was the

cause of his own death. They claim that he reached for his gun and fired three bullets,

accidentally shooting himself in the head. All police involved have been cleared in his death (The Toronto Star, 2013).

In 2007, Zoltan had filed and won a civil lawsuit against the police for excessive, malicious use of force and unlawful discharge of a firearm after he was accosted and shot after based on unfounded suspicions that he carried a firearm (Gillis & Donkin, 2013). Thus, when apprehended in 2013, my cousin was "known to the police". The integrity of the representations of law enforcement continues to waiver with each additional incident where the death of a civilian could have been avoided. There are numerous accounts of police distrust in Black communities (James, Nyaho and Kwan-Lafond, 2011). Issues of transparency plague the SIU, with popular sentiment holding that nepotism reigns in these investigations. The fact that the SIU is staffed by former police officers leads the public to believe that police are essentially investigating police.

What is clear is that institutions that are supposed to provide social, economic support are often inaccessible, unreliable and disconnected from racialized communities. In my own experience, institutions and sectors such as the educational, employment, political and legal arenas are wrought with histories that illustrate my exteriority. The police are the arm of the state that most visibly represents government presence in our lives. For me, the most salient reminder of the failure of the system to ensure my rights as a citizen is in the absence of police investigation into the 2011 invasion of my home where intruders discharged a firearm, attempted to rob and cause bodily harm or death to my family; all while I hid in the closet with my 2 year old son. Given the historical context, it can be argued that if this incident took place in a different neighbourhood with

different victims, police would have used their resources to ensure the wellbeing of those they serve and protect.

Full Circle

"My flâneurie connects to the emancipation of MY imagined community
For all…." (Peters, 2010)

I close this chapter of my life, knowing that experience and memory are reflexive; knowing that temporality is cyclical, not linear. I use my flânerie to map my world, acknowledging the spaces I am excluded from and deconstructing the barriers to those places I determine to be worth entering. From this perspective, the *spectacle* cannot seduce me so easily. I can distance myself from the (re) presentations of the hegemonic norms and values of this urban space enough to (re) focus my eyes and (re) define my self as I choose. This choice will always be constrained by the historic, geographic, the socio-economic, and the political. My choices will always be constrained, but my flânerie allows me to exercise greater agency in the matters of my mind.

The connections between our lives, to each other and to the greater society are undoubtedly inextricable; the urban analogically transforms itself into a living entity alive with each subject, every notion, every discourse, every ideology running through its blood. The context of the New Urban Environment forces us to assume a refined cosmopolitanism- envisioning our world in fluid terms. In this way, we can transcend the boundaries, discursive, geographic, and physical, that impede our intellectual and aesthetic renewals. Investigating and deconstructing dominant narratives becomes possible and necessary part of mapping our world. Opening our conceptual landscapes allows for new forms, for re-claimed self-authorship that comes from demystifying our ontologies and epistemologies. It permits us to demand space for our becoming and for

our coming together. As I have done, it is possible to write a different narrative of

belonging.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This project used as it starting point a work of poetic expression to delve into an exploration of discourses of gender, geography, subjectivity, the urban, language and diaspora. Central to this endeavour was the review of relevant literature that illuminated the analysis of ethnographic illustrations within the primary data. Literature on subjectivity spoke to the discursive nature of race and racisms while reminding us of their real, psychological and material effects. We are called to conceptualize discourses as being overlapping and contextual in nature, supported by complex networks of reinforcing ideas and paradigms that make them intelligible.

Literature on ethnicity and diaspora suggests that we complicate identity by focussing on identity as becoming. It is argued that holding onto traditional, static notions essentialize people, impeding the expression of multiplicity and individuality that is true of humanity. Situating myself as a Black subject embedded in historical, social and political construction makes visible the inextricable link between categories that are often simultaneously performed. Similarly, the overlapping of metaphorical, physical and experiential elements facilitates the conceptualization of alterable geographic understandings that center a fluid notion of diaspora and belonging.

Analyzing race discourses through the lens of Whiteness allows the researcher to see how a racial system of meanings can be deployed within a range of contexts. Moreover, investigating the place of language in the examination of discourse on Black womanhood illustrates the significance of language in the production of meaning, processes of identification and the development of social relationships.

Fluidity is the mark of the New Urban Environment. Our lives are not lived in isolation; we live in dynamic times, with media, the Internet, international organizations, financial institutions, entertainment, and immigration bringing the world and increasing diversity to our doorsteps. Urban ethnography is useful in exploring the boundaries that mediate the lives of subjects in the new urban, delimiting the real social and spatial effects of discourses such as race, gender and nation that figure prominently in my experiences as a woman of African descent.

Numerous theoretical points worthy of analysis were found in the primary data entitled 'A Walk In Old Shoes'. Working through a retooled urban epistemology, this project made the fragmentation and partiality of the urban social relevant sites of inquiry. Employing the complimentary methods of the flâneur, narrative inquiry and arts- based practice, this project made every effort to recenter human experience in the tradition of subaltern work.

The methodological strength of the flâneur lies in uncovering symbolic relationships between elements of the psycho-geographic map. This method was effective in deciphering the signifiers and symbols within the primary data to illustrate and reinterpret the juxtapositions of seemingly mundane and unimportant urban dynamics. While flânerie allows the researcher to see how spatial orientation shapes our subjective experience, narrative inquiry gives us insights into the ordering of our stories as text, fiction and discourse. In this space, I examined the connections between our attitudes, values, and subjectivities and situated my life within the context of the greater social world. Narrative inquiry allowed this project to have an iterative focus, restructuring past experiences in light of larger discourses and present notions (Webster, 2007, pp. 3). Arts-

based practice is the thread that connects these methods, making issues of voice, representation, meaning, relevance and responsibility essential elements of theoretical discussion. Ultimately, these three methods validate the academic exploration of the perplexing and complex subjectivities and lived experiences that arise from the primary data.

This project was concerned with the analysis of sensitive socio-political issues. Sheftel and Zembryzycki (2010) illustrate some of the dynamics of working with 'difficult' stories, "we can never understand because we did not experience it- memories can be raw and emotional…Tensions within these spaces can be tough to negotiate, and thereby necessitate a thoughtful and self-critical approach…" (Sheftel and Zembryzycki, 192). The moments in the primary data that were chosen as points of inquiry were considered to be the salient and most powerful themes articulated. Engaging theoretically with the primary data was made possible by playing with the poetic form. Here selecting, arranging and organizing lived experience delimits critical spaces of knowledge production about subjects and the macro- level contexts wherein their lives are lived (Rosen, 53).

In 'Urban Identifications', an exploration of the geographic context uncovers the fluid dynamics of the New Urban Environment. Exploring Western material culture, the historic association of discourses of Black womanhood with deviant sexuality and the persistence of static notions of ethnicity and dominant discourses of race, we find subjects constrained and delimited by stereotyped notions. This study reaffirms the importance of conceiving of identity as becoming and making discursive space for the hybridity of subjects. On the place of geographies in the making of bounded discourses

and spatial hierarchies, the examination of "Project Traveller" and the Miley Cyrus debacle reveals the importance of challenging dominant stereotypes and imagining alternative discourses, rejecting the homogenizing imperatives of labels and making room for difference.

'In Journeys and Becomings', we note the effects of globalization on the character of the New Urban Environment. Referencing the movement and subsequent evolution of the subject in the primary data reveals the complexities of racialized student identities and identify theoretical explanations for poor educational outcomes of low income, immigrant and racialized students. It is argued that dominant discourse and representations of Blackness negatively affect educational experiences; impeding social mobility and the ability to be a productive citizenship. Compounding these issues of discrimination are poverty, competing family responsibilities, delayed benefit and irrelevance of education, low economic status, and feelings of isolation within post-secondary institutions (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006 pp. 58). This permitted me to problematize my academic success.

'Highly Classified' opens dialogue about discourses of belonging, community and nation. We also find representations and discourses to be signified simultaneously, illustrating the intersectionality of urban subjects. The phenomenon of racial profiling is examined, uncovering its reactionary operationalization as extensions of exclusionary and racist discourses of terrorism, national security and citizenship. Exploring the case of the 2014 Miss America, we show how the discourses of authenticity and belonging shift and are reproduced to center Whiteness. This also provides space for me to personalize these discourses in shaping my life.

'Democratic Dreaming' highlights the 2013 Gilmour incident, pointing to the historic exclusion of marginalized knowledge in the academy and greater social world that reinforces the normalization of White heterosexual masculinity. A brief examination of immigrant experience shows how neo-liberalism constrains dialogue about cultural imperialism, discrimination or questions of equity to be articulated by immigrants. Illuminated are the pervasiveness of authoritative discourses and the effects of confronting issues of racism, ethnocentrism and classism in zoned spaces. This is instantiated in my own academic biography.

'Land of the free' further explores the connection between educational attainment and employment. Using a recent experience informed by the discourses under examination in this chapter, it is posited that the intertextuality of my son's experience in the principal's office was shaped by available discourses of Blackness, particularly dominant notions about Black boys in education and Black parents. Further, this chapter explores ethnic and gendered wage discrimination and attempts to speak to the persistence of inequitable salary earnings in Canada. This chapter shows that youth have compounded issues in the labour market, with neo liberalism and government austerity cutting social support programs that enable descent living. Although this paper outlines correlation between poverty and crime, we find that poverty does not necessitate profiling based on race, ethnicity or economic status. Racial profiling proves to be an extremely ineffective and inefficient practice that works to reinforce negative stereotypes of Black subjects such as myself. This results in the criminalization of entire populations, the overrepresentation of Blacks and aboriginals in jail and the premature and unnecessary deaths of racialized youth; rest in peace to Trayvon Martin, Sammy Yatim and cousin

Zoltan Hyacinth. Vital social institutions must be reconnected to marginalized communities, bridging the gaps and inequities faced.

In the foreword, 'Narrative Ideas and Aesthetic Thoughts', we explored some key elements that narrative inquiry produced. We found that examining the narrative ordering of the spoken-word videography revealed the importance of understanding my discursive reality, subjective position, and communicative intent in order to engage with the content of the spoken word. The narrative attempts to personalize and connect with the audience to create a conversational atmosphere that draws the listener to the work. We find that spoken word allows for the articulation of internal, external and narrational perspectives that offers the reader insight into the complexities of subjective encounters. In addition to the conversing with the audience, the narrative is responsive and sensitive to the evolution and growth of the author.

Exploring the aesthetic quality of the videography, we note that its artistic expressions are rooted in the connections among sound, rhythm and feeling, thought and sensation. We hold that the videography presents an opportunity for aesthetic experience through its use of dynamic, tonality, familiar phrases, rhythm, rhyme, examination of contentious issues, and a highly personal voice.

In examining identity and forgetting, Norquay proposes that identity is constructed by what we choose to remember, to include, to voice, to make public as well as what we choose to forget, to exclude, to keep silent, and private (Norquay, 86). This thesis has sought to remember, include, make visible and public a subjectivity that has long been ignored and erased. Amidst everything, I am joyful in the knowledge I have been given, more so for that I have accrued. I tell this story and the process of

"Inkumbulo" resonates in my soul. I seek to commune with those who hear this voice amidst the noise of the world. Dlamini (2006) invites use to use our stories, gather our ethnographies and share them "purposively to teach and transform the social consciousness of the listener to facilitate a conversion from obvious surface meaning and understandings to philosophically critical positions of social and political occurrences" (Dlamini, 2006). Meaningful work must be done, quantitatively and qualitatively to address the complex issues integral to the emancipation of racialized youth. For me, for my children, my family, my community; for all.

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