POP UP PEDAGOGY: EXPLORING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STREET ART, FEMINIST LITERACY PRACTICES AND COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This feminist qualitative research study is driven by two questions: (1) In what ways does feminist street art create pop ups of informal learning in public spaces, both online and offline? (2) How might street art, created by feminist street artists, be considered a feminist literacy practice that provides a point of entry for women, and those who identify as women, to participate in the shaping of community and global conversations? Data from various sources and media were analyzed: interviews with feminist street artists, social media feeds, photographs, online articles, audio interviews, documentaries and my own personal journal entries. I argue that feminist street art, as artifacts, and the actions associated with its production, can be considered a form of feminist public pedagogy that facilitates informal learning outside of traditional educational systems and also encourages women to contribute to the conversations happening in their communities, both online and in real life. Finally, the dissertation discusses how refusing the division between artifact and action supports the emergence of feminist street art as feminist literacy praxis.

DEDICATION

To all the feminist street artists who take down a piece of the patriarchy each time their street art goes up.

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Preface

> I want to be holding in my hand a concise, fairly easy to read and understand book; not a long book, not a book thick with hard to understand jargon and academic language, but a straightforward, clear book – easy to read without being simplistic. (hooks, 2000, p. 12)

As I have written my dissertation for the past two years, a war of words has raged on inside of me. I understand that being a doctoral candidate means that I am expected to write my research using academic language. I have tried to do that but when reading back what I have written, the words in my dissertation have sounded out of place. In fact, my use of academic language has been at odds with my teaching and learning philosophy of inclusive education. As a result, I have felt that my true voice has been lost in the cycle of writing, revising and writing again.

Academic language has also seeped into my teachings[1]. Last year I was speaking to one of my media students regarding next steps in the field placement process and as we spoke I said, “The job market in radio is really robust these days.” The student looked alarmed and then I realized that using the word “robust” had confused him. I re-worded quickly what I said and we continued the conversation. Later when I reflected on what happened, I thought about what the

[1] I have been teaching media courses at Durham College, a community college located east of Toronto, for the past eleven years.

student might have understood from the word “robust”. Had he thought I said “a bust”? I wondered about the possibility of him leaving our meeting thinking that he should avoid finding a placement in radio, which was the exact opposite of what I was trying to say. I asked myself why I had used a word that does not usually come up in informal conversations and I had to place blame on the academic language I was using in my dissertation slipping into my day-to-day interactions. This realization was uncomfortable, as the use of a particular word had complicated what should have been a very simple communication between an instructor and a student.

The experience I described above forced me to take stock of the impact of using academic language, not only in this research project but also in my daily dealings with students, family and friends. In terms of my dissertation, I wondered if the participants I had interviewed would even want to read the research they had contributed to. I questioned, just as many doctoral candidates, whether more than five people would ever read my research in its entirety. Kidwai (2015) reminds of the importance of using accessible language “when dealing with a subject that most people think is irrelevant to a major section of society” (p.207). This statement stayed with me. I realized I might never have a chance to find out if the research I had done is relevant because of the restricted nature of academic writing, where scholars spend time “talking” to each other in exclusive inner circles (Heleta, 2016).

Upon reflection, I decided to try to make this text as accessible as possible so that it may find readers outside of academia, who can then provide different perspectives on my research while broadening the possibilities for engagement and application. My decision to write a dissertation that departs from the use of academic language does not compromise this research project. Feminist scholars have a long history of presenting research on complex issues while using non-academic language. For example, scholar Patti Lather and co-author Chris Smithies allowed readers to understand the lives of women who were dealing with a deadly disease through the book, *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS* (1997). Lather and Smithies, who interviewed a number of women for the project over an extended period of time, wanted a book that could be read by a "broad public audience" (p.181), including the women who had participated in the study (Lather, 2004). The women who were interviewed, some of whom had a high school diploma or less[2] in terms of education, read the initial research and their feedback was then incorporated into the final publication (Lather & Smithies, 1997). It was important for the two authors to include the participants' thoughts as "feedback and criticism usually come only from professional colleagues" (Lather & Smithies,1997, chapter 20, para.1) suggesting that scholarly research may never be read outside of academia.

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[2] Out of the 25 participants, two had not completed high school, six had a high school diploma, ten had some post-secondary education and the other six had graduate degrees ranging from associates' degrees to masters'. One participant had done doctoral work (Lather & Smithies, 1997).

Reaching readers who may have little formal education motivates hooks (1991) to express her ideas in a way that are clear and conversational, even though she is writing about patriarchy, feminism, oppression and other complex issues in contemporary society. She explains:

> I have written elsewhere and shared in numerous public talks and conversations that my decision about writing style, about not using conventional academic formats, are political decisions motivated by the desire to be inclusive, to reach as many readers as possible in as many different locations. (p. 9)

Although hooks has been criticized for her writing style[3], her decision to theorize in an inclusive and user-friendly manner is far-reaching and impactful, as can be seen when a group of incarcerated men used her books to understand the roles sexism and patriarchy were playing in their lives (hooks, 1991).

The decision to use more accessible language in my dissertation is also influenced by the research I am conducting, which is looking at feminist[4] street art's potential as a democratizing literacy practice and informal educational tool. It would not make sense to use academic language to discuss this topic since I am exploring the potential of feminist street art as an alternative method of meaning making, which could be helpful for those who do not quite fit into the

[3] According to hooks (1991) students at different universities have been told by their professors that her books are not academic enough to be referenced in courses.

[4] I am using hooks (2000) definition of feminism for my research, which is: "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p.xii).

traditional systems of education. This rejection of the use of academic language is a feminist political intervention that is inspired by hooks (2000), who states:

> Literature that helps inform masses of people, that helps individuals understand feminist thinking and feminist politics, needs to be written in a range of styles and formats. (p. 22)

hooks (2000) is suggesting that community-based feminist studies need to be accessible to everyone in order to advance research in that area. To accomplish this, feminist pedagogy needs to move "beyond the academic and even the written word" (hooks, 2000, p. 23). This is a viewpoint on teaching and learning that not only aligns with my philosophy on education but also the way I wish to live my life as an educator and researcher whose work is inclusive and open. I also see my decision to not use academic language in this dissertation as an act of resistance in protest of the different systems of traditional education, which sometimes work to exclude individuals from participating in the shaping of community and global conversations.

Chapter 1

What Can We Learn from Street Art?

> Spray can art revels in being two-sided; it is often hasty yet also mapped and planned. It is messy and refined, unseen and an eyesore, primal and modern. It is art that can further trap, alienate, blight, and tarnish a neighborhood. Yet, it also sometimes reflects a color-drenched, vibrant, edginess, marking the “hip” section of a city. It can be a sophisticated symbol, rippling the Botoxed surfaces of a city, revealing that no system, architecture, or project can silence the voices of people who lack traditional power. (Ensminger, 2011, p. 68)

Street art takes place on the walls of the world and offers openings into discussions of social justice, gender, poverty, sexuality and politics through its public critique of societal norms (Schacter, 2013). Hickey (2006) suggests that while we “rarely stop to acknowledge the formative influence of the street (and for that matter, that entire zone of the street – the streetscape) it is the production of culture that occurs in it that is significant and requires interrogation” (para. 2).

As Hickey points out, street art plays a part in urban cultural production, but what exactly is it? How is it different from the often-misunderstood markings known as graffiti which are considered a ‘scar’ on the skin of a city structure? What are the stories that street art has to tell and who are they for? How can

those narratives be used to educate on social justice issues? These are questions that have concerned me as I have been documenting street art through photography for the past five years. Upon examination of the works I have found through my travels, I have wondered about street art's possible educational uses, and what that might mean for groups, especially women, who are historically sidelined from participating in community and global conversations. Those reflections led me to consider how street art has informally added to my knowledge, especially in the area of social justice, as seen in the following two examples.

The first instance takes place in the summer of 2015. While walking down a street in Montreal, I came across the drawn portrait of a young girl pasted to a door. It was a type of street art known as wheatpaste[5]. This wheatpaste portrayed a young woman with a look captured on her face that seemed to me to be a combination of grit and wisdom (Figure 1). As she looks away and beyond, it is as if she is seeing something no one else can. What she might be looking at was intriguing to me as was her look of fierce determination. With no information on this street art, other than the name that the artist had chosen to be identified by on the bottom left corner, LMNOPi, I was left with a mystery to solve: who was the person in the wheatpaste portrait and what was this work trying to communicate?

[5] Wheatpaste is a type of street art where the artist uses a mixture of wheat flour and water to create a type of glue that allows for posters and other paper items to be pasted on walls and poles (Allen, 2013).

Figure 1. The wheatpaste of Ta'Kaiya Blaney created by artist LMNOPi is located in Montreal. Credit: A.A.Rodrigues, 2015.

I was not familiar with the street artist who had created this piece so I engaged in some online sleuthing. I found the street artist's Facebook page quickly and learned that she identifies as female and resides in Brooklyn, New York. LMNOPi also indicates that she is an artist with a social justice agenda.

The posts on her page showcased other portraits with information on the pieces she has created, so I scrolled through them until I found the street art I had photographed. A post from March 25, 2014, showed the same portrait I was trying to identify tagged with a name. I clicked on the tagged name and found myself on the Facebook page of Ta'Kaiya Blaney, a 13–year-old (at the time) social activist from the Tla'amin First Nation in British Columbia. Blaney was the young woman in the wheatpaste that LMNOPi had created. After spending some time on Blaney's Facebook page I learned about her involvement in trying to stop the Northern Gateway Pipeline, a proposed twin pipeline project to transport heavy oils between Bruderheim, Alberta and Kitimat, British Columbia[6].

I was curious about Blaney so I clicked on her website link on the Facebook page. There I found out more about the different environmental causes she is involved with, I listened to some of her music (she is a singer as well), and I learned about some of the cultural traditions of the Tla'amin First Nation. Later that day I shared what I had learned about the Northern Gateway Pipeline with my daughter who is interested in environmental issues as well. Street art had provided the opportunity for not only learning, but also sharing knowledge I had newly acquired with another person. All this happened through that chance encounter with art created specifically for an accidental audience that could be reached on the street.

[6] The federal government closed down the Northern Gateway Pipeline permanently in November 2016, citing it would have an adverse affect on the communities the pipeline was proposed to run through (Tasker, 2016).

Lessons on social justice can be found embedded in street art (Johnston, 2016), although in many instances words are not being used to stage these issues, as was the case with the wheatpaste of Ta'Kaiya Blaney. The lack of text on the image did not stop me from wanting to know more about it and I found myself becoming familiar with different subjects, including the environment and Indigenous culture, and then sharing what I learned with another person. I understand that having access to the Internet and being able to read and write helped me; however, the push that led to consciousness-raising[7] came from my chance encounter with a particular piece of street art and the affect it had on me[8].

Knowledge can also be created without online assistance as seen in the following example. In May 2017, I travelled to São Paulo, Brazil with 20 students from Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Oshawa, Ontario, to co-teach a course on social justice, global citizenship and what it means to be an ally. While there we travelled to Beco do Batman (Batman's Alley), an area known for its abundant street art. As I walked around the alleyways taking pictures, two of my female students asked me to join them as they deciphered a work they had encountered. I thought there might be words

[7] Feminist consciousness-raising finds its origins in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Feminist groups adopted consciousness-raising as a tool in the late '60s to raise awareness of the socio-political nature of the barriers women face in society (Hanisch, 2010).

[8] It can be argued that not every person encountering a piece of street art without text would take the time to search online as I did. However street art even without text can be very compelling as seen in the following example: the Women are Heroes project consists of exhibiting large-format photographs of women who live in communities of extreme poverty and/or current or past conflict. The images have no text, however they are so compelling that a man who lived in one of those communities said, "You have been here for a moment looking at the portraits, asking questions, trying to understand. During that time, you haven't thought about what you will eat tomorrow. This is art" (Murphy, 2012).

in Portuguese that they needed help translating as I am fluent in that language, but the street art had no text other than the artists' signatures, known as tags in the world of street art (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Street art in Beco do Batman, Vila Madalena in São Paulo, Brazil created by Pato and Vinicius Caps. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2017.

As we stood in front of the piece, we debated its meaning, putting forth different narratives that connected back to the issues we were exploring while in Brazil, such as the lack of rights for Indigenous peoples, the dominant patriarchal society and the environmental problems in the Amazon caused by a string of governments who were putting profit before people. We did not reach a

consensus on the meaning of the piece.[9] However, as a result of informal dialogue in that alley, we furthered our understanding on some of the social justice themes we had been working through in the course. We also gained different perspectives by talking as equals, as the separation between instructor and student had been erased in a "conversation-based model of learning" (hooks, 2010, p.45). We were not in a classroom, but undeniably participating in the type of knowledge building that typically takes place in educational institutions, museums and art galleries.[10]

Hickey (2010) suggests, "the street is the teacher we don't realize is there" (p.161). At the same time, however, the street does not have a good reputation, as the word is often used as a way to describe something unacceptable or not up to usual standards. In the case of the unplanned learning that took place in a Brazilian alley, it could easily not have happened due to safety concerns[11], as the underlying tone is that there is something not safe about streets, especially for women. For example, a Canadian study on street harassment and perceptions on female street safety surveyed 12,300 women and found that over 80 per cent

[9] An Internet search did not reveal the story behind this specific piece. However, a search on the tag Pato Caps indicated that two street artists collaborated on this street art: Pato and Vinicius Caps. I could not find any information on Pato, but Vinicius Caps is a well-known street artist in São Paulo. He describes himself as an urban artist who uses art to address social inequality (Fuligans, 2013).

[10] Engaging in the type of informal public pedagogy described above gains greater significance when the exclusive nature of museums and art galleries, and to a certain extent, education, is considered. In many cases fees need to be paid before one can enter those buildings. Museums and galleries can also be intimidating places for people not used to those settings, which will have dress codes, times of operation and expected codes of conduct in place. In addition, getting close to pieces of art and touching them are usually not permitted in museums and galleries.

[11] During the Brazilian World Cup in 2014, incidents of armed robbery were frequent in Beco do Batman (Machado, 2014). When I visited Beco do Batman with my students in April 2017, we did not feel unsafe, although we were advised to avoid using our cellphones and cameras in public.

of the participants indicated having been harassed by strangers (MacMillan, Nierobisz, & Welsh, 2000). Research in this area show even higher numbers of women in other parts of the world being victimized on the streets of their own communities (Stop Street Harassment, 2013), as seen in the New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Cologne, Germany, where dozens of women were assaulted as they walked in the evening in the centre of that city (Eddy, 2016). Kissling (1991) describes this global persecution as a "language of sexual terrorism" (p. 451) that has become established in the daily routines of women who walk in public places. When night falls, women may feel even more unsafe walking city streets and many times decisions on leaving their homes will be based on how late it is in the evening and whether they will have company or transportation while out. Consequently, a woman's dealings in public spaces are impacted by many issues tied to the social construction of what it means to be a female on the streets of a city, and those constructs can block involvement in community building. Walters (2005) states that "knowledge is produced through debates over meeting agendas, the planning of meetings, campaigns and demonstrations, and exchanges over strategies and tactics" (p. 60). Many of these knowledge-producing activities take place in public areas of cities where citizens gather to mobilize as communities. Erasure from these spaces translates into not being able to fully participate in community activist processes; and this lack of participation will impact women at different levels, including financially and politically (Women in Cities International, 2013). Women, especially those who

are already sidelined in society due to economic status, social class, and race, are finding ways to combat this erasure by claiming space on the street with their physical bodies and the messages they are creating for public consumption. Feminist street art becomes a form of public resistance to patriarchal expectations, as pointed out by a Montreal street artist named Stella. She commented in an online article about how the act of being in a public area where women are not expected to be creating works is seen as a political act that threatens certain males. This has led to extreme reactions, including sexual violence, against the women from male street artists (Chan, 2014). Street art is seen as an act of non-conformity, by ignoring society's collective norms; however, some men lash out when they see their gender-specific authority over public areas at risk of crumbling. The reaction to what is seen as a threat is to produce an environment that is unsafe for women to be in, thus ensuring their voices are absent in in public spaces.

The Institutionalized Erasure of Women from Society

> Why did history become almost exclusively male? Why has almost every civilization set limits on women's sexuality, speech and freedom of movement? And what makes the status of women so vulnerable to the diktats of politics, economics or religion? (Foreman, 2015)

In the documentary, *The Ascent of Woman*, historian Amanda Foreman profiles females who have contributed to society throughout the centuries, but

were removed from, or never part of, the records of world history. While the focus of the documentary is to cast a light on these women's accomplishments, the answers to the questions stated above all point to the power of patriarchy as a global ideology that erases women (Foreman, 2015). This erasure has been achieved in many ways: for example, a man taking credit for work a female has done (Chadwick, 2012). It also happens when women are silenced through intimidation, talked over, or having the spaces where their voices can be heard taken away (Beard, 2014; Tannen, 2017). It occurs through the denial of access to education, health care and other basics in life, and by the practices of those in power maintaining structural systems that undermine and consequently silence women in all facets of society (Matthews & Beaman, 2007). Even when women do have access to education, this is typically not an effective way of resisting dominant forces, as most educational systems, including universities, are based on and guided by patriarchal ideologies (Luke, 2010; hooks, 2003).

Women and Online/Offline Public Spaces

As mentioned before, feminist street art can act as a form of resistance against the erasure of women in public spaces[12], both online and offline. Offline, female street artists take over physical spaces to start conversations and empower women: unleashing their messages as they communicate publicly

[12] I borrow from Gagnon and Iacovino (2005) when defining public space in the context of this research: "the confines of public space are not relegated solely to the activities of the state but encompass 'the public space of social interaction' as well (p.31).

through permanent urban structures. Figure 3, an image of a stencil[13] that simply states #stophatingwomen, is an example of this. A hashtag, although not on social media in this case, it was most likely seen by thousands of people as they travelled along a York University walkway where it could be found from fall 2013, to the summer of 2014, when it began to fade, and became difficult to read.

Figure 3. Stencil on the York University grounds. Artist is unknown. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2013.

It seems the author of the stencil was targeting those who commit crimes against women with a communication that was jarring in its rawness. It speaks out against gendered-based intimidation and violence by providing a very firm message to misogynists to stop their hatred toward women. The fact that this

[13] Stencils are a type of street art where an image or text is cut out of cardboard or paper. The artist holds the stencil to a hard surface and paints over the cut out parts. The stencil is then removed revealing an image or message (Schacter, 2013).

stencil was seen in such a public place, with the potential to be read by thousands of people, is not a mistake. Its placement at York University was deliberate in its intent to inform and to take up space at an institution where sexual violence has happened (DiManno, 2012). As the message was stencilled on a walkway where men are free to travel without fear anytime of the day or night, it becomes a form of resisting male authority in those public spaces.

Each time I walked past the stencil on an almost daily basis for a number of months, it gave me not only a jolt of empowerment to read the words underfoot, but also a feeling of comfort when walking the area at night. It reminded me of official signs put up to caution people of unsafe situations, such as 'road narrows' or 'watch for fallen rock,' but in this case the warning was meant for those who express their hatred for women through violence, therefore taking away some of their power. Artist Harmony Hammond (Chadwick, 2012) states:

> I see art-making, especially that which comes from the margins of the mainstream, as a site of resistance, a way of interrupting and intervening in those historical and cultural fields that continually exclude me, a sort of gathering of forces on the borders. (p.13)

Hammond, just like hooks (1990), regards the barriers created by oppression as invitations to resist and challenge current situations. Street art, as demonstrated by the example above, becomes not only a source of inspiration, but also of strength, and a stimulus to organize. That said, resisting social

inequality through real actions, either online or offline, is difficult. Female street artists often encounter misogyny, persecution and violence when they create a work of art on the street. Stella, a female street artist, notes the politically charged atmosphere of identifying oneself as a female in the male-dominated landscape of street art:

> When I began to see my experience in that scene as a sexist experience, I guess I cannot see anything that I do, street art-wise, as not political, because it is. Because I was not supposed to still be there. (Chan, 2014, para. 20)

Ironically, the behaviour of male street artists toward female street artists is repeating the very patterns of the dominant society that street art critiques in many cases. This is not a new experience in the world of arts. Chadwick (2012) chronicles the battles women have faced for centuries to be treated as equals in the domain of visual arts. However, female street artists are challenging the exclusion within these already marginalized groups by creating spaces of resistance. This can be seen, for example, in the work of Miss Me (Figure 4), a street artist from Montreal who wheatpastes and stickers images of her naked body around the world to reclaim herself from the objectification she has endured from men. Miss Me (n.d.) writes on her website:

> To be born with a woman's body is to bear the unsolicited burden of humanity's unresolved attitudes towards sex. She learns to adapt to a patriarchal system that blames women for the misbehaviour of men. She's

taught to be ashamed of her sexuality and apologize for the power of her body. This is the portrait of an unapologetic soldier, the portrait of a vandal. (para. 1)

Figure 4. A sticker by Miss Me in Montreal. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2015.

Through her street art, Miss Me creates pockets of resistance to the limitations placed on her by a patriarchal society. It is an example of building areas of enablement in communities whose members are not only shaped by the message from the street art and the actions of the street artist, but who also feel supported to create change. In a sense, feminist street artists are writing beyond

the borders of the margins they have been forced into by male street artists, and by society's expectations for women who walk the streets of a city and choose to use its walls to participate in public discourse.

Miss Me also uses online spaces to share her ideas on feminism with those who may not be able to see her pieces in person. An example of that type of interaction can be seen in how Miss Me shared images of feminist street art she created in Havana, Cuba, through her public Instagram account and Facebook page[14]. This showed that dialogue on issues surrounding feminism and patriarchy are no longer localized, or at the mercy of local media for broadcasting. Through online applications such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, social justice matters can be shared and debated without the limitations of time, distance and even language. The use of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram hashtags facilitates the meeting of activists who, although separated physically often by thousands of miles, can find each other online through the use of a hashtag dedicated to a particular cause.

An example of this can be seen in how social media played an integral part in the Kony 2012 campaign that sought to bring attention to Joseph Kony, the leader of a Ugandan guerrilla group known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Kony has been indicted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands for crimes against humanity, including the kidnapping and sexual abuse of minors, but has yet to be captured (Interpol, 2006). The hashtag

[14] Miss Me's Instagram and Facebook page can be found at the following links: https://www.instagram.com/miss_me_art/ and https://www.facebook.com/missmeart/

#Kony2012 brought not only awareness to this issue but also accelerated its reach through the ease of sharing the message, while informing many individuals who were unaware of Joseph Kony and the atrocities he has committed in Uganda (Meikle, 2014).

#Kony2012 was a particularly thought-provoking case in hashtag activism. Social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, had fast-tracked the message to millions over a period of days. These were the very same tools then used to inform people that the organization behind the campaign, Invisible Children Inc., had questionable practices[15]. The organization behind the push to make Joseph Kony a household name around the world was accused of misleading the public on the true motivation behind the campaign. Despite this, the end result was that an awareness surrounding the activities of the LRA was created where there was none before, and that consciousness-raising was assisted by the use of social media to spread the information.

Another example of social media activism is seen in women employing hashtags to force discussions on underreported topics. One such hashtag is #notokay, which women used at that time to share their first experiences with sexual violence. This hashtag began after an audio recording of Donald Trump bragging about sexually assaulting females surfaced, prompting one woman to encourage others to tweet their first experiences with sexual violence (Hickson,

[15] After the #Kony2012 campaign rolled out, journalists took a look at Invisible Children Inc's 2011 tax return. It was revealed that they had received a two million dollar donation from Oprah Winfrey but more alarming was the fact that the three founders, the only paid staff at the organization, were each drawing a salary of over 80,000 dollars (U.S) a year. The organization also claimed two million dollars in travel expenses and production costs for 2011 (Abad-Santos, 2012).

2016). The person who started the hashtag, author Kelly Oxford, wasn't sure if it would be used by other women to share painful stories of assault, but within two days she found that more than a million women around the world had used it to tweet their experiences, thus forcing open a conversation on sexual violence that was not being controlled by mainstream media (Dionne, 2016).

As shown in the previous example, online activism is a way for women who have been denied access "to spaces of power" (Phillips & Cole, 2013, p. 75), to be included in public discourse by forcing issues to the forefront that had previously been relegated to the sidelines. This is important, as public spaces, both online and offline, are typically controlled by patriarchal forces that make these places uncomfortable or even dangerous for women to express themselves in. This is no accident. The verbal and physical harassment, both on the streets and online, are meant to keep women from participating in public discourse by silencing their voices through fear and force (Mantilla, 2013). Therefore, the production of street art by feminist street artists becomes a way for women to take up space, online and offline, as a form of resistance, even when pushed to the outermost borders of the margins set up by dominant societal forces. An important commentary on gender equality, corporate agendas and the meaning of the word marginalization is made when feminist street artists create street art in public. To be marginalized means to reside on the sidelines and it is used to describe those who are excluded and otherwise living on the fringes of the dominant culture in any given society (Smyth, 2011). Although

considered an unsavoury place for an individual or group to find itself, hooks (1990) describes those margins as places of possibilities, where potential can be realized through acts of resistance. Redefining marginalization[16] means smashing pre-conceived notions of the word, thus leading to an abundance of possibilities instead of a stifling of potential that could happen when an individual or group is absorbed into an institutionalized patriarchal system (hooks, 1990). Creating feminist street art seems be one of those acts of resistance but it's important to understand what it is and what it is not in the context of this research project.

Defining Street Art

Street art is considered a sub-genre of graffiti but, as DeNotto (2014) notes, "both are inextricably linked" (p. 208). The word graffiti comes from the Italian word *graffiare*, which means to scratch a surface (DeNotto, 2014). Although the word graffiti and what it represents seem to be associated with more modern times, in reality, humans have been creating graffiti and street art for centuries, as seen in the work of Levin-Richardson (2013) who explored the significance of Pompeian sexual graffiti. The writings found in bathroom stalls, chalk drawings created on pavements, symbols carved into wooden fences and the etchings found on monuments around the world are examples of graffiti. Essentially, any sort of unauthorized marking found on public or private property that has a communicative intention can be regarded as graffiti. In most cases,

[16] In Chapter 4 I will re-visit the topic of marginalization and its meaning with the context of this research.

those types of markings are viewed as an act of vandalism and therefore are considered illegal in North America (Stewart & Kortright, 2015). For example, those caught damaging property in Canada with spray paint can be charged with Mischief under the Canadian Criminal Code (Criminal Code, 1985, s 430).

Usually, people equate the word graffiti with the practice known as tagging. The type of graffiti seen in Figure 5 is an example of tagging, which is the signature of the individual who created it, known as the tagger. The tag, which only uses one colour, serves as a tangible method of informing anyone who may see it that the person who created it was there, but it may also communicate which crew[17] the tagger belongs to and its territorial reach. When a tag is written over by another tagger, as seen in Figure 5, it is construed as an act of disrespect within the graffiti community (Reibe, 2011).

[17] A crew is defined as a group of individuals who work together to create graffiti (Christen, 2010).

Figure 5. Tagging in Kensington Market in Toronto. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2012.

The other form of graffiti that is widely recognizable is a ‘piece’ as seen in Figure 6, which is short for ‘masterpiece.’ This type of graffiti uses more than one colour, takes longer to create and, just as in the case of tagging, will contain a message.

Figure 6. Graffiti located in an alley at Dundas Street West and McCaul Street, Toronto. This image is an example of a piece.

Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2012

As previously stated, street art is considered a form of graffiti, but its intention is different. While tagging and graffiti, as described above, are used as a form of communication within exclusive groups (Christen, 2010), street art is created to provoke a public conversation, as the goal is to make a statement and to engage those who see the message (Chung & Lee 2009; Waclawek, 2008). That message, in most cases, has social, cultural or political implications and it is produced with the intention of forcing a passerby to reflect on a perceived

injustice or to bring attention to an issue (Molnar, 2011). Most people can make meaning from street art because it uses universally understood forms of communication, such as words, symbols and images, to transmit a message, but it is not confined to only something displayed on a wall. A more complete definition of the word encompasses public but non-sanctioned performances, installations, video projections and all the variety of pictorial representations such as paintings, stickers, stencils and posters that occur in urban settings (Chung & Lee, 2009).

For this research, the focus is centered on street art created with the purpose of commencing a dialogue in the public sphere, as seen in the three examples provided below (Figures 11 – 13): We can't afFord this, Joe Death and My Turn. These works were chosen because each exemplifies a concerted, consciousness-raising effort on the part of a street artist within a particular community. As well, each piece demonstrates how the literacy practices of the members of the communities where these works are located are impacted by the messages contained in the street art. To further clarify, this research project focuses on street art that is being created with markers, paint, stickers and yarn, but not on performance forms of this type of independent public art.

Rob Ford, the former mayor of Toronto (2010-2014) was a popular choice for street artists to use in their creations during his office, but the attention intensified particularly after his declaration of war on graffiti and street art, which actually resulted in commissioned pieces being destroyed (Shea, 2011). The

political sparring street art entangles itself in can be seen in Figure 7, an image taken in 2012 in Toronto's Kensington Market, when Ford was halfway into his controversial mayoral term.

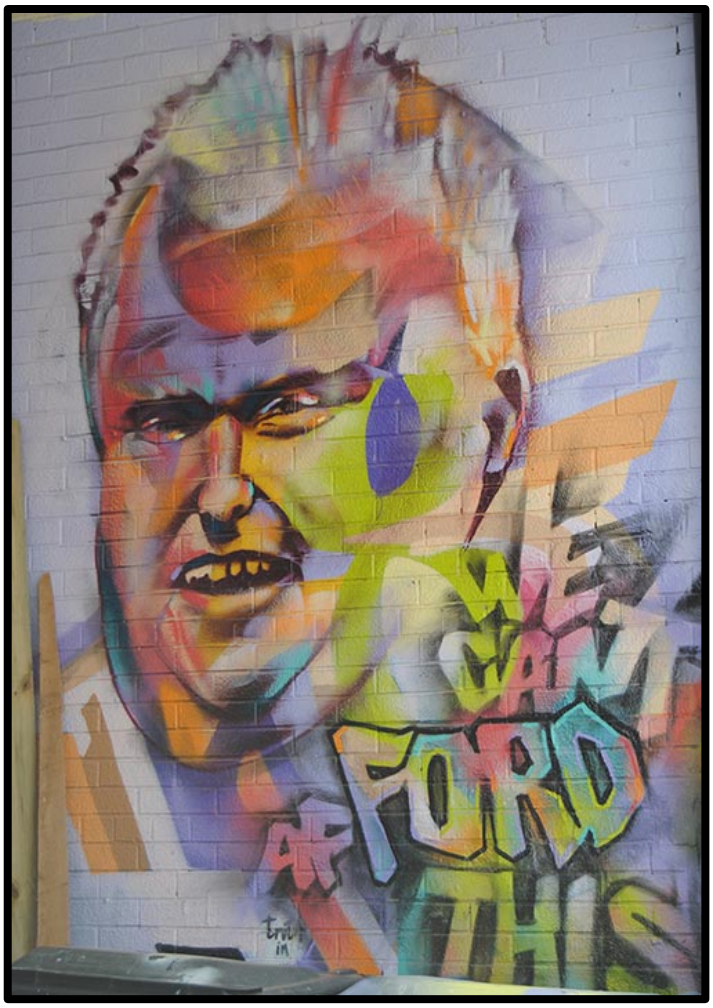

Figure 7. Street art located in Kensington Market, Toronto.

Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2012.

This piece demonstrates not only a preoccupation with a controversial political figure, but what also seems to be a consciousness-raising effort directed

at the citizens of Toronto in the form of a public comment written on a wall. When I re-visited Kensington Market in February of 2014[18], I found this piece untouched, except for the faded weatherworn look that resulted from its exposure to the elements over time. This was perplexing to me as most non-commissioned street art gets erased by the wall's owner for fear of being fined by the city (Atchinson, 2013), or eventually gets crossed out by inexperienced graffiti artists, referred to as toys (Schacter, 2013).

A street artist called Javid created this mural, called the Bobby Ford Mural, in 2011. His goal was to bring attention to Mayor Ford's war on public art by using aerosol on a plain but shared wall between two residences. One of the owners of the wall was asked by the city to remove it under Toronto's graffiti bylaws, and as Javid painted over it, the other neighbour asked that he re-paint it as a commissioned piece. Javid acknowledges that this negotiation of what was to be represented on a privately owned but yet visible wall is "a story of what we can afford to tolerate as art on the streets of Toronto" (Javid, 2011, para. 1); but it is also a story of how space, which was void of any message, can be utilized to work as a form of commentary over a very long period of time.

The Joe Death stickers seen in Figure 8 are also an example of the type of public awareness street art strives to achieve. These stickers began showing up in Toronto neighbourhoods in May 2013, about one month after the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh happened; a tragedy that led to the death

[18] In December 2017 I went back to see this piece and saw that R.I.P. (the abbreviation for Rest in Peace) had been added to it.

of more than 1,000 workers. The workers in that factory, who were mostly women between the ages of 18 and 20, were producing clothing for European and North American markets. When media began covering the tragedy and investigating the causes of the collapse, the Canadian clothing brand Joe Fresh was shown amongst the rubble of the destroyed factory (Kelley, 2013).

Figure 8. Street art located in Kensington Market, Toronto. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2014.

These stickers are an especially efficient critique as the original Joe Fresh logo was appropriated to create a subverted message, much in the vein of

culture jamming. Culture jamming, described as “semiotic Robin Hoodism” (Klein, 2000, p. 280), is the process of changing a sanctioned communication, as found in an advertisement or in the image of a product, to a different message that challenges the initial corporate messaging (Darts, 2004). These stickers are telling a tragic story that is inescapably disturbing for those living in the neighbourhood where they are located, but they do provide “an opening into learning” (Simon, Rosenberg & Eppert, 2001, p. 7), and an opportunity for dialogue.

Street art works well as a megaphone for messages that are both unfiltered and easily accessible for consumption by the masses, but context is still very important; otherwise the message’s meaning may be lost. The importance of context can be provided with the following example. Figure 9 is the image of a stencil depicting a raccoon with a shovel and the words “my turn.” This stencil was painted in response to an incident in which a man was charged with cruelty to animals and possessing a dangerous weapon after using a shovel to beat a family of raccoons (four kits and a mother) in his backyard. Most Torontonians would agree that raccoons are a nuisance, however, most people would recognize that a raccoon would be defenseless, especially a kit, if attacked with a shovel.

Figure 9. Street art located in Kensington Market, Toronto.

This image was taken in March 2012. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues

Because I was aware of the raccoon shovel incident, when I spotted the stencil I laughed at the irony. I knew exactly what the social commentary was because I was also party to the background on this happening, but I wondered what a person who is not familiar with the story might think of this stencil. What sort of meaning would they construct from it without context? If that person asked about it and perhaps heard the story through someone who is familiar with it, what meaning would they take from it? Would they understand the social connotation of the stencil once informed of the story, or would that context now be tainted because it is another person's construction of the situation? Interestingly enough, just as the accused in the raccoon incident was charged

with a criminal offence (Consiglio, 2013), so too could the artist for criticizing him via an illegal piece of street art.

Lynn and Lea (2005) contend that these acts of creating illegal works, such as the one described above, cannot be separated from the context in which they are produced. The authors argue that the creation of graffiti art (the authors used the words *graffiti art* to describe what I refer to as street art) becomes much more than a visual experience as "location, timing, the influence of social, political and cultural events, together with personal ones, and the element of risk involved in executing the deed are all factors that need to be considered along with the subject matter itself" (p. 43).

Exploring Feminist Street Art Through an Educational Lens

For the past four years, as I have explored street art in an educational context, two questions have been key to my investigation: in what ways does street art, produced by feminist[19] street artists, create pop ups[20] of informal learning in public spaces, both online and offline? And how might street art, created by feminist street artists, be considered a feminist literacy practice? While exploring street art's educational potential, I have also attempted to

[19] I am making a distinction in my research between female street artists and feminist street artists, as not all female street artists are creating feminist street art. For example, Fefe Talavera is a female street artist that does not create feminist street art in my opinion.

[20] I define 'pop up' in this research project as an experience that is unexpected, random and may be short term.

understand how feminist street art[21] might provide an opening for females to participate in the shaping of community and global conversations, both online and offline. To help answer my research questions, I interviewed 12 feminist street artists, and analyzed the public Facebook pages of 25 feminist street artists and two feminist street art collectives, who are all creating works on the streetscape and posting images on Facebook. The public comments left on these postings were also examined in an attempt to understand in what ways the posts created by these artists are informally educating those who engage in this type of online communication. In addition, several videos, audio interviews and web articles were analyzed, including four documentaries and nine online articles on feminist street artists. In addition to these, I analyzed over 1,400 photographs I have taken of various forms of public communication, legal and illegal. I will return to this data in chapter 4 when discussing my research project design and data collection methods.

The Importance of this Research

The women who are transgressing societal expectations by creating, in most cases, illegal art in public spaces, are disrupting not only the male-dominated narrative of street art, but also the takeover of public spaces by corporate entities. As a result, their actions convey valuable lessons on resistance and empowerment; however, there seems to be a dearth of research

[21] I define feminist street art as street art that brings attention to issues of social injustice that affect women, men and children.

in the areas of feminist street art and its connections to informal education and literacy practices.

An extensive search of various databases[22] revealed two academic papers in which street art was explored as a community literacy practice within an informal educational context (Holmes, 2014; Iddings, McCafferty & da Silva, 2011). *Democratic walls?: Street art as public pedagogy* (2016), contains a chapter exploring street art as a public educator with the author drawing examples from Egypt and Northern Ireland (Johnston, 2016). I also located one paper in which graffiti was discussed as a social practice (Weinstein, 2002), while in another academic article graffiti crews were researched as public educators for youth (Christen, 2011).

To date, this area is under-researched. That argument is further supported by the recent publication of a book, *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, which is described as "integrating and reviewing current scholarship in the field of graffiti and street art" (https://www.routledge.com, 2016). However, it does not mention street art in an educational context, focusing instead on aesthetics, history and related legal issues. As there is little research on the intersections of street art and education, and none that focuses on exploring the potential educational value of feminist street art, this project will undoubtedly contribute to the scholarship in that area.

[22] The following databases were searched: ERIC, Education Abstracts, CBCA Education and Sociological abstracts. A search done in June 2017 had the same results.

Chapter Outlines

This investigation is exploring the potential of feminist street art as an educational tool in informal learning, while also examining the significance of the art form as a feminist literacy practice. In this opening chapter I stated the issues I am exploring through my research questions. I also provided my definitions for street art and feminist street art by providing different examples, and I looked at the history of women in public spaces, both online and offline.

In Chapter 2 I discuss feminist public pedagogy, the theoretical framework that has informed every aspect of this research. I also look at the theory of public pedagogy and delve deeper into two themes within public pedagogy that are crucial to this inquiry: informal institutions and public space, and public intellectualism and social activism.

In Chapter 3, I review the literature in three different areas of scholarship that are integral to my research: public art, informal learning, and literacies. The role of public art as an educator is explored as I consider both commissioned and non-commissioned public art works within the framework of my research questions. The scholarship on informal learning, multiliteracies, multimodal literacies, and critical visual literacy is reviewed within the context of how expanding definitions for literacy contextualizes street art as a literacy practice.

In Chapter 4, I cover the research study design by discussing the context of my research questions, the feminist street artists that were interviewed and the

data I gathered from Facebook. I also discuss the methods I chose to gather data for this qualitative research project, and my data analysis process.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I discuss my findings by focusing on the two dominant themes I identified during data analysis: Informal Learning in Public Spaces, and Feminist Literacy Practices. Chapter 5 looks at different instances of feminist street art that support the potential of this art form to create public spaces of informal learning in online and offline communities. Chapter 6 discusses how feminist street artists engage in feminist literacy practices when they are creating street art in public, or sharing images of their work through social media. It also looks at the possibilities offered by bringing both themes together and discusses how the merging of product and process develop into feminist literacy praxis.

Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation with a discussion on institutionalized systems of education, while situating my findings within the global context of feminist street art. The possibilities found in public spaces of learning are discussed, along with how feminist street art can help women contribute to the public sphere by providing an entry point into community and global conversations happening both online and offline.

Chapter 2

(Re) Applying a Feminist Lens to Public Pedagogy

It is essential to conduct this study from a feminist perspective, since my research questions are intertwined with societal issues affecting women and those who identify as women. As a result, the research I am doing is framed through the theory of feminist public pedagogy as it aligns with my exploration of feminist street art.

To provide some context to feminist public pedagogy, I will first introduce the theory of public pedagogy and its long history within education. In this section of Chapter 2, I will take a closer look at two areas from the five public pedagogy themes identified by Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick (2011). Both these domains, informal institutions and public spaces, and public intellectualism and social activism, are of particular relevance to my research questions. When I examine feminist public pedagogy I will discuss its history in relation to public pedagogy, and present examples of feminist arts-based projects that align with this framework. Informal learning will also be discussed as this is included in one of my research questions, and relates back directly to public pedagogy.

Public Pedagogy

The term public pedagogy first appeared in the late 1800s in educational papers, but only gained traction as a pedagogical theory in the late 1990s

(Sandlin, et al., 2011). The theory has been adopted from work in different educational contexts, but at its core it is concerned with the spaces where informal learning happens, or, in other words, the knowledge people obtain outside of traditional educational institutions (Sandlin, Schultz & Burdick, 2010).

In the article “Mapping the Complexity of Public Pedagogy Scholarship: 1894 – 2010,” Sandlin et al. (2011) analyzed more than 400 papers on public pedagogy in an attempt "to trace the use of the term and its divergent meanings" (p. 339). The authors identified five themes in their review: citizenship within and beyond schools; popular culture and everyday life; informal institutions and public spaces; dominant cultural discourses and public intellectualism and social activism. I will now turn my attention to two of these themes of particular importance to my research questions: informal institutions and public spaces; and public intellectualism and social activism.

Public Pedagogy: Informal Institutions and Public Spaces

Chappel (2010) states that when the arts are positioned as a public pedagogy it creates opportunities for individuals to see art not "as static end products, but as social texts continually re-performed for pedagogical purposes" (p. 319). An example of that pedagogy can be found in *Three Weeks in May,* a multi-faceted, activist art project created by feminist artists Suzanne Lacy, Leslie Labowitz, Jill Soderholm, Melissa Hoffman and Barbara Cohen, in Los Angeles, California in the late 1970s (Fryd, 2007). Considered as the “practice of

expanded public pedagogy" (p. 23), this work had several components, including a very public piece in the form of two maps. One map showed the number of rapes reported to the police over a three-week period, a number that was updated on a daily basis with information provided by the Los Angeles Police. The other map pinpointed where those victimized by rape could find help in the form of hospitals, organizations and so on. Both maps were located not inside a gallery, but in a very public area, the City Mall Plaza. The impact was tangible and educational to both men and women who came across the maps as "rape became a visualized reality in a public space that originally had a quite different purpose of consumerism" (Fryd, 2007, p. 30). There were other aspects to this art project, such as a performance piece in a gallery, but the maps became the central part. Its impact on random shoppers and government workers (the mall was underground beneath the Los Angeles City Hall) was felt in a forceful, inescapable manner, as the message was not one sought out by people wanting to see it through the act of attending a show or visiting a gallery. Naidus (2007) states, "all art reveals a value system through what it depicts, who it is made for, and where it is displayed" (p. 140). In the case of *Three Weeks in May,* the uncompromising public manner in which the maps were displayed and updated in real-time forced a conversation in a public space that would not have occurred had the pieces not been displayed in that area.

The type of learning that takes place not only in non-traditional spaces, such as the *Three Weeks in May* art project, but also in unconventional ways,

can become educational, as the following example illustrates. *The Framing Safety Project*, a program that ran at several women's shelters, encouraged women to demonstrate through photo-narratives what it is like to live with violence. For example, one image was simply a set of keys, however, the participant wrote a small paragraph indicating that those objects represented her husband's control over her as he withheld the power to lock her inside or outside of her home. The project was initiated in a support group setting, and became an informal place not only of learning, but of educating others:"the images participants chose to represent their experiences destabilized the collective representations of battered women found in public discourse" (Frohmann, 2010, p. 344)

Disrupting the storyline feminists perceive as imposed by patriarchy can also be seen in the objects created by women through The *Philani Printing Project*, a painted textile cooperative in South Africa (Miller, 2007). The *Philani Printing Project* was created as a work opportunity to bolster the social and economic conditions of women in that particular township. Upon performing a visual analysis of the themes the artists were choosing for their textiles, Miller (2007) found that the participants were providing counter narratives to the stereotypical representations of African women, such as being exotic beauties or impoverished. The women were painting the female figure "as empowered and dignified, through a focus on women's ability to care for, sustain, and nourish their families" (Miller, 2007, p. 127). Other visual representations showcased a

preoccupation with the poor living conditions in the township while contrasting the fact that the community is very close to a major highway leading to an international airport. Despite its proximity, the airport was not benefiting their town. This feminist activist work had a wide-ranging impact, as the printed textiles were sold across South Africa and even in global markets.

The previous examples are educational opportunities that are being experienced in locations traditionally not associated with formal education. Ellsworth (2005) refers to these spaces as "anomalous places of learning", and she challenges educators to explore these places as alternatives to formal schools:

> I wonder what might happen to how we teach if we allowed ourselves, if we demanded the resources and the democratic right, to associate freely as educators and in the name of educational research and practice, with the pedagogical pivot places now being created by architects, documentary filmmakers, performers, artists, user experience researchers, museum exhibition designers and industrial engineers. (p. 97)

The idea of transforming schooling into something that does not alienate those who do not fit neatly and quietly into its rigid forms, works in tandem with positioning feminist street art as an informal tool of education, both online and offline. To accomplish this transformation, Ellsworth (2005) advocates finding spaces that are free from oppressive educational systems and not usually

associated with pedagogy. Duncum (2011) states that arts-based “pedagogic interventions” (p. 349), underpinned by a social justice agenda, can happen in a variety of public places, physical and virtual, despite the increasing pressure by various entities to control and suppress non-authorized activities. Guerrilla Girls, a feminist art collective that emerged in the 1980s, is an example of a multifaceted, informal approach to educating the public on the existing sexism and racism in the male-dominated world of art. The group has made use of a variety of artistic mediums to express their viewpoints and raise the public’s consciousness to issues of inequality in the arts, through posters, billboard advertisements, theatre and books, to only name a few of their artistic, activist interventions (Chave, 2011). Feminist activism in the virtual world can also be considered public pedagogy as these actions demonstrate “how women utilize technology to communicate, to increase social interactions, and engage in and influence the public sphere” (Motter, 2011, p. 109). These culture jamming interventions include the use of online virtual worlds such as Second Life, technology-enhanced activist art and digital mapping technologies, and are focused on bringing to light gender-related issues such as violence against women and workplace harassment (Motter, 2011).

The examples of public pedagogical practice highlighted here, relating to its theme of informal institutions and public spaces, are of struggles to educate and transform through artistic endeavours outside of spaces normally used to display art, such as galleries and museums. This aligns with the work feminist

street artists are doing. Each of the individuals involved in these efforts could be considered a public intellectual with notions of agency. But first I should take a step back to discuss why none of the feminist street artists researched in this project should be regarded as an individual intent on changing the world through their actions, or a public intellectual with a social activist agenda. The actions of such individuals, combined with the community reactions to their work, should be considered a collective public intellectualism, which is more in line with the type of informal learning being explored in this research project.

Public Pedagogy: Public Intellectualism and Social Activism

Sandlin, O'Malley, and Burdick (2011) identified two strands within the theme of public intellectualism and social activism: the public intellectual who, as an open resister to unjust ideologies, works to enlighten others who are perceived as less educated, in the sense of formal traditional educational credentials; and community-based actions, working to counteract dominant discourses in society, with roots firmly entrenched in feminism. While one strand elevates and promotes the individual (who in many cases is privileged and male) as the one who has the knowledge and experience to lead others, the second strand is all about the collective efforts of a group of people, many times marginalized, intent on making change, not from a pulpit, but rather from the frontlines. What the strands do have in common is the desire to bring about changes in society, and to make it a more equitable place for all. Yet the public

intellectual model in education can be problematic. For example, Giroux (2004) proposes that educators take on the role of public intellectuals by encouraging their students to become critical thinkers who challenge the status quo, as he sees pedagogy as a "performative practice embodied in the lived interactions among educators, audiences, texts, and institutional formations" (p. 61). Giroux views teachers and students alike creating spaces where activism can flourish in the public sphere instead of the confining walls of traditional classrooms. The critique of powerful cultural forces, such as Disney, becomes an example of such an intervention by public intellectuals; however, the risk of this approach lies in its replication of formal school systems, where a teacher holds the power as he or she preaches to students from an elevated platform (Sandlin et al., 2011).

Not surprisingly, Giroux's critical public pedagogy approach has been critiqued in much the same manner as Freire's critical pedagogy framework, for assuming that those working toward a common anti-oppressive goal will disregard the "baggage" they carry into the situation.

Ellsworth (1989) suggests that an individual's personal issues are not going to be checked at the front door, and that we must keep in mind that those very issues can become just as oppressive as the initial goal the group is fighting against[23].

[23] I acquired a deeper understanding of this critique while co-teaching a field course in Brazil in May 2017. While visiting the Paulo Freire Institute in São Paulo, my students and I met Lutgardes Costa Freire, Paulo Freire's youngest son. During our time at the institute, Lutgardes explained how his father had come to a different understanding on certain issues he had written about after being challenged. For example, in 1970 while Paulo Freire was a visiting professor at Harvard University, Pedagogy of the Oppressed was printed in English and Spanish. Lutgardes Costa Freire recounted how his father received letters from American

Brass (2014) further challenges the familiar notions associated with public intellectuals cited in public pedagogy by engaging with "Foucault's problematization of critical intellectuals and their roles in social change" (p. 91). He draws from Foucault's work to demonstrate the limitations of the public intellectual, seen as the individual, who will provide guidance, direction, "voice and power to others" (p. 100), based largely on social and cultural capital, academic pedigree and credentialed knowledge (Brass, 2014). The image of the "sage on the stage" is intimately attached to anything considered as traditionally educational. The concept of being taught by someone is what is accepted, due to the accepted expectation that someone must be needed to lead others to knowledge. To compound the issue in many cases, if that guidance does not take place in a traditional institution that offers a piece of paper to acknowledge a person's educational achievement, it is not considered valid.

As a counter narrative, this research frames public intellectualism and social activism as practices where "the work is not done from the outside, so to speak – that is, by educational agents who instruct – but is located *within* democratic processes and practices" (Biesta, 2014, p. 22). In other words, the act of being taught by one individual is taken out of public pedagogy and it is through collective actions that opportunities are provided for people to become educated on a certain issue. The work feminist street artists have accomplished is community intellectualism, wrapped in collective social activist thought, through

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feminists claiming the language used in the book was patriarchal. Paulo came home one night after reading the letters sent to him and apologized to his wife, Elza, for being a "machista" (male chauvinist) and promised he would change his ways, including the language he was using in his books.

online and offline interactions that began with their work on the street. Each street artist who creates a piece on their own could be regarded as a public intellectual, an agent of public pedagogy (Denith et al., 2014) who brings society's injustices to light. However it is through informal community interaction with their street art that knowledge seems to be gained and shared.

Feminist Public Pedagogy

This research project is investigating the potential of feminist street art to create pop-ups of informal spaces of learning in offline and online communities, while examining the significance of feminist street art as a literacy practice. As these research questions stretch into the realms of visual arts, literacy and feminism, the theoretical framework guiding this study is feminist public pedagogy.

A strong feminist presence in public pedagogy is not surprising when it is considered historically. Denith, O'Malley and Brady (2014) state, "feminist public pedagogies have been practiced and evident for more than 200 years in the United States" (p. 28), while intersecting with the different categories of public pedagogies as identified by Sandlin et al. (2011). Described as generally grassroots with the desire to create social change, feminist public pedagogy uses public spaces as sites to share information, nurture intellectualism and take social activist thought right through to transformative actions (Denith, O'Malley & Brady, 2014).

An example of that effort to educate and transform can be found in the street art of Tatyana Fazlalizadeh. Her public art project, *Stop Telling Women to Smile*[24], was created to begin a dialogue surrounding the issue of gender-based street harassment by pasting poster drawings of women with messages to their harassers (Brooks, 2014). These messages have resonated with the public at large, as the project has now spread to several cities in the United States and Canada, such as Montreal, Quebec, Kitchener, Ontario and New York City. However, the most interesting result of this undertaking has been the active discourse happening right where the street art is located. Men and women leave comments and responses to the comments on the posters, demonstrating that a discussion is springing from the public exposure of street harassment as a societal problem (Carlson, 2013). An example of this type of critical conversation is the following: one man wrote on a poster that he did not think that asking a woman (that he does not know) to smile is harassment. According to the author of the article, a woman then left a comment explaining why doing that is not something she appreciates and stated the reasons why she felt this way. Other people added their comments to the initial conversation, building on the previous comments. While not all of what gets written can be considered educational or transformative, a "conversation" between the harassed and the harassers did occur that otherwise would not have were it not for feminist public pedagogy in the shape of street art.

[24] Examples of Tatyana Fazlalizadeh's posters can be seen in this video: https://youtu.be/oHgD56wZRws

Luke (1996) opens up the word pedagogy when she explores how feminine identities are formed through a variety of "public pedagogies of everyday life" (p. 7). The essays contained in the book *Feminisms and Pedagogies of Everyday Life* (Luke, 1996) demonstrate these social constructions by revealing the fairly innocuous and informal places where education takes place, such as in the home with one's own mother. In one of these essays, it is argued that mothering is positioned as not only an isolating event, but also one that takes place mostly inside the home. Griffith and Smith (2004) point out that although the "discursive representations" (p. 39) characterizing mothers have changed over time, what remains consistent is a "mothering discourse" (p. 39), which positions a woman as the main caretaker of children in the home, ensuring that all their needs, including educational, are met. This notion is reinforced further by visual representations in popular culture, including influential parenting magazines, which show women living and thriving, usually in the company of a male partner, inside their homes (O'Reilly, 2004). Even when not excluded from the mainstream due to socio-economic status, a mother's marginalization may happen because of social norms that place a woman in a house rather than outside of it (Marshall, 1991).

Disrupting those traditional expectations are feminist public pedagogies which work to activate, through collaborative actions, "women's knowledge, experience, intuition, and differences" (Denith, O'Malley and Brady, 2014, p. 28) in public spaces. Street artist Zola writes about an experience with other female

street artists in her zine *Radical Thoughts on Street Art II* (2015), which speaks to what I have described above:

> On the first night of the convergence, six of us went wheatpasting. We didn't know each other much, and some had no wheatpaste experience at all, others had a little more. We felt free of judgment from expressing stress or insecurity. The atmosphere was one of trust, as everybody relied on the team's collaborative supportive enthusiasm. We helped each other carry the paste and paper, watched out for the cops and discussed locations together, with no judgment. I believe we all were left with a strong feeling of empowerment after that night. I can still remember the good and strong vibes shared, feeling proud of our collective accomplishment in subverting the capitalist, patriarchal-colonial norms. We were a group of young and fierce women, brown, indigenous and white, telling the world what was on our mind. (p. 2)

Collaborative interventions, such as the one Zola describes, are part of a particular type of social activism where learning takes place in de-institutionalized public spaces that are unexpected, and many times random, fitting in with the values underpinning feminist public pedagogies. Denith et al. (2014) suggest the very origins of public pedagogy are feminist: "historically, feminist pedagogies have been constructed around various forms, processes and sites of education and learning" (p. 27), that are disengaged from the formal teaching and learning customary in traditional education.

Despite its long history rooted in feminist action, there has been an almost complete erasure of feminism in public pedagogy scholarship by academics, according to Denith et al. (2014). The authors discovered this when exploring the rich history of feminist public pedagogy in the United States from the last two centuries and took note of "…the occlusions and doubled moves of the academy that align public pedagogy with a generally masculinized history, personification, and representation that imply feminist public pedagogy as a secondary add-on, a latecomer to the table" (p.37).

The erasure of feminism in public pedagogy can also be found on the Internet: a search in Google using the words "public pedagogy" reveals an educational theory explained from a mainly male perspective. Denith et al. (2014) stress the importance of changing that narrative "to claim feminist activism and theoretical investments as constitutive of public pedagogy as a socially transformative project" (p. 37). Therefore, I would argue that when the feminist agenda in public pedagogy is not acknowledged, it becomes an educational theory that replicates the patriarchal systems of education, albeit outside the confines of conventional ways of learning. Traditional education is mostly a solitary effort where competition amongst learners is encouraged as grades attached to letters or numbers are the accepted ways of measuring knowledge. An education that occurs within a community, in most cases, resists those systems by not pitting people against each other, but rather by bringing them together to build knowledge, through supportive collaboration, leading to changes

in society.

A powerful example of communities coming together to create change can be found in the Women's March on Washington, a grassroots movement started by an American woman named Teresa Shook. On November 9th, 2016, one day after the U.S. election, Shook decided to organize a march on Washington as a way to protest Donald Trump's presidential win and bring attention to women's rights. She created a Facebook event page for the march, which would run one day after Trump's inauguration in January 2017. Shook invited some of her friends to the event via Facebook and within days thousands of people confirmed their commitment to march on Washington and participate in other marches being organized around the world (Kearney, 2016). On January 21st, 2017, millions of individuals marched for women's rights in peaceful protests on every continent, including Antarctica (Liptak, 2017). An idea that had started with one woman had swelled to more than five million protesters participating in marches and millions more becoming aware of various socio-political issues, including gender equality, abortion rights, and immigration concerns. Perhaps even more remarkable is how these marches were planned in less than three months with little funding and were still able to inspire millions of women and their allies. Even organizers were surprised with the number of people who participated, either by marching or sharing information about the events happening in various cities. For example, the Toronto Women's March on Washington had only been expecting 13,000 protesters, but organizers believe that close to 60,000 people participated

(Vella, 2017).

Undeniably the Women's March on Washington movement sent a message that all types of communities, comprised of millions of people, are holding those in power accountable[25]. The impact of such visible actions fueled by the desire to make change and be heard is not unique to the Women's March on Washington protest. The Black Lives Matter and Idle no More movements were also conceived and nurtured by women within their respective communities. The impact of such actions can be profound as seen in the following example: Vigdis Finnbogadottir, who served as the president of Iceland from 1980 to 1996, attributes her career in politics to the Women's Day Off[26] protest that took place five years before she was democratically elected as the first woman president in the world. As a result of the protest, the gender wage gap was narrowed and the doors to leadership roles opened to women (Brewer, 2015). These feminist movements can be regarded as feminist public pedagogies, which have demonstrated the ability to effect change in society through thoughtful community actions that challenge and humble powerful entities, such as governments. This may very well be the reason that feminist projects that are conceived and realized with a public pedagogical framework are not identified as feminist public pedagogies. The power of community movements led by women to foster and

[25] The Washington Post reported that Donald Trump was enraged when media reported more people were taking part in the march in Washington on January 21st than had been at his inauguration the day before (Parker, Rucker & Gold, 2017).

[26] On October 24th, 1975, over 90 per cent of Icelandic women went on a general strike to protest the lack of gender equality in the country. As a result, many businesses closed and men were forced to take their kids to work with them, essentially forcing the country to a standstill (Brewer, 2015).

force change has been recognized by the patriarchy, and so it seems that the feminist part in public pedagogy is not being acknowledged intentionally.

Practicing feminist public pedagogies are essential as conventional systems of education are sometimes used as a means to oppress groups who are customarily sidelined from public discourse. Luke (2010) states:

> The gendered politics at school and university have taught me and so many other women about the politics of voice and silence, even though we didn't always have terms or theory to talk about how pedagogy can function as a silencing device. (p.133)

A formal education is considered an emblematic route to emancipation and personal growth, but Luke points out in the above quote how traditional pedagogy can fail women as these educational systems are influenced heavily by patriarchal thought. Silence that is imposed by dominant forces can lead to non-participation in every facet of society (Solnit, 2017). It is by locating education outside of its normative spaces that women have created educational opportunities, by not only creating works of art, but also through concrete actions such as protesting, lobbying governments, networking online and offline, and taking consciousness-raising from discourse to transformative actions within a community (Denith et al., 2014). This creates a double tension as women are now not only occupying public spaces usually controlled by the patriarchy, but also utilizing those places to teach and learn within a feminist framework (Denith et al., 2014).

Women who engage in this type of informal teaching and learning are described as “skillful masters on the integration of knowledge into the fiber of everyday life” (Denith et al., 2014, p. 28). This statement connects back to my research as the street art created by feminist street artists is educating without the traditional tools of a formal education, such as a syllabus, pencils, books and so on. An example of feminist street artists creating opportunities to educate others informally and by chance can be seen in the work of a collective known as “Women on Walls.” This group of female street artists, located in Montreal, work toward increasing awareness about important women by displaying their names and images on walls in a series of stencils, as seen in Figure 10. The figure shown is an image of a stencil of Chief Teresa Spence, who staged a six-week hunger strike at the foot of Parliament Hill to bring public attention to various issues affecting First Nations in Canada (Galloway, 2012).

Figure 10. Chief Teresa Spence stencil in Montreal. Stencil by Women on Walls. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2015.

Although Chief Spence's protest took place in 2012, this stencil was available for anyone to see in the summer of 2015 on a wall behind a business in the Petite-Patrie neighbourhood in Montreal. Anyone curious to know who Chief Teresa Spence is and the activism she has been involved in would only need to search her name on the Internet. Upon reading about her motivations, an individual would also learn that inequalities in terms of education, health, work opportunities, and many other areas still exist on reserves in Canada right now. The act of creating this type of street art in an open forum not only brings

awareness of the person portrayed in the stencil, but informs others of their actions to rectify injustices in their communities, thus creating an informal learning opportunity that is also a form of public pedagogy. As the concept of informal learning shares many of the same tenets as public pedagogy, these similarities will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

Informal Learning

When I come across the words “informal learning” I always think of my grandfather Benjamin Augusto. He did not know how to read and never learned math, but became a well-known pastry chef in Lisboa, Portugal, where he worked in a variety of high-end bakeries for more than 40 years. When I tell this story, I am asked how is it that my grandfather could be a pastry chef without knowing how to read a recipe. The answer is not that difficult and can be explained in the following story. My mother had carefully been following a recipe for Portugal’s well-known *pasteis de nata* (custard tarts) when my grandfather walked into our kitchen and observed that she had weighed the wrong amount of flour and needed a bit more. My mother challenged his comment because she had just weighed the flour using a kitchen scale, but upon my grandfather’s insistence, she checked the amount of flour using a measuring cup this time. He was right; the flour was off by a quarter cup as the scale my mother used was not calibrated correctly. My grandfather had noticed the wrong amount by measuring the flour with his eyes. His training and practice over the years in the kitchen, and I would argue, his lack of traditional literacy skills, had given him an ability that most of us

do not develop because we rely on kitchen gadgets and written recipes when baking.

As entertaining as this story may be to pass along to others, it also makes me sad. I always think if he had been born a few decades later he most likely would not have been given an opportunity to develop his baking skills because his lack of formal education would have barred him from pursuing that profession in the first place. Fortunately, he began his apprenticeship in the early 1930s when producing a credential to work in a pastry shop was not required. As he worked at different places over the years, his reputation, showcased in the form of tasty pastries and other baked goods, was all the proof required by his employers that he could do the job. It could be said that my grandfather was engaged in informal learning throughout his life but I also argue those activities could also be considered as forms of public pedagogy.

Livingstone (1999) describes informal learning as activities “involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occur outside the curricula of educational institutions, or the courses or workshops offered by educational or social agencies” (p. 51). Adults who participate in this type of learning are self-directed, independent and seize the moments to learn instead of waiting for those times to come to them. The learning is unscheduled and experimental, but is not less meaningful because it is not happening within the confines of an educational institution (Livingstone, 2007, Schugurensky, 2000). These

statements align with public pedagogy where knowledge is created outside of traditional learning structures, such as a school.

Despite informal learning having such significance and ability to impact the lives of individuals, its being recognized as a measurement of knowledge and experience in a particular area is not traditionally accepted. This can be seen in how a person may acquire a huge expanse of knowledge on a subject through experience, but would not be able to teach at a traditional institution without the relevant credentials required to take on such a position. This connects back to public pedagogies, where learning and teaching that happens outside of traditional schooling is not considered as authentic education (Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011). The consequence of inflexible educational systems is lost knowledge, as people are rendered invisible in a society that values established systems of knowing. A crucial question that needs to be addressed in traditional education is: what is society as a whole losing when voices are silenced for the reason that their educational journeys have been unconventional?

Schugurensky (2000) classifies informal learning into three areas: self-directed, incidental and socialization. He further divided each of those three categories into two areas: intentionality and awareness. Schugurensky (2000) describes self-directed learning as taking place when a person decides to learn something on their own or in a group setting without the help of an actual teacher, although there could be a “resource person” (p. 3) present. This learning is “both intentional and conscious” (p. 3) as the individual sets out to learn

something and is aware of acquiring knowledge. Incidental learning, according to Schugurensky (2000), is where learning takes place when the individual was not seeking a learning opportunity, making it unintentional. The notable part is that the person becomes aware of having learned something after having gone through and reflected on the experience. The last category is socialization, which refers to individuals having neither intention or awareness of learning, this type of informal learning being an “internalization of values, attitudes, behaviours, skills ... that occur during everyday life” (p. 4).

The definition of informal learning utilized in this research project is borrowing from all three categories in Schugurensky’s taxonomy. An example of self-directed learning is seen in a program in Israel that is teaching Hebrew through street art found on walls in Tel Aviv (Rudoren, 2012). This self-directed learning is intentional with learners who are consciously gaining the knowledge they sought through that particular experience. Incidental learning also supports aligning street art with informal learning, as demonstrated in this example: two activist scholars began replacing street names in Toronto two years ago with stickers written in Ojibwe to remind people of the city’s Indigenous history, which has been largely erased (Andrew-Gee, 2016). The stickers, posted on signs of well-known intersections such as Spadina and Davenport, became a wider learning opportunity when the City of Toronto approached the creators of the initiative asking them to help the city add the historical names of the streets in Ojibwe to the permanent city signs (CBC News, 2016). This seems to be an

example of an individual or group coming across a message, which made them aware of an issue as a result of being exposed to it in a subtle manner.

Street art can also be regarded as informal learning when described as socialization. An excellent instance of that is found in how feminist street artists create their street art in the public eye, allowing girls and women to see them publicly challenging traditional gender norms. Although those who see this work, either in person or online, may not realize what they are learning from that moment, it may resonate later on upon reflection, especially if one is confronted with a social injustice. Feminist street art can therefore be considered as a type of informal learning. It aligns with Schugurensky's three categories of informal learning, self-directed, incidental, and socialization, as illustrated in the examples above.

Chapter 3

Intersecting Public Art and Literacy Practices

To situate this project's research questions in the academic landscape of feminist street art and literacy practices, in this chapter I'll discuss the scholarship on public art, both independent and commissioned, and how it intersects with education. I will also look at various literacies (multiliteracies, multimodal literacies, and critical visual literacy) to explore how expanding definitions of literacy contextualizes feminist street art as a feminist literacy practice.

Public Art as an educator

Non-commissioned Public Art

Abaca (2011) describes independent or non-commissioned art in public places as art that happens informally, without permission being given from the entity, public or private, that owns the space. Ephemeral but transformative, transgressive and accessible, independent public art, which includes street art, wishes to engage and inform (Philipps, 2015). Independent public art can also become an essential resource in communities by creating awareness of the issues affecting it and spurring people to social action (Iddings et al., 2011). An example of that type of social awareness can be seen in the street art created during a period of unrest in Egypt. Abaza (2013) suggests that the proliferation of street art that appeared in downtown Cairo between 2011 and 2012 was a direct result of violent clashes between protesters and the military junta in power at that

time. Of interest was the fact that the street art, which was critical of the regime in power, was being created on walls that had been erected by the very same political group to dissuade protests in certain areas. In essence, the walls began to serve as canvases for activist artists, who painted dissidence to demonstrate their opposition to the current regime in "an attempt to open up imaginary spaces that would defy the concrete walls" (Abaza, 2013, p. 128).

These "interventionist art practices" (Branscome, 2011, p. 119) are reflective of the environment street art operates in, as demonstrated by the works created by prominent street artist Banksy, whose identity is a carefully guarded secret[27]. Banksy, who started out as a graffiti artist in the 1990s before expanding their artistic work to include street art installations, is known for an unflinching critique of multinationals, government policies, the media and institutionalized discrimination. Although Banksy has exhibited in the traditional sense of the word, it is the artist's satirical but thought-provoking messages found on the streets of the world that affect people most profoundly (Branscome, 2011).

That preoccupation with social justice issues is demonstrated in Banksy's on-going installations related to the occupation of the Palestinian territories, including a project containing a video called *Make this the year YOU discover a new destination* (Banksy, 2015). The video begins in a way that is reminiscent of a promotional piece for a travel destination, but quickly transforms into a critique

[27] There have been reports in the media speculating that Banksy is a female street artist.

of the inhumane living conditions the people of Gaza continue to experience due to the destruction caused by the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict.

A visit to Banksy's official website at the time the video was released revealed images from the same project. I had to click through several of these photographs before being allowed to land on Banksy's homepage, consequently giving a visitor no choice but to engage with the issue (Banksy, n.d). Without a doubt, the artist's intention is to force people to "be critical and question the world around them" (Bannet-Weiser, 2011, p. 650) through the process of creating art that promotes critical awareness, and by also ensuring its exposure through a variety of means. Although a satirical and in-your-face approach is taken by many street artists, ruptures between what a person understands and what the artist wants them to understand can still occur. Moors (2011) points out that though misunderstandings of the intended message could lead to confusion, there could be added conversational benefits to ambiguity. The artist's missive is open to interpretation, but it is not any less impactful because the work and its meaning, motivated by social activism, encourages critical conversation in the wider community (Moors, 2011).

Ensminger (2011) suggests that non-commissioned public art, such as street art, offers an alternate to the status quo by allowing subjugated voices to be heard in public spaces typically used by dominant powers, while "infiltrating public consciousness" (p. 74) to counteract the daily deluge of marketed messages. Ensminger (2011) states, "street artists give a community back, to

some degree, a sense of urgency, agency and freedom" (p. 77). The underlying message is that illegal public art has the potential to educate, and, by being an accessible literacy practice, its greatest advantage may be in messages that can disrupt the traditional discourse found not only in society's formal institutions, but in the streets of neighbourhoods dominated by political and corporate interests.

Commissioned Public Art

Commissioned public art, such as the mural seen in Figure 11, is often referred to as street art. Murals are a user-friendly and highly popular form of commissioned public art that many cities have embraced to beautify their public areas.

Figure 11. Church Street Mural Project, located at Granby and Church Streets, Toronto. This mural is an example of a commissioned mural. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2016.

Moss (2010) states the murals created through public art programs, such as the Mural Arts Program[28] in Philadelphia, reveal themes such as pride, empowerment, and resistance, and that these pieces become important elements in communities. Moss (2010) also notes that messages contained in commissioned murals are shaped by members on committees who bring to the table their own agendas. Therefore when a project is produced under those

[28] The Mural Arts Program was founded in 1986 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with the intention of deterring illegal graffiti in underprivileged neighbourhoods by having graffiti artists involved in the creation of community murals (Moss, 2010).

circumstances, the message is one created through cooperation and compromise, as several groups will provide input on the message(s) projected into a community by the presence of a mural. An example of that can be seen in Figure 12, which is showing the different partners and project champions, ranging from community organizations to government entities to large businesses, involved in the *Church Street Mural Project* in Toronto.

Figure 12. A plaque located on one of the Church Street Mural Project murals. This plaque shows the different businesses, organizations and government entities involved in the project. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2016.

When researching the production of murals in Chemainus[29], British Columbia, Moss (2013) found that the "realities of economic power dictated the content of mural images, rather than the principles of democratic participation or inclusivity" (p. 49). Indigenous peoples in the area were excluded from making decisions on the themes that would be chosen for the murals. Although the murals were meant to be a visual representation of the history of the town, Moss (2013) found the lack of Indigenous voices in the project perpetuated a distorted narrative, reinforced by colonialism, that was then transmitted to townspeople and tourists.

It seems that the context in which commissioned pieces are produced must be considered when reflecting on the nature of its message. Burke (2009) notes that "the tensions embodied by public art often run deep" (p. 229), as she recounts Alex Colville's perspectives on a mural he was commissioned to create for Mount Allison University in the 1940s. Colville felt he needed to explain what the mural represented, which he felt was a failure, as in his words, "a good painting should require no verbal explanation" (Burke, 2009, p. 230). According to Colville, only a few people understood the history of the university and therefore only those privy to that background would appreciate the significance of the mural (Burke, 2009). Although this might position commissioned pieces as elitist and inaccessible, Burke (2009) points out that art critics Lucy Lippard and

[29] The Chemainus Mural Program was created to attract tourism to Chemainus, British Columbia. The program consisted of having artists paint murals that depicted the history of the area on various walls located within the town (Moss, 2013).

Hilde Hein argue “the need for public art in spite of the risk of multiple, contradictory, or erroneous interpretations” (p. 230), as the ability to provoke discourse among those who engage with it is the very essence that “makes a work of art public” (Burke, 2009, p. 231).

It may be that public art does not offer the same pedagogical possibilities as street art due to the complicated relationships that exist between those who fund the art, those who create it, and those in the community where the art is located. Cockcroft, Webber and Cockcroft’s (1977) in-depth look at the funding of public murals in North America revealed “a struggle for control” (p. 236), where the artist finds themselves divided between the benefactor(s) funding, which supports the artist, and the members of the community who will be living with and learning from the art. If there is a loss of control over the message at any point, and the creator’s vision is compromised, what is being learned other than the reality that political and economic agendas impact the work of an artist? This begs the question: in what ways can funded art in the public domain still be considered an expression of activism, and can it still foster critical awareness despite the message having been changed to possibly suit a benefactor’s agenda? The answer to this is complicated, but perhaps it speaks to the importance of critical visual literacy (CVL), a framework where the learner must regard art critically, accessing the agendas of all who were involved in the decision to create it. This research project takes a closer look at critical visual literacy and its relationship to feminist street art in the section dedicated to

literacies.

Expanding the Traditional Notions of Literacy

A few years ago, I came across a paper written by Jerome C. Harste (2003) in which he asked the questions, “What kind of lives do we want to live and what kind of people do we want to be”? (p. 11) Although these questions may seem straightforward, I decided to analyze them through an educational lens. Reflecting on those questions troubled me for a very long time because I tried to imagine myself answering them twenty-three years ago. The reason that I was unsettled came from the realization that I could never have answered those questions in my early twenties because I would not have known I should even ask them. I simply did not possess the awareness to imagine beyond my circumstances at that time. There was a shortfall in my vocabulary far beyond the traditional literacy skills I did not possess at that time. I will discuss my personal connection to literacy in Chapter 4, but Harste’s questions led me to reflect on the dangers that individuals encounter if they are not critically aware. What happens to someone if imaginings of personal growth and achievement lay idle instead of flourishing? In what ways are communities affected, by not one person’s stagnation, but by many individuals who do not know that outside of the barriers surrounding them there could be a different reality? What becomes of those who never master a different vocabulary, one of prospects and dreams? How can dominant and oppressive discourse ever be challenged in these

environments? And in what ways can the new meanings adopted to describe literacy assist in finding “the spaces where we begin the process of re-vision”? (hooks, 1990, p. 145)

The definition of literacy in modern society has evolved and expanded, as current conceptualizations run from written text in physical books to images and video, to computer-mediated communication and video gaming, to name only a few literacy practices (Rowsell & Walsh, 2011). So what role might feminist street art have in the growing definitions used to describe a literacy practice? To localize that question and the ones asked above, this section will look at how multiliteracies, multimodal literacies and critical visual literacy might position feminist street art as a feminist literacy practice, and as a form of public pedagogy.

Multiliteracies

The term multiliteracies “sets out to address the variability of meaning making in different cultural, social or domain-specific contexts” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 3) thus stretching the traditional notions of literacy away from only reading and writing. In the paper, *A Room with a View: Revisiting the Multiliteracies Manifesto, Twenty Years On*, Collier and Rowsell (2014) trace the precursors to multiliteracies by looking at the work of Saussure, who in the early 20th century explored semiotics, the “notion of language as a sign system of arbitrary relationships between words and their meanings” (p. 13). Halliday

(1978) built on Saussure's work, as he investigated meaning making as a social practice (Collier & Rowsell, 2014), while being the first academic to use the term social semiotics in linguistics studies in the late '70s. In the late '80s and '90s, Hodge and Kress (1988) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) expanded on Halliday's research to include design, which provided the beginnings of a multimodal framework in literacy studies (Collier & Rowsell, 2014). Other academics also looked at the social aspects of literacy and addressing issues of power and ideology in those decades, such as Street (1984) and Gee (1996).

Despite the expansive research into literacy in those decades, a group of educators[30] gathered in New London, New Hampshire in 1994 with the intent to discuss how "the emphatic and singular connotations of the term literacy were beginning to work not-so-well" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 1). The group became known as the New London Group and they used the term "multiliteracies" to describe "modes of meaning other than linguistic" (p. 80). Cope and Kalantzis (2000) state:

> We decided that the outcomes of our discussions could be encapsulated in one word, 'Multiliteracies' – a word we chose because it describes two important arguments we might have with the emerging cultural, institutional and global order. The first argument engages with the multiplicity of communications channels and media; the second with the

[30] The ten scholars who make up the New London group are: Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, Allan Luke, Courtney Cazden, Norman Fairclough, James Gee, Gunther Kress, Carmen Luke, Sarah Michaels and Martin Nataka (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015).

> increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity. (p. 2)

The New London Group's discussions resulted in the publication of the influential paper, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures* (1996) which outlines multiliteracies as an approach with four key areas: situated practice (experiencing), overt instruction (conceptualizing), critical framing (analyzing) and transformed practice (applying). Using this framework in an educational setting has led to improved engagement in the classroom (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015), as multiliteracies expand the traditional notion of literacy to encompass drama, music, art, photography, video and other mediums (New London Group, 1996). This educational theory also supports those who do not perform well in traditional educational settings, thus allowing an individual who has difficulty expressing themself in writing to demonstrate their knowledge through an alternative medium such as drawing or drama (Cowan & Albers, 2006). Cope and Kalantzis (2009) state:

> One of the fundamental goals of a pedagogy of multiliteracies is to create conditions for learning that support the growth of this kind of person: a person comfortable with themselves as well as being flexible enough to collaborate and negotiate with others who are different from themselves in order to forge a common interest. (p. 174)

The above quote suggests that allowing individuals different opportunities to express themselves may encourage more participation in the public sphere. This also aligns with the fact that a community of practice framework underpins

many multiliteracy practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Community of practice (CoP) theorizes that people can learn and create knowledge effectively outside of traditional schooling, as they interact regularly in a shared domain of interest (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This connects back to my discussion on public pedagogy and community public intellectualism, where awareness and understanding are created collectively within community instead of being an individualistic effort.

While a review of the literature in the area of multiliteracies did not reveal any research associated with street art, I looked at scholarship in the area of street art and graffiti that seem to position these art forms as a multiliteracy. One example is the research conducted by Iddings, McCafferty and da Silva (2011) on the informal learning opportunities provided by graffiti arts to those with low literacy in a neighbourhood in Brazil. This suggests that graffiti art (what I define as street art) is a multiliteracy as it involves "different ways of socially organizing communicative events involving writing language and semiotic signs that can provide opportunities for access to social and cultural understanding" (p. 6).

An example of a community conversation and shared experience that takes place within the multiliteracy framework (Kalantis & Cope, 2010) can be seen in the analysis of Figure 13.

Figure 13. Stencil of Rob Ford in downtown Toronto.

Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2012.

Deadboy, the Toronto street artist who created this piece, seems to be commenting on an incident where Rob Ford[31], then mayor of Toronto, allegedly gave the finger to a driver who pointed out to him that he should not be driving while talking on his cellphone (Agrell, 2011). This street art seems to have been created without the heart or the words as seen in the image that can be found at this link: https://www.flickr.com/photos/martinreis/6059904277/in/set-

[31] While campaigning for a second term as mayor of Toronto in 2014, Rob Ford withdrew from the mayoral race after being diagnosed with an abdominal tumor. He recovered but in March 2016 he died after treatment for a second tumor was ineffective.

72157626496163157. It becomes clear that the words “stop this” and the smiley hearts were added after the piece was created. Different people seemingly created the additions, as the marker stroke is quite different. As well, the smiley heart is well known across the city of Toronto and associated with street artist, Gregory Allan Elliot.

The initial street artist’s message offers what seems to have been a critique of Ford for his behaviour, a visual narrative that the artist knew could be a shared understanding (experience) for those familiar with the story. Another person reinforces that rebuke by putting out a call to the community to put an end to Ford’s time at City Hall, and the smiley heart seems to be an attempt to add a positive note to the situation, perhaps a sort of “stay positive Toronto” amidst the turmoil of the Ford administration (conceptualizing). A passerby could analyze the street art through social and cultural lenses that are unique to them but are nonetheless tinged by what they have seen or heard from others sources, such as the media (critical framing). Finally, knowledge obtained from an encounter with the piece allows for learning to take place that can then be transferred to others or to new situations (applying). Participating in this public analysis of street art could in turn be described as the act of “reading the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987), as those spending the time to look at a piece will try to make connections through prior knowledge, form an opinion, or create some sort of understanding. The process is one that requires thoughtful and deep reflection, as individuals consider the message being transmitted to them, while at the same time being

firmly entrenched in the histories of their own lives and of their communities. An example of that can be seen in the following: an on-going adult literacy project in Lisboa, Portugal, capitalized on its participants' diverse backgrounds to facilitate the acquisition of traditional literacy skills through the integration of art. The program, *Writing and Reading with Art* (WRAP), uses paintings from known African artists as a way for participants to make connections to their own experiences while learning how to express themselves in Portuguese. The project is inspired by Freire's (1999) adult literacy theory, but takes it a step further by utilizing culturally relevant art that the participants, who are of African descent, can relate to in wider world contexts. This approach values the literacy practices the learners bring to the table, and through the integration of art, those participants are now multiliterate (Azevedo & Gonçalves, 2012).

In the above-mentioned examples, the concept of literacy has opened up and expanded to include much more than traditional reading and writing. These instances demonstrate how arts-based multiliteracies do not operate in a vacuum, but are congregating to create accessible new ways of broadcasting information that can be "read" by all who engage with it, and ultimately may "improve the conditions of one's life" (de Castell & Jenson, 2006, p. 241).

Multimodal Literacies

Multimodality explores communication and representation by going beyond traditional literacy skills. According to Jewitt (2009), this theory is based

on three intersecting theoretical assumptions. The first one is that multimodal communication makes uses of multiple modes to transmit messages. A mode is a meaning-making resource used for communication that includes text, music, signs, gestures and visual endeavours, such as art and photography (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The second assumption suggests that modes are created through social and cultural interactions (Jewitt, 2009). Finally, social context plays a significant role in multimodality as "all communicational acts are shaped by the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign making, and influenced by the motivations and interests of people in a specific social context" (MODE, 2012, para. 5).

Rowsell and Walsh (2011) suggest "a fundamental part of 'new' literacies in literacy education considers not only that literacies are multiple, but also that they demand different modes" (p. 55). When modes are combined, communication becomes multimodal and consequently more effective, allowing those who do not have traditional reading and writing skills to make meaning (Kress, 2010). To prove this point, Kress (2010) describes how a traffic sign he had encountered on his way to work required written text, an image and colour to communicate effectively to drivers how to get into a parking lot from a busy intersection. Kress (2010) explains that each mode is doing a particular job as the "image shows what takes too long to read, and writing names what would be difficult to show while colour is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message" (p. 1). As well, its actual placement on a street is very important

although Kress did not touch on that subject. The traffic sign's physical placing must be highlighted as significant because that sign will only make sense to those who see it if it is in the location it is meant to be in, and from which its directions make sense.

The affordances provided by varied modes are discussed in *Semiotic representations: Building complex literacy practices through the arts.* In that paper, Cowan and Albers (2006) explain the impact visual arts has on literacy development by allowing students who may have difficulty with writing to still express themselves in a meaningful manner. The authors contend that "students are positioned not just to write but to write, with force" (p. 127), and as a result, the texts they produce, albeit multimodal, are products of expanding one's knowledge. Allowing opportunities for people to demonstrate their knowledge through a variety of modes is the way to "produce learners who know how to use art, music, drama, etc. to reposition themselves, gather information, change perspectives, re-theorize issues and take thoughtful new social action" (Harste, 2003). Multimodal arts-based literacies "enable learners to develop richer and more complex literacy practices" (Cowen & Albers, 2006, p. 124) as incorporating "multiple modes that work together in interactive, dynamic and integrative ways" (Sanders & Albers, 2010, p. 5) permits communication to get across, even to those who have difficulties with literacy (Iddings et al., 2011).

The creation of graphic novels falls into this category, as demonstrated through a research project conducted at two high schools located in Ontario,

Canada (Hughes, King, Perkins, & Fuke, 2011). The students involved in this project perceived themselves as being poor readers or writers, but in creating their own graphic novels, with both text and artwork, their perceptions of themselves changed. The authors noted that the ″students were engaged by both the published graphic novels they read and the process of producing thoughtful and insightful commentaries on their lives" (Hughes et al., 2011, p. 610). By allowing the students to engage in practices that were multimodal and meaningful to them, which departed sharply from the usual educational experiences prescribed by a government entity, the students' perceptions of their own literacy abilities expanded. This was a direct result of being able to express themselves through more than just words.

The re-visioning of traditional literacy practices is also seen in Weinstein's (2002) ethnographic project at an alternative high school in Chicago, where the literacy practices of students was researched. Weinstein discovered that, contrary to the dominant narrative accepted by both students and staff, there was ample evidence of various literacy practices, such as rapping and drawing, not only in the classrooms of that particular high school, but also in its hallways, cafeteria and assemblies. She even found evidence of literacy activities outside of the high school, such as tagging, that connected back, albeit not always directly, to the traditional learning happening in the classrooms.

Weinstein (2002) recounts how the perceived disconnect between the literacies the students were learning within a set curriculum, and those that they

were engaging in as personal choice, was leading to a reinforced notion that these students were not literate in the traditional sense of the word. Weinstein (2002) notes, the “self-motivated” (p. 21) literacies the students practised, such as drawing, composing rap lyrics, creating graffiti and even writing love letters, were disregarded by staff and many times subjected to “immediate censure” (p. 36), resulting in further student estrangement from the conventional school curriculum. As a result, the influences attached to these literacy practices, such as identity, culture and social acceptance, were devalued the moment the activity was deemed unacceptable**.**

Critical Visual Literacy

Equipping individuals whose voices are being drowned out by the dominant culture with tools to counter negative narratives can be profoundly empowering (Frohmann, 2010). Having "control over communication" (Christen, 2010, p. 237) becomes very important for underprivileged groups, such as graffiti and street artists, whose artistic productions are a way to express themselves within a community.

Christen (2010) also suggests that creating illegal public art actually achieves something formal education does not, which is to introduce individuals to the "critical understanding of dominant power structures" (p. 237). Learning to analyze works from different perspectives and perform a close reading (or viewing), where diverse aspects of street art are analyzed, separately and then

together as a whole, will help in its interpretation. Further to this, learning about the history of those involved in its production, including the reason for its street location, and how the workings of authority affect the lives of those creating the pieces, will open up many more learning possibilities. These activities will possibly enhance a person's awareness on a variety of issues in their neighbourhood and even beyond, but effective analysis requires a toolkit to assist in the decoding of visual information. And even before acquiring and learning how to use these tools, individuals must be aware enough of their circumstances to ask the question: why do I need to repair or change this situation?

The skill to decode visual texts is visual literacy, and it is an essential skill being taught in schools to help individuals break down the messages, subliminal or overt, found in logos, music videos, advertising and elsewhere. In a world saturated by constant visual stimuli, where those with the social, political and economic power are controlling what is being seen or heard, visual literacy is an educative force to counter dominant narratives (Newfield, 2011). Critical visual literacy takes it a step further by being a "framework on which to establish a critical pedagogy of visual literacy on behalf of social justice" (Chung, 2013). That process of politicization, through the development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1999), uses critical visual literacy as one of its tools to help question, de-construct, re-frame and re-build. Chung (2013) and Newfield (2011) suggest that when practicing critical visual literacy, individuals not only decode a message,

but they begin to raise questions. Those inquiries can then lead to change, as once they start to interrogate a situation, individuals may make the choice to disrupt and transform it through action. This framework paves the road for the creation of new representations of traditional texts that not only resist dominant oppressive forces, but seek to actively change them (Chung, 2013; Newfield, 2011), as demonstrated by many types of artistic activism, including street art. Critical visual literacy, therefore, aligns well with feminist street art, which can be seen in the following two examples.

The French street artist known as Princess Hijab uses black paint or markers to cover the faces of fashion models in advertisements, in an effort she refers to as hijabizing (Moors, 2011). While her street art has been deemed both pro-Islamic and anti-Islamic, and in turn pro- and anti-feminist, according to Princess Hijab her work is rooted in subverting the messages conveyed by fashion ads by giving them a sense of humanity through the addition of a chador or hijab to the images' models (Aburawa, n.d.). Although the artist's actions are open to interpretation by those who see the pieces, it still encourages critical conversation in the wider community on issues of female representation by the fashion industry (Moors, 2011). However, to initiate that discussion, Princess Hijab understood that there was a problem with the way the advertisements were characterizing women and she followed through by becoming an "active agent" (Chung, 2013), who disrupted the status quo through her actions. Princess Hijab changed the dominant narrative on female representation in advertising, but to

do this she needed to situate herself historically and socio-politically before proceeding with her statement, and this then becomes a crucial element in critical visual literacy.

Decoding and creating visual communication through this theoretical framework allows individuals to understand their "social relatedness" (Tavin, 2003, p.197), or rather, where they stand in their communities both locally and globally. These actions open a door for individuals to "increase their capacity to enter into dialogue not only with others but with their own world" (Heaney, 1995, p. 3).

By way of another example, the work of street artist Zoulette will be examined through the lens of critical visual literacy. On February 8th, 2016, this street artist posted an image on her public Facebook page showing a poster on a wall with the sentence written in English, "Women are best for cleaning!!!" The sentence was written in a black font on a white background with the words neatly written in beautiful, curly handwriting. Just below it, but to the side, was another pasted image of a seagull looking at the message and squiggly lines just above its head, as if to signify it is confused. A comment in English appeared on that post with the words, "What??? Are you crazy Zoulette Street Art?" Zoulette responded, "Ha Ha! The provocation works, I see!!! Smiley emoticon." The comments continued as Zoulette explained, in English and French, why she had created that piece as others posted their support for the street art, and thanked her for starting the conversation online. Zoulette ended her comments by writing,

“It’s important to react in the face of this kind of nonsense” (translated into English from French). This public, online, multilingual interaction was very meaningful as an example of critical visual literacy. Both Zoulette and the first commenter are well aware of their social standing in a male-controlled society that still sees women as the people who are “best for cleaning.” Through her street art, Zoulette not only challenges those entrenched gendered expectations by inciting feelings of anger in those who fight patriarchy, but also by informing people, both male and female, who are not conscious of how society relegates women to “housekeeping” positions inside and outside the home.

With so many commercials, in print and broadcast, demonstrating to the public endlessly that only women know how to clean properly, it becomes an accepted norm that is rarely challenged. Whether these socially constructed ideals of womanhood, which are forced on society, are already understood or not by the audience, Zoulette’s message has the power to make people stop and think, then challenge and change societal norms. Zoulette’s example is interesting as an illustration of critical visual literacy being applied by both the producer of the message and the consumer of it. Unlike advertising and marketing, that seeks a highly targeted audience for its messages, this communication is a random pop up of thought-provoking information, both online and offline, as the street artist does not know who will engage with the work and what effect it will ultimately have.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at public art, both commissioned and non-commissioned, and diverse literacy practices in an attempt to understand how these two topics inform my research on feminist street art. Both these areas intersect with public pedagogy in many different ways. Street art, along with public art, especially in its non-commissioned form, seems to offer possibilities for re-visioning adult education (hooks, 1990).

This research project's explorations into multiliteracies, multimodal literacies, and critical visual literacy assisted in understanding street art's role as a literacy practice where a learner not only reflects on texts and recognizes any ideological undercurrents (Cowan & Albers, 2006), but also as a practice that is situated in a social and cultural context. These frameworks not only align street art as a literacy practice, but one that is democratizing through the use of signs and symbols which allow those who do not read or write, in the traditional sense of the words, to participate in public discourse. Weinstein (2002) suggests that "acknowledging and valuing the literate activities that are already meaningful" (p. 41) to an individual fosters an openness to learning, because the person feels that his or her experiences are a valuable resource.

And why would exploring new literacy practices be necessary for formal or informal adult education? A search through several educational databases revealed many papers on arts-based literacy practices in elementary, high

schools and post-secondary education, but very few on the use of the arts in adult literacy settings, such as basic literacy programs or continuing education. A 2007 report on research into adult literacy states, “the field of adult literacy only has a small foundation of scientific research” (Comings, 2007, p. 2). Several reasons are cited in the report for this situation, including the following: research is focused in the K-12 area because academics are not seeing the potential in adult literacy studies; budgets for adult literacy programs are small, and some are disappearing, making it difficult for a researcher to get involved in a long-term research project; and the lack of theory-based models of instruction in adult literacy (Comings, 2007). My recent search seems to indicate that, although ten years have passed since the report was published, research on adult literacy in general is still lacking when compared to the body of scholarship available on other areas of education.

When I was investigating the impact of digital technology on the literacy skills of adults involved in a basic literacy program for my Master’s degree, a participant in my research project shared that he did not like attending the literacy program because it reminded him too much of a traditional school environment. He then told me that the day I had taken the participants out of the room where they were attending the program for a short field trip to take images with iPods had been really enjoyable for him. He felt he was learning without being behind a desk with a pencil in hand and an empty sheet of paper, something that had been stressful for him in school as a child. What this indicated to me is that

cultural productions found on walls, in gardens, on signs and essentially everywhere outside, have immense potential to educate those who may not enjoy the traditional ways of learning in school systems, and those affordances need to be explored further.

In the next chapter I will look at my personal history with street art and literacy, and how those relationships influenced the research design of this project. I will also explain what my research process was as I discuss the methodologies I was influenced by, the research methods used, and the analysis framework chosen to examine the data that was collected.

Chapter 4

Research Study Design

In this chapter I will discuss the methodologies that influenced this research project and my rationale for adopting them. The various methods employed in collecting data will also be reviewed, along with a description of the participants and how they were chosen as interviewees. Before I discuss those sections however, I will look at how my personal history factors into this study. Exploring my positionality within the research questions I am proposing is essential to understanding "the assumptions, motivations, narratives, and relations" (McCorkel & Myers, 2003, p.200) that I bring into this project. I feel that being able to reflect on my relationships with street art and literacy has enhanced my understanding of the research I have conducted, of both its limitations and possibilities.

Positioning the Researcher

I was introduced to street art in the summer of 1976 in Lisbon, Portugal, which is my parents' hometown. It was in that city that I saw an image painted, postered and plastered everywhere I looked: a red carnation. What exactly was the message of that image I saw over and over again? This was a question I asked of my parents, who explained that the red carnation, already a symbol associated with socialism in Portugal, was adopted during the revolution that took

place on April 25th, 1974[32]. Known as the Revolution of Carnations, it saw the fall of a dictatorship and the installation of a socialist government. The dictatorship, which had been in place for decades, censored what people could say publicly about the government, but the revolution had changed that. People were now free to express their opinions, including on the street, hence the huge amount of street art on public and private property.

I remember seeing a specific piece of street art located on a wall at a very busy intersection. The image was of a soldier with a rifle on his back and stuck in the barrel of the rifle was a red carnation. There were no words with the street art but it was conveying a message to the many people who were most likely seeing it daily. Santas and Eaker (2009) state that the significance of a visual image is dependent on the cultural and social context of the person viewing it. As an eight-year-old child who became aware of the political history of Portugal through a sound-bite provided by parents who had not lived there for many years, my interpretation of that image would have been very different to that of a person directly affected by the toppled dictatorship.

From that time on I have made note of public messages in many forms, such as posters, paintings or the written word. These visual pieces are communicating with everyone who happens to come into their space, and it is important to take the time to listen to what they have to say, and, in essence,

[32] This political symbol can be seen in the image at this link: http://bit.ly/2l6h7El

reflect on these communications. As I have explored street art's pedagogical potential as an alternative literacy, my thoughts have returned often to those elucidating moments, where I learned lessons in politics, history, social justice and activism through the images and posters located on the Portuguese walls of my youth. That street art also played a role when I was learning a second language.

I have always been very aware of issues surrounding literacy since I was a small child. Three of my grandparents were unable to read and write, and both my parents only completed grade six in the elementary school system in Portugal. They were forced to learn a new language when they immigrated to Canada, and subsequently to the United States. As a result, their employment options were dictated by how well they understood and spoke English. Although they both learned enough English to function at work, they were never comfortable speaking that second language.

At the age of eleven, I moved from the United States to Portugal, my parents' birth country, and then I was the one who had to manage a new language, as I only knew how to function in English. It took years to learn how to speak Portuguese without a noticeable accent, but in many ways writing and reading was the biggest difficulty. I became dependent on visual prompts to help decipher this new language, and so reading material that contained pictures became my favourite teacher. I especially enjoyed comic books and *fotonovelas* (magazines that use photographs and dialogue bubbles to tell stories of

romance) because I could "read" the same material my classmates were reading without feeling left out due to my weak skills in a new language. Being able to read in that manner led to understanding what was going on in the stories, and because I could make meaning from it, I could then participate in conversations on these reading materials. Much of my political knowledge from that time came from the walls of the town where I attended school. It seemed that there were elections going on frequently, so posters and written content for and against the parties and individuals running for office could be found for public viewing very easily. At that time, those in power were a target of social critique, and so satirical illustrations of prime ministers, mayors and other elected officials would pop up over time, bringing to light serious issues, such as the influx of homeless Portuguese-Africans living on the streets of Portugal after fleeing civil wars in their homelands. However, even with the use of visual aids to assist in learning a new language, I did not automatically become bilingual. During that time in my life I was unable to speak, read or write in one language fluently because I began to forget how to communicate in English while still to master Portuguese, and so I lived in a state known as semilingualism[33] *(*Hoffman, 1990) for a number of years.

At the age of 19, I returned to Canada as an adult who had dropped out of high school and consequently lived with low literacy skills, the effects of which I

[33] While Hansegard (1975) and Skuttnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) were using the term semilingualism before Hoffman, it was upon reading Hoffman's book, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (1990*)* that I was able to understand my personal difficulties with speaking two different languages as a child. Hoffman's book, written in the form of a memoir, resonated with me and for that reason I reference it when discussing semilingualism in this research project.

felt on a daily basis. With limited skills and education, I found myself working at minimum wage jobs until I was able to enter a program to help uneducated youth find employment. There was one caveat though: participants were required to complete high school through correspondence courses while in the program. I eventually obtained my high school diploma and pursued post-secondary education at a community college. Yet having lived for a number of years in a society that values and rewards those who read, write and speak English (Tomic, 2013), I am well aware of the negative effects low literacy skills in the dominant language can have on an individual's life. The impact is not only felt in terms of missed opportunities, but also in day-to-day dealings that others take for granted, such as filling out a work application properly. There were many expressions in the first work applications I filled out that I just could not understand, such as "employment history." I knew what the word history meant, but it was something I associated with learning about a country's past or a world event and not finding a job. This was a problem I kept to myself, and I felt for a long time that I must be the only adult in Canada who cannot understand simple words on a job application. Thoughts like those contribute to a person's sense of isolation within the society they live in, leading to social exclusion and non-participation in the public sphere. I certainly experienced that, as I did not want to risk looking foolish for not knowing the vocabulary needed in order to articulate a position. The other side of the coin is that learning how to cope with a lack of literacy skills, in both Portugal and Canada, provided me with the ability to interpret visuals in a more

clarified manner, as I have had much practice making sense of text by “reading” photographs, illustrations (Schecter & Otoide, 2010), and, of course, street art. To be visually literate would seem at first glance to be an advantage, but I saw it more as a negative and a practice I should keep secret as it did not support “dominant literacy practices” (Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 11) in the community I was living in, thus leading to aspects of social exclusion. When the issue of marginalization is considered alongside street art and literacy, the connections become clearer within the context of education and my own experiences. As a single mother escaping an abusive relationship, my oldest daughter and I were homeless for a period of time and then lived in subsidized housing and on social assistance. We experienced social exclusion while we faced economic, political and socio-cultural obstacles that prevented our full participation and acceptance in the community in which we lived. These barriers are difficult to transcend as social exclusion is apt to cut off “avenues for upward mobility” (Lightman & Gingrich, 2013, p. 124), leaving people to plod on to the point of exhaustion without much change to their situations, even over a long period of time. I was able to overcome those obstacles through the process of education. By gaining formal years of education, which included mastering traditional literacy skills in the dominant language of the society I lived in, I was able to secure a job with better prospects, which in turn permitted my de-marginalization. Through the process of leaving subsidized housing and no longer being stigmatized by social

assistance, I became an accepted member of mainstream society, as did my daughter.

Language and literacy play a pivotal role in one's sense of acceptance as a member of a group. Essentially, it becomes a necessity to acquire the language and literacy skills to perform well within that group in order to belong (Tomic, 2013). Obler (2005) suggests acquiring language becomes paramount in order to attain admission to a group through the perfect performance of the group's specific mode(s) of communication. On one hand, a world of opportunity can open up to the individual who has mastered reading and writing in the dominant language, but as Gee states (as cited in Street, 2005), traditional forms of literacy can also be used to control those who hold little to no power within the dominant society.

Barton and Hamilton (2005) suggest that "socially powerful institutions, such as education," (p.12) will usually support traditional literacy practices. That statement forced me to reflect critically on the institutionalization of my own literacy practices. I recognized that as I acquired more years of education, from completing high school at the age of 22 to attending a three-year college program and then years of taking courses at universities, my literacy practices became increasingly embedded in conventional forms of meaning making. Ironically, the more years of formal education I have acquired, the less reliant I have become on using different modes to express myself, so the ability to read visuals has become less important.

When I lived in a state of speaking two languages, neither fluently, my literacy practices included different modes of expression in my daily interactions, such as drawing images to communicate an idea in the language I could not speak. These days, however, I mostly communicate using traditional forms, including speaking and thinking in a dominant language (English). It has become clear to me that alternative literacies are not entirely welcomed in the spaces occupied by formal education. This begs the question: if certain individuals do not conform to established institutionalized learning, and alternatives to conventional methods of teaching and learning are not accepted, what becomes of these learners? If I return to the word marginalization, I must also reflect on what is lost when those who do not fit the traditional notions of being literate are relegated to the margins of society, and consequently silenced. How is a community, whether it is online or offline, ultimately impacted by the absence of these voices? In what ways are these silences filled by those who do not live or frequent a community? And when that happens, how do those outside influences affect it? These interrogations feed directly into the research questions I am exploring through this investigation. I conducted qualitative feminist research as I investigated my questions, and in the next section of this chapter I will discuss how feminist thought has framed this study.

Engaging in Feminist Qualitative Research

Qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003) allows for an in-depth examination on diverse subjects in real-world settings (Yin, 2011), by using techniques such as interviews, fieldwork and participant observations to collect detailed data. As the subjects and objects I am researching are feminist, feminist ideology has had a strong influence on this research.

McCormick (2012) defines feminist research as being political and contributing "to the transformation of society in a way that is beneficial to oppressed persons" (p.24), while ensuring that the participants being researched are not harmed in any way. Another characteristic is innovation by "challenging conventional or mainstream ways of collecting, analyzing and presenting data" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2005, p.40). The researcher's attitude is also key, as reflecting on "personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological and ontological influences" (Doucet & Mauthner, p.42) during the entire process plays an important part in feminist research.

Despite the contributions feminist studies have made to scholarly research, Oakley (2000) points to the difficulties of researching within a feminist framework:

> What we face here is a fundamental paradox between the idea of open, accountable, empirically based knowledge, on the one hand, and a system of thought which is deeply oppressive towards women and

anything to which they are seen to be attached, on the other.

(p.101)

The above quote points to an issue that I discussed in preceding chapters: women and those who identify as women are continuously being diminished or excluded from different areas of society, including academic scholarship. Examples of that exclusion can be seen in how Goodey (1998) described scholarly research as being male-dominated and apt at making women "outsiders" (p.139). Studies from the past ten years suggest gender discrimination in academia is still prevalent (Monroe, Ozyurt & Alexander, 2008; Ernesto, Sapienza & Zingales, 2014; Blau and Kahn, 2016), thus making it difficult for research to be conducted by women, with women and for women (Goodey, 1998). On top of all this, the value and actual validity of feminist research in academia has been debated (Oakley, 2000; Doucet & Mauthner, 2005).

Despite the barriers, "feminist scholars have made significant contributions to mainstream and alternative thinking" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2005, p.42) in a number of academic areas such as politics, social equity and interdisciplinary studies.

I have applied principles of feminist research to this investigation by conducting research with women and for women (Goodey, 1998), while reflecting on my own experiences as a female, mother, wife, student and the long list of my other life roles. Being informed by feminism in this project has also meant

engaging with the ideas surrounding knowledge building and mobilization in community, identified by Doucet and Mauthner (2005) as one of the tenets in empirical feminist research. This connects back to the theoretical framework I have used in this research, feminist public pedagogy, which supports the notion that “communities, not individuals acquire and possess knowledge” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2005, p.37).

Feminist thought has shaped the methodologies and data analysis framework chosen for this study. In the next section of this chapter I will discuss how my research has been influenced by both visual ethnography and sensory ethnography.

The Influence of Different Ethnographies

Ethnography is both a methodology and a method used in qualitative research (Pink, 2011). When discussing methods later on in this chapter I will introduce social media ethnography as one of the techniques I used to collect data. For now though I will focus on ethnography as a research methodology. Classic ethnography is described as the “long-term immersion in a society or culture” (Postill & Pink, 2012, p.4). O’Reilly (2005) provides this detailed description on ethnography:

> An iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures),

> watching what happens and listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory as well as the researcher's own role and that views humans as part object/part subject. (p.3)

Although my study on street art and communities intersects with some of the ethnographic methods and principles described in O'Reilly's (2005) quote, I would not characterize it as an ethnography. It was not the sustained investigation of a certain cultural group during a specific period, but rather a study of diverse groups, at different times over a period of five years, who have different agendas when it comes to street art. These groups included feminist street artists that create street art, the groups who have encounters with the street art in the communities they are located in, and also those individuals who interact with the pieces that are posted online. My personal relationships with street art and literacy played an important part and, although O'Reilly (2005) addresses the researcher's role in her description of ethnography, it did not quite align with how my own background featured as the research project evolved.

When I encountered a description of visual ethnography, I felt that this methodology suited the research I was doing. It is characterized by combining visual mediums, such as video recording and still photography, with the more traditional methods of ethnography, such as fieldnotes and first person observations (Pink, 2013). As the data I collected involved examining media of

different types, the influence of visual ethnography could be seen in this research project on many different levels.

For example, Pink (2013) suggests that ethnographers acknowledge their own histories when doing visual ethnography, and this is especially relevant here, as my background has played a key role in the direction this investigation has taken. Being able to contextualize my personal experiences in relation to the research ended up being liberating for me, however it was not exactly a comfortable decision as it involved revealing parts of my life that I have not shared previously with anyone, including my closest friends and relatives. Nonetheless, reading Pink's (2013) take on developing a "reflexive approach to classifying, analyzing and interpreting visual research materials" (p.141) permitted me to examine the data through a lens where my history with street art and literacy was welcomed into the discussion. This in turn allowed for a more open exploration of the personal connections I had made when collecting data, and when triangulated during the analysis, was helpful in framing the findings. This approach also aligns with the feminist research tenet of reflexivity.

Visual ethnography is also a methodology that "is concerned with the production of knowledge and ways of knowing rather than with the collection of data" (Pink, 2013, p.35). This encompassing approach to using visual images in research is noted by Rose (2016) as important, who states:

> Visual imagery is never innocent; it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges. A critical approach to visual

> images is therefore needed: one that thinks about the agency of the image, considers the social practices and effects of its circulation and viewing, and reflects on the specificity of that viewing by various audiences, including the academic critic (p.23).

This is relevant in the research I am conducting, as I analyzed not only the feminist street art for its content, but also its production practices and how individuals who see those activities may be impacted. I further considered how images of feminist street art posted online were interpreted by an online audience, by examining the comments left on the posts.

Although visual ethnography was useful as a guide in this research, it was a methodology that was not taking into account the non-visual aspects of street art[34]. I therefore turned to sensory ethnography, a methodology advanced by Pink (2009), to fill that gap. It is an approach "to doing ethnography that takes account of sensory experience, sensory perception, and sensory categories that we use when we talk about our experiences and our everyday life" (Pink, 2011,00:25). Pink (2009) admits that it can be argued that ethnography has been conducted in this way in the past, but she stresses that it needs to be more clearly acknowledged that the ethnographer is aware and reflective of the impact multisensoriality might have throughout an entire research process. This means thinking differently about the data as it is collected and as it is analyzed. Pink

[34] Street art is not only visual but it can be touched and is some cases, have a scent. For example, a wheatpaste will be textured and may smell of the glue used to paste it to the wall. As the glue used in wheatpasting is made of flour, as it degrades the scent changes over time. Certain types of street art can be heard, such as street art that includes performance. It can also be argued that street art can be tasted as street artists have used edible food to create pieces. See example at this link: http://bit.ly/2imbm0j

(2011) says:

> We can't record smells, we can't record textures but maybe we can take with us something that is textured in such a way that enables us to remember and understand the textures that form part of the place where we were doing ethnography. (04:38)

This idea of feeling the data in a multisensory manner at the time of collection and during analysis resonated with me, as my personal thoughts when encountering street art and documenting it had become an important part of the research I was conducting. I had noticed that when engaging with street art in certain places, such as alleyways or walkways at night, in essence areas of a city I have been conditioned to avoid as a woman, I felt emboldened by seeing it. This led to feelings of empowerment that minimized fearful thoughts about my personal security in such places. Looking at the images that I had taken brought me back to those spaces that I had discovered were not threatening in the way I had imagined them to be before actually experiencing them. What I was feeling embodies what Pink (2009) refers to as "sensory ways of knowing" (p.113), which builds on traditional ethnography, and can lead to new ways of creating knowledge that is not dependent on scholarly articles. This allows it to engage not only a non-academic audience in knowledge production, but also those who do not read and write in the traditional sense. This in turn encourages alternate ways to communicate, which is a central idea that I am investigating in this dissertation.

Research Methods and Data Collection

This study encompasses interviewing 12 feminist street artists, documenting street art through photography, following the various social media feeds of street artists, visiting Montreal twice (where many female street artists live and practise their art), and attending a feminist street artist event. Nine online articles, four videos and three audio interviews on various feminist street artists were examined. I also monitored a Google Alert[35] on "Street Art" for two years, resulting in daily notifications of articles, videos and other media associated with the words "street art."

I used three methods of data collection in this research project: interviews, social media ethnography, and a visual research journal. In the following section I will look at each method of data collection and provide details on the participants who were interviewed.

Interviews

Although it has been and continues to be immensely educational to learn about feminist street art through the various means mentioned above, it was important to pose questions[36] to feminist street artists and record their perspectives on the research questions through interviews. From July 2015 to March 2016 I contacted 53 female street artists from around the world via email

[35] Google Alert is a notification service that allows for the customization of Google searches based on terms a user specifies when creating the alert. This information is then emailed to the person who created the alert in the form of links (Google.com, 2017).

[36] The questions the feminist street artists were asked can be found as an appendix.

or Facebook's private message function. These artists were chosen after viewing the type of street art they are creating and researching their online biographies, social media feeds and other information on the Internet, suggested they are engaged in creating feminist street art. Out of the 53 contacted, 31 responded. Out of the 31 responses, three street artists let me know that they were interested in participating but did not have the time, two said they were not comfortable working with an academic, one street artist refused to sign the Letter of Consent (LOC), 13 agreed to participate but never sent a signed LOC and 12 street artists were interviewed[37] after signing the LOC.

The initial plan for the interviews was that they would take on a semi-structured approach, as this permits researchers to start with a set of pre-determined questions, but also allows for changes depending on where the interviewee decides to go with their answer (Adler & Clark, 2011). However, some of the street artists contacted did not want to be interviewed in person, by phone or Skype to maintain their anonymity. Others were unable to do the interview in a more traditional manner due to time constraints or because they were traveling. In the end, two interviews were conducted in person and ten were completed via email. Follow-up interviews with the participants were undertaken in some cases to clarify answers. Pseudonyms were given to all the interviewees, even when they used their street artist names in their interviews.

[37] A table with information on the participants is located in this chapter under the section on participants.

The group of women who are creating feminist street art worldwide is small, and therefore it was of utmost importance to maintain and respect their anonymity.

Social Media Ethnography

Initially, the intention was to spend time observing the interactions that members of particular communities are having with the feminist street art located in the areas they frequent. Observations of a few of those interactions were made possible during field research in Montreal on two occasions; however, these exchanges did not provide enough data to analyze for this research project.

A street artist who was interviewed suggested I look at the social media feeds from feminist street artists as the comments they receive on the work they post come from, not only people from around the world, but also from those who live in the communities where their street art is located. After completing some research into social media ethnography (Postil & Pink, 2012), I found that this method of collecting data would align well with my research goals, as access to information that was being generated in an online “shared, observable space” (Baker, 2013, p. 135). This type of data collection allows the researcher the opportunity to explore community interactions through online mediums (Postil and Pink, 2012), as its meshing of the online and offline offers “an expanded field for the researcher to work within, thereby facilitating the collection of richer data” (Baker, 2013, p. 143). In addition, Hine (2000) states that a great advantage to

conducting social media ethnography in a research project is that traveling to different places to collect data, which can be time-consuming and expensive, is not required.

I was able to collect data for six months from open Facebook pages on the street art created by 25 different feminist street artists and two feminist street art collectives, who are producing work all around the world. This permitted the collection of a much larger data set than would have been possible in that time without the use of social media. Looking at the observations of individuals who comment on the posts of the feminist street artists or collectives was an important part of this social media ethnography, and provided an even richer source of data to work with. Furthermore, personal familiarity with Facebook facilitated an easy data collection process, which Baker (2013) sees as an advantage for researchers who use this method.

Visual Research Diary

> The research diary can be seen as a melting pot for all of the different ingredients of a research project – prior experience, observations, readings, ideas – and a means of capturing the resulting interplay of elements. (Newberry, 2011, para. 7)

For the past five years I have kept a record of the street art I have photographed in the form of a visual research diary. The diary consists of images organized digitally in folders and written notes, mostly handwritten, about certain

pieces and their respective locations. Aside from images and text, there are other components such as drawings, maps of locations and a few audio files. Therefore when I read Newberry's quote it resonated with me, as my visual research diary has been a way see the "resulting interplay" (Newberry, 2011, p.3) between all the elements I have been collecting for this project. An example of those interactions can be seen when I have photographed street art to document its content and then taken the same shot from a wider angle to show its location on a street. I have then gone back months or even years later to take a look at the same piece and, by referring to my notes and taking a look at the images I took before, I can see if anything has changed with the actual street art, such as it being painted over or additions being made to it[38].

An important part of my visual research diary is the collection of photographs, which contains the first image I took of street art in 2012. Since that time I have taken hundreds of images of street art, tagging, graffiti and other forms of urban communication encountered as I walked through the alleyways, laneways and streets of different cities. I amassed 1,404 photographs of varying types of street communication, both legal and illegal, as photographic data in this project. The breakdown of categories and number of images in each group can be seen in Table 1.

[38] The street art of Rob Ford in Kensington Market, found on page 29 of this dissertation, is an example of the type of interaction between elements found in my visual research diary.

Table 1: Photograph breakdown of images (2012-2017)

Street Art	578
Tagging	79
Graffiti	65
Posters	53
Stickers	105
Yarnbombing	13
Street Artists in action	10
The general public interacting with street art	28
The area where the street art is located	175
Combination of different types of street art	81
An official sign changed through street art	40
Advertising pretending to be street art	3
Commissioned Murals	119
Public art that is commissioned but not	31

murals	
Messages left in public areas by people who are not street artists	24

The visual research diary I have kept has been useful as not only a way to unite all of the elements in this investigation but also as a tool for reflexivity in research. This connects back to one of the principles of feminist research, identified earlier in this chapter. Pink (2013) takes the idea of examining "oneself as researcher, and the research relationships" (Hsiung, 2010, para.1) further when discussing photographing while walking:

> These methods advance the idea of the photographic survey by offering us alternative ways of understanding the process and meanings of photographing (in) an environment as we move through it…walking and photographing enables us to attend to elements of the ways that people experience and give meanings to their environments, and in this sense also enables a focus on the sensoriality of place. (p.81)

My visual research diary has afforded "alternative ways of understanding" (Pink, 2013, p.81), which in turn has allowed this research to move into unanticipated directions. For example, re-reading thoughts that were jotted down months or even years ago but which are now framed by broadened horizons, including the sensorial aspects attached to an image, has provided some clarity

amidst the chaos that can in many instances be the result of dealing with complex topics in research (Ortlip, 2008).

Although I could call my visual research diary 'field notes', as that is the description typically used for these sources of data, I feel that research method is limiting. According to Newberry (2001), "fieldnotes can be understood as an objective record of observations made in a particular setting (p. 6). On the other hand a visual research diary contains content that will go beyond observations to include notes on methodology, quotes from readings, strategies to deal with problems and future research ideas. My visual research diary contains all of that and more. Additionally, fieldnotes are usually well-organized records of data typed from rough notes that the researcher has written while out in the field (Adler & Clark, 2011). Newberry's (2001) description of a research journal not being a "polished piece of writing" (para. 36) aligns with my own diary. The notes I have written consist mostly of hand-written missives scrawled on different pieces of paper in point form in many cases, from the past five years. They are, many times, ramblings associated with thoughts in the moment and sometimes they are not even written using words, but rather communicated using a drawing of some sort. It was only at the beginning of writing this dissertation that I employed a permanent diary to document thoughts, from which point many of these past communications could be compiled into one area. My visual research diary as a whole still remains chaotic and incomplete to outsiders, but it is

personally meaningful, and has provided immense value as I have worked through ideas while exploring my research questions.

Participants

From July 2015 to March 2016, interviews were conducted with 12 feminist street artists from different parts of the world. Two of the interviews were done in person, so the audio recorded during those interviews was transcribed. At the time of creating the interview files the data were de-identified and each interviewee was given a pseudonym. The following chart provides some information on each feminist street artist using the pseudonyms chosen for them.

Table 2: Feminist street artists interviewed

Street Artist	Years creating street art	Type of street art
Karen	Three years	Stencils, stickers, murals
Gaia	Eighteen years	Spray paint – graffiti and murals
Soleila	Six years	Wheatpaste
Zoe	Six years	Spray paint and Wheatpaste
Janis	Eight years	Stencil-based murals
Carlie	Four years	Wheatpaste and yarnbombing
Matti	Five years	Murals

Carol	Seven years	Wheatpaste and collages
Jude	Fifteen years	Spray paint
Danni	Five years	Wheatpaste, stickers, murals
Velma	Six years	Clay-based
Coco	Fourteen years	Spray paint – graffiti

The twelve participants who were interviewed come from or are living currently in North America, Asia, Europe and Australia. They have all been creating street art and other forms of public art (graffiti, murals and performance art) for longer than three years. Some of these street artists have had their artistic work displayed in galleries. Some of the street artists are part-time artists and have full-time jobs such as graphic artists and educators.

Data Analysis

The research I have conducted for this dissertation has explored the ways in which street art, produced by feminist street artists, might produce pop ups of informal learning in both online and offline communities. I have also looked at how feminist street art might be considered a feminist literacy practice. The connections between street art, literacy and communities are areas in pedagogy that seem to be understudied, while at the same time a vast amount of information on street art is present in the public domain. It was therefore important to collect and analyze data from multiple sources, especially given that

the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) being studied is so secretive. In order to do this, data was collected in the following ways: interviews with feminist street artists; an examination of posts and comments from feminist street artists' Facebook pages between January 1st and June 30th, 2016; reviews of posts and comments on videos by feminist street artists; a review of feminist street artist collectives on Facebook; a review of articles, videos and audio interviews on feminist street artists; and reviewing content from the visual research diary that I have kept for the past five years. This content comes from diverse sources and involves different mediums; therefore I chose multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) as the lens to analyze the data in this feminist qualitative research project. The next section of this chapter will explain in more detail why this framework was selected as an overarching approach to analyzing the data.

Analysis Framework: Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

Before discussing multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), the history of critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be explored, as it is the precursor to MCDA. CDA finds its roots in critical linguistics, where the seminal work of Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew in the late '70s "sought to show how language and grammar could be used as ideological instruments" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 2). Research into critical linguistics evolved into different branches of linguistic analysis, including CDA, driven by the "need for analysis to draw on a range of

linguistic methods to research things like the production and reception of texts" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4).

Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teyn van Dijk advanced research in this area of linguistics but feel that there is no single way to do critical discourse analysis. Fairclough (1995) suggests that discursive communication must always be considered in its social context "to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 132). Wodak and Fairclough (1997) argue that CDA identifies language as a social practice. They state:

> Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. (p. 258)

CDA also provides a stage for not only examining how dominant discourses are being enacted and repeated, but how different types of communication resist such dominance as they are played out in the public eye (van Dijk, 2005).

CDA aligns well with how this research explores the ways feminist street art can be considered both a feminist literacy practice and an informal learning

tool as a means to resist “imperial white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (Yancy & hooks, 2015, para. 3). However, a common critique directed at critical discourse analysis is how text-focused this approach can be (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Realizing this, Hodge and Kress (1988) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) began to look at how CDA principles could be expanded to include the analysis of other meaning-making resources, such as video and images. Machin and Mayr (2012) state:

> What was needed, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argued, was a set of tools that would allow us to study the choices of visual features, just as CDA allows us to study lexical and grammatical choices in language. Kress has been one of the pioneers of Critical Linguistics and took the same set of concerns to visual communication – what Kress and van Leeuwen coined ‘Mulitimodal Analysis.’ (p.7)

Multimodal critical discourse analysis still includes analyzing text on a resource, when present, along with other details, such as colour, lighting, composition of objects, the setting, font used if text is present, location of the resource, who created it, the medium being used to transmit it, and so on. Furthermore, the interactions between all the “semiotic choices” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 30) present in the resource are examined to better understand how they work together to communicate directly or indirectly with an audience.

Additionally, MCDA explores how visual communication is “shaping and maintaining a society’s ideologies and can also serve to create, maintain and

legitimize certain kinds of social practices" (Machin & Mayr, p. 19). It is usually used to deconstruct semiotic resources that the powerful use to oppress the marginalized.

I felt this approach could be used to identify, deconstruct and magnify the work being done by feminist street artists, who are producing, maintaining and legitimizing their own social practices, such as creating street art in tandem with members of a community. Feminist street art can be thought of as megaphones attempting to rise above the deafening chorus of the dominant patriarchal discourse found in society. Despite this it is not always seen as beneficial, but rather as a suspicious and, depending where it is located, even illegal activity. However, the reality is that feminist street art unsettles the domination of authoritative groups as the works, especially illegal ones, carry significant implications just by the act of disrupting the exclusive "access to and control over" (van Dijk, 2005, p. 355) what is being communicated to the public at large. Deconstructing feminist street art, including attempting to understand what the final art communicates to the public, is an important component of this research project. Adopting multimodal critical discourse analysis as a framework to analyze the data allows for that deconstruction and understanding to happen at a deeper level.

Analyzing the Data

While working with a large data set originating from different sources and media, I considered it more efficient to use a form of computer-assisted

qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). After doing some research into the various software programs, MAXqda was selected, which is a type of data analysis software that allows for mixed-methods analysis. This software was chosen for its ease of use and also affordances, as it allows various types of media to be coded easily and quickly along with text-based content. Adding memos to data, compiling information in visual maps, and transcribing audio or video within a project file were all tools that made the data analysis portion of the research more structured, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis.

The data were compiled, coded and interpreted following Yin's (2010) five-phase cycle of data analysis, which consists of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and concluding. This data analysis method meshes well with research where the analysis of data is not expected to occur in a straight line, running from point A to B without interruptions, but instead to "have recursive and iterative relationships" (Yin, 2010, p. 179). The unpredictability of the qualitative data is recognized in this framework, as each datum, whether it is text-based, image, audio or video, is regarded as a story, brimming with thoughtfulness, emotions, perplexities and more questions, unlike hard, cold, absolute quantitative data.

Yin (2010) also proposes questioning your data and yourself constantly when working through these phases. This is a specific technique that aligns well with the non-linear approach that will permit the researcher to return, if needed, to different phases of analysis while the investigation is still in progress. Having

this flexibility when performing qualitative data analysis allows for a much more complete picture of the research, with more nuances.

In the following section, each of the data sources will be examined, except for the researcher's journal and personal images[39], and discussed using the first two phases of the five-phase data analysis framework: compiling and disassembling. Following this the conversation will include the third and fourth phases: reassembling and interpretation of the data. The fifth phase, concluding, will be found in the next three chapters where I discuss the research findings, limitations and recommendations for further study.

Phase One: Disassembling the Data

The goal when disassembling the interviews is to look at the data differently; not as just an aggregator of information, but as a researcher who will begin making preliminary connections (Yin, 2010). Coding can begin at this stage according to Yin (2010); however, re-reading the interviews and creating memos to record first impressions, thoughts and questions is a good way to start sorting data without the pressure of labeling it. This is time consuming, but Saldaña

[39] The reasons for excluding my visual research diary from the same data analysis performed on the other data are two-fold. Firstly, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, my diary is not well organized, although it holds elements collected for this investigation from the past five years. Using the framework described above to analyze the entries would not work well due to its lack of structure. Secondly, the personal production of text and images, were created to provide a critical self-reflection with "a notion of creating transparency in the research process" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 696). This differs from the interviews, social media posts and digital artifacts that were analyzed, which were not as personal as the actual data created in the diary. In other words, the researcher is more detached from the data that was not generated through personal experiences, thoughts and creativity. For this reason, the same methods cannot be used to analyze the data, and as such, the insights created through my visual research diary will serve only as personal interjections in the next three chapters.

(2009) states that although making notes on data seems counter-productive, as many of them may end up being discarded, it is an excellent way to maintain a record of developing ideas and questions that could become important as the analysis progresses.

The data were organized using codes in the following phase (assembling) as memos written were reviewed when re-reading the content of the documents. The codes were generated in-vivo, which means naming a code from two or three words together that originated from the interviews. Along the way, the themes were developed inductively from the existent data (Adler & Clark, 2011) to organize it into more focused and manageable chunks, something that has been referred to as level 1 coding (Hahn, 2008; Yin, 2010). The goal of this initial work is to pave the way for level 2 coding (Hahn, 2008), where the researcher attains a "higher conceptual level" (Yin, 2010, p. 188) as connections are made and data begins to fit into categories that are more focused.

Although there were only data from 12 interviews to analyze, the analysis provided interesting discoveries that led me to re-think my positions in two areas pertaining to the production of feminist street art: why are these women creating street art and who is the intended audience for their work? This is discussed in Chapter 5, which examines the findings for one of the themes.

Facebook posts and comments (individual Street Artists)

As stated previously, the Facebook feeds of 25 feminist street artists were

followed and documented from January 1st to June 30th 2016, as it was felt that six months would provide a snapshot of sufficient data. The 25 feminist street artists are different from the ones interviewed[40] and all have public Facebook pages. From these feeds the posts made by the street artists were examined, along with the comments the posts received and the images and videos contained within the posts. Many of the posts and comments were written in a different language other than English or Portuguese (the researcher is fluent in Portuguese) and were translated using Facebook's translation tool. Aside from that, many of the posts and comments contained emoticons. In many cases, a comment might just be an emoticon, so that was also taken into consideration when analyzing the posts. Posts and the comments to the posts were copied and saved into a document created for each street artist along with any links or images in each of the posts. Once all the comments and posts were collected the same preliminary analysis was followed as was used with the interviews. In total 1,145 posts and 2,731 comments were analyzed.

[40] I decided not to look at the Facebook pages of the feminist street artists I had interviewed, as I did not want their answers to my questions to prejudice that data I collected from the Facebook pages.

Table 3: Breakdown of posts/comments analyzed on Facebook between January 1 and June 30th, 2016

Street Artist	**Posts analyzed**	**Comments analyzed**
Gilf	51	21
Jessica Sabogal	14	21
Magdalena Anopsy	24	17
Zabou	22	63
Lilyluciole Elo	11	40
London Kaye	50	198
Tatyana Fazlalizadeh	54	126
Bambi	3	4
Dndinzzz	8	3
Vexta	62	61
Elle	49	14
Shamsia Hassani	49	385
Panmela Castro	193	452
Lady Aiko	25	23
Shalak Attack	26	105
Laila Ajjawi	82	202
Amara por Dios	30	64
Swarm	44	9

Starchild Stela	67	188
Artista Busca Pared	13	18
Miss Me	112	387
LMNOPi	14	2
Maya Hayuk	10	13
Alice Pasquini	104	262
Zoulette	28	53

Facebook collectives

The public Facebook pages of six feminist street art collectives were also monitored and documented from January 1st to June 30th, 2016. Upon re-reading the type of posts the collectives were posting on their Facebook pages, I decided to remove four of the collectives from the analysis as I felt that they did not fit the type of collective I wanted to research: that is a group of feminist street artists who are creating street art together, usually in one geographical location, and using social media to let people know about their group's efforts. One collective, for example, collects images of street art on feminism, from various social media (Twitter and Tumblr for example), which is then shared on their Facebook page. This was not the type of collective that should be the focus in this research project, which is centered around collectives where various members of a group are creating street art together, not aggregating work. The two collectives that

were included are Offmural-es, located in Montreal, and Women on Walls, located in Egypt. Both collectives have only female members who are creating street art and running workshops for other women. Both collectives have also organized street art events to promote the work of feminist artists in the areas where most of the street artists live or work. Each collective has various feminist members and is promoting social equality through a range of activities announced on their Facebook pages. Twenty-six posts and two comments were analyzed on the Offmural-es Facebook page, and 19 posts and nine comments on the Women on Walls Facebook page were analyzed using the same process as the interviews and Facebook pages previously used.

Other Digital Artifacts

There are many online artifacts on feminist street artists in the form of interviews that are text-based and in videos. It was important to analyze these digital objects as they provide "entry points into learning" (Pink, 2013, p. 123) not accessible through other methods of data collection: you hear directly from the female street artists and, in the videos, see them creating street art as well. Also analyzed were nine online interviews with various feminist street artists, and four videos following the same process as the first three data sets aforementioned. The interviews and videos were chosen based on the following criteria: the female street artists were interviewed so that their own voices could be heard or read, and the articles were written in the last three years. The text and images of the online articles were analyzed, as were the visuals and audio of the videos.

Phase Two: Reassembling the Data

After coding all the data, 1,195 coded segments were organized into 46 level one codes. Having the data systematized visually made it easy to pick out similar codes and retrieve particular segments for further evaluation.

At this stage of analysis patterns surfaced in what is considered the reassembling stage. Yin (2010) states:

> The reassembling process can involve "playing with the data," which means considering them under different arrangements and themes and then altering and re-altering the arrangements and themes until something emerges that seems satisfactory to you. (p. 191)

As the codes were moved around using the data analysis mapping tool provided by the software, segments of data merged as codes were collapsed. Through this process particular codes such as feminist literacy practices were identified as dominant due to the number of datum the theme had and also the quality of the selected data. As a result, based on exhaustive coding and recoding of the data, the final themes constructed were: knowledge creation in community, public spaces of learning, and feminist literacy practices. These three themes comprised a total of 345 coded segments. The following chart shows the number of coded segments in each of the themes, and the number of segments cross-coded with two themes or more.

Table 4: Breakdown of coded segments and cross-coded segments by theme

Themes	Coded Segments	Cross-coded Segments
Knowledge Creation in Community	37	25
Public Spaces of Learning	121	48
Feminist Literacy Practices	187	46

To confirm my understanding of the coded segments, each coded selection was re-read, viewed or watched while applying a rating to indicate its importance within its respective theme. Ratings were used that spanned from one to five, with a rating of one meaning the selection was highly important to the research question and five indicating less importance. Out of the 345 coded segments, five segments were considered of less importance as they were given a rating of four or five. All other segments were rated one to three, with most of the segments receiving a rating of one.

Two dominant themes, public spaces of learning and feminist literacy practices, were constructed from the analysis when analyzed in concert with the research question. The other theme formed during coding, knowledge creation within community, contained substantially less coded segments than the other two themes. Upon reflection therefore I decided to fold the coded selections from the knowledge creation within community category with another theme, public

spaces of learning. I renamed this merged category ‘informal learning in public spaces’.

Conclusion

The methodologies that influenced my data collection were examined in this chapter, along with the research methods and data analysis framework used. The feminist street artists who were interviewed were introduced along with those whose Facebook pages were part of the interview research. I also discussed how feminist theory has been an overarching presence in the design of this research project.

In the next two chapters, I will explore the findings from the analysis of data for each of the themes I have identified, and the informal learning in public spaces and feminist literacy practices, both within the context of my research questions. It will become clear that there is a distinct separation between the theme findings as the discussion progresses. Chapter 5 will look at feminist street art as artifacts that sustain the notion that this art form can be considered a feminist public pedagogy, while Chapter 6 explores the processes involved in the making of these artifacts. In other words, in what ways do the actions of feminist street artists associated with the production of the artifacts support feminist literacy practices?

At the end of chapter 6, I will provide concluding thoughts on both chapters. During that discussion the separation between product and process will

be bridged as I look at how the blending of street art's content and the actions associated with its production by a street artist who identifies as a woman can together form a feminist literacy praxis.

Chapter 5

Findings: Informal Learning in Public Spaces

Interpreting the data analysis results for the theme of informal learning in public spaces has been an attempt to gain a greater understanding into the ways that feminist street art creates public spaces of learning, in both virtual and real life communities. In this chapter, as various examples are contextualized through the findings for this category, it will become evident that feminist street art supports knowledge building and mobilization within communities.

A personal example of that can be seen in the following: I photographed a stencil of a little girl with the words "Mr. Trudeau, why are my people still thirsty?" in October 2017 (see Figure 14). I found this stencil, created by two street artists that go by the name of Windigo, in a highly visible location: on the outside of the Oshawa office for Colin Carrie. Carrie is the current conservative Member of Parliament in Ottawa representing the city of Oshawa. The stencil is a message to Canada's Prime Minister[41] regarding a promise made during the 2015 election, where it was announced that if the Liberals were in power they would ensure all First Nations would have clean drinking water by the year 2020[42] (The Canadian Press, 2015).

[41] Windigo confirmed that the street art "Mr. Trudeau, why are my people still thirsty?" is related to the lack of clean water on several First Nations when an open letter explaining the significance of the piece was dropped off at the office of a newspaper in Orillia, Ontario in August 2017. (Shahid, 2017).

[42] A February 2017 report found that the federal government is not on track to keep its election promise of providing clean water to all First Nations by 2020 (David Suzuki Foundation and The Council of Canadians, 2017).

Figure 14. Stencil "Mr. Trudeau why are my people still thirsty?" by Windigo. Image taken in Oshawa, Ontario. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2017.

I was unable to conduct any research on the origins of this street art after taking the image, but I placed it in my visual research diary as something to investigate in the future. It was, however, through this piece that I was able to

find out more about community issues in the area of Oshawa when speaking to a Trent University student I met by chance. The student mentioned that she had posted posters bringing attention to LGBTQ rights on Colin Carrie's Oshawa office wall in the mid-summer and I immediately asked her if she had seen the stencil created by Windigo, as that would give me a timeline to when it had been created. She was familiar with it and said that Carrie's office took down her posters but that the stencil was left untouched. We then spoke about what we thought might be Carrie's reasons for taking down the posters but leaving the stencil[43], about the message in that piece and the affect it might be having on those who were seeing it on a daily basis over a number of months. This conversation eventually led to the student talking about different problems local youth are facing in the area of Durham Region and her involvement in several social justice organizations. As a result of our conversation I became more aware of certain socio-political issues in the area where I live and work, and also found out how local community groups, that I was unaware even existed, are working together to make change. In turn the student learned about social justice issues being introduced through street art as I discussed my interpretation of the piece and the significance of its location. I have since connected with this student via social media so I can continue to be informed on the social justice projects she is working on, and we have talked about collaborating on activist initiatives in the

[43] After analyzing the situation, the student and I felt that Carrie, being a conservative politician, is leaving the stencil up to criticize the current government rather than for artistic reasons or raising awareness of the lack of clean water in many First Nations.

future. This information, in turn, has been shared with students in my classroom who are interested in becoming involved in social equity issues that affect them personally in Oshawa.

The “unagended” conversation, sparked by street art, that led to consciousness-raising and sharing of knowledge, seems to align with the pedagogical possibilities provided by feminist public pedagogy, described by Denith, O’Malley and Brady (2014) as “a project of justice and social transformation” (p.27), that typically takes place in “shared public spaces” (p.29). It is important to note that feminist public pedagogy manifests itself in different ways as well. It can be an experience or process, such as a participating in a demonstration, or an actual tangible thing such as a zine, or both an action and artifact, where the process of creating a zine and the end product, the zine itself, together form a feminist public pedagogy. As aforementioned, at the end of Chapter 6 I will take a closer look at the links between processes and products in relation to feminist street art, but for now I will turn the focus on exploring it as artifacts that promote random opportunities for learning in public spaces, in both offline and online communities.

Feminist Street Art as Artifacts

> I'm telling the stories of the people who I know, who look like me, whose lives I think need to be told… [Women] who aren't really represented in these traditional oil paintings, who aren't represented in art, in mainstream

media. (Pruitt, 2016, para. 9)

In this quote taken from an online article, street artist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh explains how the street art she is creating and displaying in public spaces is a response to the erasure of women in all forms of visual culture, especially those who are not privileged by virtue of race or socio-economic status. Chapter 2 described how Fazlalizadeh creates street art in the form of wheatpaste posters that bring attention to the issue of street harassment, but she also paints murals such as the one called “Sakia, Sakia, Sakia, Sakia[44].” In this Facebook post from May 26th 2016, Fazlalizadeh explains why she created the Sakia mural, where it is located, and the public response to it:

> “Sakia, Sakia, Sakia, Sakia" is a mural I completed earlier this week in Newark, NJ. #SakiaGunn was a teenage girl who stabbed by a man after her and her friends refused him on the street. She was 15, black, a girl, and gay. This month marks the dates of her death (May 11) and birth (today, May 26). It felt really appropriate and important to paint her portrait. However, I was nervous because I had trouble getting in touch with her family to get permission before starting the mural. But a few days into it, through social media, we found each other and there was nothing but love. This mural is a part of a mural project called #GatewaystoNewark to (sic) spans over a mile on McCarter Hwy and features dozens of amazing artists.

[44] The Sakia, Sakia, Sakia, Sakia mural can be seen at the following link: http://bit.ly/2ASH9OI

> Because the murals are off of a highway, we had to work overnight for only a week. 9PM - 4AM everyday (sic). I'm not from Newark. I didn't know Sakia personally. But she was a young black queer girl and deserves to be seen and her story heard. While painting, many people drove by a (sic) yelled out her name. A few people got out of there (sic) cars to tell me they knew her. This is the stuff that public art is good for. #sayhername. (Fazlalizadeh, 2016)

This street artist's Facebook post on the Sakia mural had garnered 744 likes, 548 shares and 69 comments when checked for final numbers during data collection. Although most of the comments left on this post were thanking the artist for creating it and commenting on the beauty of the mural, there were several that align with the idea that feminist street art can provide a space for informal learning, in both online and offline communities. For example, on the same day the post was written a commenter wrote:

> This is so sad. Thank goodness for ppl like you Tatyana Fazlalizadeh telling the stories through art of the lesser known individuals and their stories who the mainstream media refuses to focus on. (Morris Marquese Burns, 2016)

Another comment posted two days later stated:

> As a hate crime survivor who is also a Black masculine woman I thank you for this. Our deaths are often unnoticed or unmentioned. (Sima Lee, 2016)

Yet another commenter wrote:

> Thank you for sharing this story. My daughters and I have passed by these murals several times and often wonder about the artists' inspiration. Glad to see this young lady's life is recognized and honored. (Sybil B. Bost, 2016)

The post and three comments are ones that can be considered educational, as they bring attention to complex but often ignored issues of societal oppression. The fact that these statements are available for anyone to see, being public and on a popular online social network, seems to facilitate the developing of deeper knowledge through analysis in a form of inquiry-based learning (Dewey, 1916, Freire, 1999). Whether individuals are passing by the mural in Newark or reading about it online, they may be provoked into questions. When attempting to answer those inquiries through offline or online research, they may be confronted with two issues: the oppressive societal systems that led to Sakia being murdered, and the realization that the media will ignore the stories of women due to their gender, sexual orientation and/or race.

This is a form of ‘pop up’ public pedagogy that fits in with the theme of informal institutions and public spaces (Sandlin et al., 2011) looked at in Chapter 2. These informal learning opportunities provide entry points for inquiring about patriarchy, homophobia, and racism, and, by learning about these issues, perspectives may evolve (hooks, 2010). Those finding out about the story through the street art may be spurred to action, an example of which can be found in the following public Facebook comment from a man who wrote:

> Tatyana's mural was explained to me by Akintola Hanif (another muralist who i had a great convo with) and now i see it in a hugely different light. (Dino Gravato, 2016)

The author of this comment also shared a Wikipedia page on Sakia, demonstrating a desire to pass on to others what he had learned by seeing the mural and hearing the reasons it was created by the street artist. It would seem through his written post and the steps he has decided to take that he experienced a wish to educate others after learning the story behind the mural. These actions support the concept of public pedagogy as “education for the public good” (Sandlin et al., 2010, p. 342). The desire to learn more after encounters with street art was confirmed by Janis, one of the street artists interviewed, who stated that the “street critique is beautiful”, as there is a willingness by the public to ask questions and open up about their own experiences as they witness the work being created. Sontag (2003) argues that an image “deepens one’s sense of reality” (p. 119), and viewing public art in person or via an image may induce the same response in those engaging with the works.

It could be argued that posting an image of street art becomes an opportunity to acquire knowledge that is then expanded further by the comments of those who choose to contribute to the conversation. This process might well be considered learning at a profounder level, a form of “engaged pedagogy” (hooks, 2010, p. 43), where an individual does not just view the image of the

street art and decode its message, but also reads the comments of others who post. This creates an opportunity to encounter different opinions as well as (perhaps) to be persuaded by a line of argument. hooks writes:

> Learning and talking together, we break with the notion that our experience of gaining knowledge is private, individualistic and competitive. By choosing and fostering dialogue, we engage mutually in a learning partnership (p. 43).

hooks is referring only to face-to-face conversations that can branch out into informal pedagogical opportunities, as “conversations are not one-dimensional; they always confront us with different ways of seeing and knowing” (hooks, 2010, p. 46). Those “conversations” translate especially well into online territory, as seen in the meaningful dialogue surrounding the Sakia Mural on Facebook. Significantly, this type of collective knowledge creation might act as a form of resistance for those relegated to the margins. As Delgado puts it, these “stories about oppression, about victimization, about one's own brutalization, far from deepening the despair of the oppressed, lead to healing, release, mental health” (Delgado, 1989).

A story of oppression (Delgado, 1989) and resistance is being told to an audience of thousands, online and on the street, through the street art seen in Figure 15. The image of a woman and the words “What about our girls,” which was taken in June of 2015 in Toronto, is not only bringing attention to the unconscionable numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls

in Canada, but also commenting on the non-action by the Canadian public and government on this issue. In fact, the prime minister at the time, Stephen Harper, stated in an interview that the issue “isn't really high on our radar, to be honest" (Kappo, 2014, para. 11).

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Figure 15. Wheatpaste by Red Bandit in downtown Toronto.

Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2014

After engaging in some online sleuthing I discovered that a feminist street

artist named Red Bandit[45] created the work. Through her blog, the street artist explained what inspired her to create this wheatpaste:

> A response to radio silence on missing and murdered indigenous women here in Canada at a time when much kerfuffle was made over the disappearance of young girls a continent away. (Red Bandit, 2014)

Red Bandit's written comment alludes to the extensive media reporting in Canada on the Chibook schoolgirls kidnapping in Nigeria[46], in contrast to the coverage of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada itself. Shortly after the kidnappings, the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls trended worldwide, while several events and demonstrations were organized in Canada to bring attention to the kidnappings (CTVnews.ca, 2014). The street art in the above image becomes a mirror that reflects back to those who engage with the work a narrative of truth and resistance.

The missing question mark in the piece is a point to ponder, as the original on the artist's blog clearly shows it without the punctuation as well. Was that intentional or not? By not having the question mark, the phrase is no longer an interrogation but rather a statement. An interrogation would force the phrase to become a question that each person who engages with the street art may choose to answer or not, however, a statement, which seems to be the intention, defines a particular fact the artist wants to amplify through the public art she has created. As well, the image of a strong Indigenous woman with her gaze up

[45] Red Bandit changed her street artist name to Kitten in 2016.
[46] In April 2014, the Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group, kidnapped approximately 200 young women from a boarding school in Nigeria (CTVnews.ca, 2014).

alongside the statement is in direct contrast to the typical representations of Indigenous women in popular culture where they are portrayed as either sexualized or seen as submissive (Jiwani, 2009). The use of the word “our” is especially poignant as it implies a sense of shared understandings, which could include experiences of complicity, ignorance, apathy or empathy. Using that word may force a random passerby, with no intention or expectation of encountering this social issue, to reflect on the street art from a more personal perspective as they place themselves inside the context of that message.

That is exactly what happened to me. I photographed this piece during a very long walk through the back alleys of Toronto’s Spadina Avenue, between Dundas Street West and College Street. On that day, I had been walking through the area for a number of hours looking for street art to document through photography, but was disappointed as I had found nothing that I felt had a feminist social justice message. It was very hot that day, I was tired and had decided that it was time to pack it in when I ventured from the back alleys, up Oxford Street with the intent of reaching Spadina Avenue. Then I saw it, and although this particular piece was deteriorating from being out in the elements and had been scribbled on, the message was loud and clear. In my visual research diary, I wrote how thrilled I was to find street art that day that was so powerful and conveyed so much without using a lot of words or even an elaborate design. I was elated to find it, but I also experienced stabs of sadness and shame. I wrote:

> Reading those words is very tough. It jolted me. I know this is true – govt/police/most people don't care about the missing wom. but reading the words makes it real. I feel very sad and embarrassed. People say this can't happen in Canada but it does. (Research Journal, June 9, 2015)

I also wrote that I was particularly happy to see this piece's location, as it was very visible to anyone walking south on Spadina Avenue's west side, which can be busy in terms of both pedestrian and car traffic. If I were processing this random message attached on a wall and thinking about it long after seeing it, then I feel others encountering it might have the same response. Sandlin et al. (2011) recognize those types of reactions when stating:

> Within these informal sites, learning often takes on a subtle, embodied mode, moving away from the cognitive rigor commonly associated with education and toward notions of affect, aesthetics, and presence. (p. 348)

I also felt that those who were affected by the piece but may not quite understand its significance might feel compelled to learn more by turning to the Internet. Velma, a feminist street artist I interviewed, reinforces that idea of self-directed learning spurred through a street art encounter:

> I create street art to make people think. I do not need them to get what I was aiming at, but I'd like them to turn on their brains and start thinking for themselves. Working on the street gives you the possibility to send out

messages and to change things.

Likewise, the feminist street artists interviewed and those who were interviewed in online articles expressed how they felt there are links between consciousness-raising and public space, especially when it creates an area for the diffusion of ideas that disrupt corporate, patriarchal and hegemonic messages. Soleila, for example, feels her street art reclaims public space from corporations and mainstream media, thus providing an “alternative voice and an alternative set of values then (sic) those dictated by the market.”

Many of the feminist street artists felt the accessibility of public space permits the sharing of information that is random in nature, but not necessarily lost on those who see it pop up in front of them as they navigate cities. According to Hickey (2010), “this is what streets do – they give us access to collective, contemporary culture but in ways that seem ordinary or everyday” (p. 161). This subtle but powerful method of transmitting information is harnessed by street artists whose works are not trying to sell something using public walls, but rather inform and encourage action to challenge and change unjust situations.

Informal pop-up education can be seen in two stickers I came across in the Dundas Street West/McCaul Street area in Toronto in January 2017(Figures 16 and 17).

Figure 16. Sticker in downtown Toronto. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2017.

Figure 17. Sticker in downtown Toronto. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2017.

The images show two animals, a raccoon and a squirrel, with words written underneath them. I searched the meanings of the words online and discovered that both are Indigenous: atu'tuej is the Mi'kmaq word for squirrel and ati:ron is Mohawk for raccoon. This was a very exciting series of street art for me to discover as it aligns well with the definition that Barton and Hamilton (2005) provide when describing what a literacy practice is, which is "what people do with literacy" (p. 7). That definition demonstrates the creative ways street artists are passing along knowledge in the form of pop-up pedagogy, as the artist of this series created an accessible way to teach Indigenous languages through stickers. Passersby drawn in by the illustrations are not expecting to learn words in Mohawk or Mi'kmaq as they walk by, but that is what happens.

When I found the stickers, I spent a few minutes looking at the pictures and sounding out the words. I was saying the words for raccoon and squirrel in a different language, but I did not know what language I was speaking. Once I discovered the words in online dictionaries, I spent some time looking at other words written in Mohawk and Mi'kmaq as well. The street art was the gateway, in my case, to being exposed to two other cultures through language.

Was that the artist's intention when they conceptualized this street art series? Without speaking to the street artist it is difficult to know what the end goals are, however, a desire to share knowledge seems to be embedded in the street art, as those illustrations could have been pasted without the words. The sharing of that specific knowledge, an Indigenous language, also feels like an act

of defiance, a way to resist against the dominant language found in the streets every day. I felt I needed to find out so I turned to the Internet for help, as the stickers did not have the creator's tag attached to them. It took a few Internet searches until I found matching images on Imgrum (an online application to view Instagram images on a computer) under the name Tepknuset. A search for that word led me to the website of the artist, Adore Subtract, who explains her sticker series, that identifies animals found in Toronto by using their indigenous names, is a cultural reclamation project with the "intent to heal ancestral wounds through restoring cultural literacy in myself" (Subtract, n.d. para. 2). Although the artist sees this project as something she is doing for herself, the Tepknutset sticker series has transformed public spaces on the streets of Toronto into Indigenous language classes.

Another thought-provoking example of feminist street art transforming a public space and the minds of those who engage with it can be seen through the work of street artist Laila Ajjawi. This street artist lives in Jordan but was raised in a Palestinian refugee camp in that country. She has created works that speak to the difficulties of being a woman in the Middle East, and of being a refugee in the country in which she lives. Her Facebook posts recount how she creates street art to not only beautify cities, but also to empower women.

For example, on April 16th, 2016, Ajjawi wrote in a post that she was creating a work of street art in a refugee camp. An image of the mural she had painted depicted a young woman in a hijab with her eyes closed and with a slight

smile etched on her lips, in what seems to be a dream-like state, surrounded by flowers and butterflies. In a subsequent post, Ajjawi mentioned how children from the camp watched her paint and how she had posed a question to them: “what do you see through her closed eyes?” Several people commented on her post leaving their own impressions on what they felt the woman in her street art was seeing through her closed eyes, which included home, inner peace and beauty. On April 26th, Ajjawi posted an image of the same piece but it now had names written on the face of the woman in Arabic. Her post reads (translated from Arabic using the Facebook translation tool):

> Today I passed near it in my way home, I felt sad at the first sight! But I decided to get closer to have a look on what's written on her face, I smiled when I read names for girls! Somehow they spoke through her, and it's a unique thing to find girls names on the walls. I can assure you they are related to little courage girls. They completed it somehow! I'm happy to see that ... :) (Laila Ajjawi, 2016)

This work seems to demonstrate how the street art and the act of creating it in a public space encouraged dialogue and action, both online and offline. The street artist points out the importance of names written on the piece as they were most likely added by girls who are living in the camp. Being the most vulnerable and least powerful of the camp occupants, the girls who wrote their names on her art demonstrated agency and courage. That small act speaks volumes when one takes into account the difficult circumstances surrounding the girls in a refugee

camp, but it is one that becomes visible to others living there over a period of time as long as the message is read on the wall. The agency, exercised by the group of young girls, was then witnessed by an online audience as the post was liked more than 70 times at the time of data collection.

Similarly, a collaborative project created for an event called Decolonizing Street Art (DSA) showcases how street art can spark collective action in a community while also functioning as an educational opportunity, albeit informally. DSA was a gathering of feminist street artists in Montreal that ran in August 2015. Describing itself as an arts collective, DSA provides a support system for Indigenous street artists and street artists of colour, while encouraging positive interactions between the collective and the communities where the street art is created.

The weeklong gathering had feminist street artists producing works on the streets, speaking at panel discussions and leading workshops on creating street art within a social justice framework. One of those workshops challenged participants to create collages that incorporated Indigenous histories of Montreal in an attempt to disrupt the area's settler history chronicled in schools. Montreal is located in an area of Canada that has seen its share of successive power struggles, as demonstrated through its "complicated and layered history of colonization and conquest" (Mills, 2010, p. 4). Furthermore, this city is located on unceded territory, meaning land that was taken away from the First Nations who occupied it, not through a treaty process or by losing a battle, but rather as a

result of colonization (Decolonizing Street Art, n.d.). Many people are unaware of these processes that led to the loss of land for the Indigenous peoples of Canada. However, DSA, through the collage workshop, facilitated that conversation amongst the participants[47].

The day after the workshop some of the participants took their completed collages to an alleyway in the Plateau Mont-Royal community, where their work would become part of a mural created by Indigenous artist Lianne Charlie. Charlie had painted the portrait of a woman fishing on a wall that had been donated to DSA. As the artist and workshop participants worked together to complete the mural, people who lived in the community and were walking in the area stopped to ask questions. Some of these curious individuals then created their own collages that would later become part of the mural on the wall. The completed mural and details from it can be seen in Figures 18 and 19.

[47] I did not participate in this workshop but I visited the wall where the street art was located. The workshop was documented in a short documentary that can be seen at this link https://youtu.be/RvDlClXJ7Z0

Figure 18. A collaborative street art project located in the Plateau Mont-Royal area in Montreal, created by Lianne Charlie, workshop participants and members of the Plateau Mont-Royal community. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2015

Figure 19. This is a detail of the street art project created by Lianne Charlie, workshop participants and members of the Plateau Mont-Royal community. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2015

Lianne Charlie, the creator of the mural and facilitator of the collage workshop, wrote on the Decolonizing Street Art website:

> Our contributions to the wall, together, attempt to counter the erasure of native people, place, and life ways from parts of our homelands that are currently urban centres. At the same time, the collage/mural mirrors the complexity of urban spaces, and their potential for being the source new kinds of Indigenous collective resurgence. (2015, para. 2)

In the above quote, Charlie uses the word “our” to explain the collective effort in the creation of this piece, as individuals, some who live in the area where the mural is located, worked alongside the artist to shape this specific conversation in the community. Just as the aforementioned street art “What about our girls” uses the word “our” to impart a shared sense of responsibilities when dealing with a social issue, Charlie uses it in the same way. She had expressed her hope that the community would continue to add their thoughts on that wall as the collages degrade and need to be replaced (Decolonizing Street Art, 2015). This is of particular interest as Charlie is entrusting community members, some of whom may not have participated in the original event, to continue the discourse surrounding indigenous histories in Montreal by becoming the new storytellers. This street art piece exemplifies ‘pop-up’ pedagogy as it offers an informal learning opportunity, created in community, that is igniting dialogue within an informed context.

The creation of street art with the assistance of a community connects back to a comment by Zoe, a feminist street artist who wanted to bring attention to the emotional and physical tolls that activism has on those who engage in it. She sees these works as not only informing the public on unjust issues through their participation in its actual creation, but also as a “visual presence of radicalism in the streets” that encourages other activists to take up the work of fighting social injustice, or those already involved to continue their work despite

the adversities they may face. This quote sparks deliberation on whether it is the use of a public space that creates a community that consequently participates in shared knowledge building, or if it is the community who creates the public space that in turn facilitates community learning.

In my opinion, many aspects of the transformational knowledge achieved by individuals engaging with social justice issues introduced by street art are being created and sustained within a community. It seems public actions in public spaces, such as creating street art, is actually what stimulates collective learning. Chappell (2010) stresses the "importance of being in relation to others as a part of the struggle" (p. 326) while hooks (2010) recognizes that "our collaborative effort to challenge and embrace each other is an ongoing expression of critical resistance" (p. 39). This shows that people might be receptive to learning about social problems and how others are affected by injustice, not through a formalized lesson plan, but rather through an opportunity encountered in a public space running counter to formal education (Sandlin et al., 2011, p.348), which in essence is public pedagogy.

Similarly, an online image and text posted by a street artist can also become a space for sharing and developing ideas, as seen in the following example. Feminist street artist Panmela Castro posted an image of herself in a revealing bikini while creating street art in a public venue. She posted the image along with a piece of text written by a feminist Brazilian writer that reflected on issues surrounding body image and acceptance, while making a point of

expressing the pressures women face by society to look a certain way in order to feel self-worth. The post had 530 likes, 45 comments and 98 shares. Many of the comments remarked on the street artist's body, but some were from people questioning why she would post such an image when they felt the comments being left on the post were objectifying her, not aligning with the feminist values she espouses.

An online conversation between several commenters developed on what it means to be feminine, the standards society uses to measure femininity, and how the definition of feminism is not static but dependent on many factors. Panmela Castro, the street artist, commented in the thread, but mostly it became a conversation between a collection of individuals who were discussing their thoughts on these important issues in an open forum that is still available for anyone to read, although this interaction happened several months ago. The hovering presence of the feminist street artist online was also detected in several other instances, where an image of something they had created would then lead to thought-provoking discussions with minimal intervention by the person who initiated the conversation. Although the presence of the street artist in the online conversations could be interpreted as that of an educator who has funneled[48] "students" to engage with ideas as they converse on a subject, it is the

[48] It is my opinion that feminist street artists will post a specific image of a piece or themselves creating street art online with the intention of starting a dialogue on a certain subject. An example of that can be seen in the Panmela Castro example mentioned in this chapter. Another instance of funneling audiences to a specific issue offline can be found in the wheatpaste Red Bandit created to bring attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, also mentioned earlier in Chapter 5.

knowledge that is acquired through the various viewpoints expressed that encourages learning in a collective sense. As this happens, the initial role of "educator" fades into the background and the group interactions is what becomes significant. What is also noteworthy about these posts is the spontaneity involved in these discussions, as the street artist would not be able to predict the interaction, if any, from posting an image of their work. This reinforces the idea of feminist street art being a form of feminist public pedagogy that is "conscientiously decentered and improvisational" (Sandlin et al., 2011, p.349), but yet is grappling with socio-cultural-political issues in spaces that are public.

Conclusion

In this chapter, findings were discussed relating to one of the themes formed from the data analysis: informal learning in public spaces. The findings indicate that feminist street art is providing opportunities for learning in public spaces that is not any less meaningful than the type of education that takes place in traditional schools. Using feminist street art as an educational tool seems to be a possibility not rooted in radicalness but rather practicality, for a number of reasons: street art is prolific, easy to access, and encourages dialogue within communities as collective experiences. Those community conversations are mostly happening without an agenda or plan in place, and therefore seem to qualify as informal educational opportunities, where people are acquiring "knowledges" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 27).

Further to this it seems that when a group of individuals chooses to engage with the street art, online or offline, non-hierarchical learning and sharing within a community is occurring. One way feminist street art achieves this is by erasing the traditionally well-defined roles of educator and student found in conventional education, where the “knowledges” (Ellsworth, 2005) certain individuals possess are deemed to be of special importance, thus creating hierarchies of knowledge within communities. As the concept of the public intellectual was explored during the discussion on public pedagogy in Chapter 2, the similarities to the notion of hegemony were striking. One insidious aspect of hegemony sees a group of individuals with less power accepting and absorbing the ways of a dominant group without much resistance, as the dominant values are typically disguised as government legislation, popular culture, and education, for example (Gramsci, 1971). In many cases this domination happens with a public intellectual rising to “guide” others and show them the “right” way with full support of those in power, as “the oppressors do not favor promoting the community as a whole, but rather selected leaders” (Freire, 1999, p. 143).

In contrast, there is community intellectualism, where knowledge is created collectively and shared equitably amongst individuals. This concept, examined in Chapter 2, aligns with the work the feminist street artists are producing in the public realm. The informal learning happening in public spaces through feminist street art seems to bring communities together based on the principle that everyone can contribute to the conversation, as different ways of

knowing, regardless of their origins, are welcome.

Collective knowledge building and sharing is not always easy to engage in and sustain. Oppressive forces recognize the power of community actions, especially those conceived and implemented by feminists, and will attempt to divide marginalized groups along different lines such as race, gender, social class and religion, to suppress collaborative efforts that may challenge their dominance (Freire, 1999). This is currently being seen with the introduction of bills in different American states to prevent transgender people access to public washrooms. To receive support for the bill, those in favour of it have been stating that women are at risk of being attacked by transgender individuals in washrooms (Steinmetz, 2016), thus inciting fear as a way to divide two groups of people and pit them against each other. Another method used frequently to prevent women from collaborating and contributing to public spaces, whether it is online or offline, is to make those places uncomfortable and even unsafe for them to be in (Mantilla, 2013).

Despite these obstacles, feminist street artists are fighting against various forms of oppression and exclusion as they take up public space with their works and their actions. At odds with my findings, albeit at first glance, is the fact that three out of the 12 feminist street artists interviewed did not feel there was a connection between street art and educating people on social justice issues, even if informally. Karen, for example, felt the type of street art she creates does not lend itself to informal learning, while Soleila stated the work she produces

never has an educational goal in mind, which makes it difficult to classify as a learning opportunity. Gaia referred to her street art as “a nice little creative outlet.” These comments mirrored some of the posts found on the Facebook feeds of the 25 feminist street artists monitored, which sometimes showcased work that was meant to beautify rather than inform or make a statement. These interview answers and online posts led to a question about who is actually the intended audience for their street art. My presumption when starting this research project was that these particular street artists, whose work had been researched and aligned with feminist values, were creating it to inform others. Eight of the interviewees declared the work they produce are for themselves first and foremost, while the other four alluded to their audiences being a mix of themselves and others who do the same work they do, such as other female street artists and social justice activists. For example, Karen enthusiastically responded to this question by saying, “It’s first for me that I will go in the streets. It’s to liberate me of the conditions of this society and then to transmit this to those who want to receive it”. The artist Adore Subtract, mentioned earlier in the chapter, also wrote that the Indigenous language sticker project was meant for her.

Although all participants stated the importance of the general public engaging with their pieces, the main view expressed was that the street art they are creating begins with pleasing an audience of one: themselves. If the street art also draws in others, that is a wonderful benefit of their efforts, but not a prime

motivating factor. Before analyzing the data, my initial assumption was that when these feminist street artists were creating street art, their intended audience would principally be people who might encounter the work on the street or online. These presumptions are due to societal conditioning that takes it for granted that women will put the needs of others, usually their partners and children, first in most instances. Before and even during this research process, I assumed that most, if not all, feminist street artists create street art for others. Upon discovering that assumption was quite wrong, the argument that feminist street art has the potential to create public spaces of learning that are informal and not planned seemed to be strengthened. This can be seen in the way the artifacts the feminist street artists create are not being generated, in many cases, for the purpose to inform an intended audience. However, the results of engaging with a specific work, especially within a community, seem to point to knowledge being created and shared with others.

The strength of such an approach can be found in the new possibilities this type of informal learning can offer due to its democratizing accessibility, unexpectedness, and lack of structure. The last two, and perhaps even the first descriptor in the previous sentence, would not make sense in traditional education, but Luke (2010) reminds us “social agency in the world is about learning from and reacting to multiple information sources, cues and symbol systems” (p. 136). To assist in understanding these findings, I turned to my visual research diary and one entry from 2015 became clearer within the context of my

description of informal learning:

> S. A. (street art) - safe place to explore issues. No boundaries, non-linear storytelling…one person starts the story and another person can end it. There's something in that, isn't there? (Research Journal, July 29th, 2015)

Illich (1971) called for an "educational revolution" (p. 72) that involved making learning less regimented in favour of an unpredictable education where building on ideas with others in informal ways are cornerstones to creating knowledge. Similarly, Ellsworth (2005) urges experimentation in education while diverging from a "learning model that teachers use to set the terms in which already-known ideas, curriculums, or knowledges are put into relation" (p. 27).

However moving away from the traditional structures of formal education, both physically and psychologically, is not easy, but Ellsworth (2005) reminds us that educators must find the courage to do just that if education is to evolve into an inclusive system.

In the next chapter, the connections between feminist street art and communities will continue to be explored as I turn the focus on the actions associated with feminist street artists creating their pieces.

Chapter 6

Findings: Feminist Literacy Practices

In chapter 5 I looked at the findings for one of the two themes that emerged from my data analysis, informal learning in public spaces, in an attempt to understand how feminist street art might be considered learning that is both informal and unstructured. In doing so, I positioned street art created by feminist street artists as artifacts that support the notion of learning happening outside of traditional educational systems.

The second question I have been exploring in this research project is seeking to understand how feminist street art might be considered a feminist literacy practice. To situate my question in the academic scholarship on literacies, I reviewed literature on multiliteracies, multimodal literacies and critical visual literacy in Chapter 3. When looking at the data in my second theme, feminist literacy practices, a pattern emerged. Many of the coded segments in that category were not reflective of traditional reading and writing skills, but were rather aligned with the principles of multimodal literacies. Furthermore, within those multimodal ways of communication, I found that the actions associated with the production of street art by the feminist street artists reinforced the relevancy of that theme.

While framing the act of creating street art through a literacy lens in this research project, I have struggled with my own definitions as I searched for

academic examples that support action as a literacy practice. I read and re-read Gee, Street, Rowsell, and Barton and Hamilton to situate my research within academia. These scholars define literacy and the practices surrounding literacy as moving beyond reading and writing to include different meaning-making activities that are tied to constructed social events. These viewpoints include events such as conversation and gesture, but I still wanted to see arguments for or against aligning actions, on their own, as a literacy practice. As I searched for examples of feminist literacy practices I discovered they were tied to traditional reading and writing, not always reflecting the realities of those who are not privileged economically, socially or by virtue of their gender. This is problematic as “this experience of going through life and not finding your experiences represented” (Gabor-Katz and Horseman, 1988, p.120) may further disenfranchise those who already feel sidelined by society.

Literacy practices have been researched from feminist perspectives, just as public pedagogy has been explored through a feminist lens, but finding instances of literacy practices being identified as feminist were rare. This is not because they do not exist, but rather, similarly to feminist public pedagogy, feminist literacy practices have been re-branded to fit in with an academic narrative that is more male-oriented.

With this realization, the idea of exploring how the actual actions of the feminist street artists when creating their work in public might represent a feminist literacy practice was not out of line with this research. It became

apparent that the silencing of women in public spaces, including academia, seems to trigger the erasure of the word feminist and/or feminism from written and oral language. As a result, I concluded it was not the act of creating street art in public that might be considered a literacy practice, but rather the act of a woman creating street art in public that transformed the event into a feminist literacy practice. In other words, if a man is creating street art I would not consider the actual act of creating it a feminist literacy practice but rather only a literacy practice as his life experiences are very different from a woman's experiences. On the other hand, it could be argued that the process of creating street art in public by women is "just a literacy practice," but it is not just a literacy practice practiced by anyone. They are feminist literacy practices, achieved by those who identify as women and, who through their various acts of creating street art in public are taking up space and demonstrating they are not going to shrink into the background of the public sphere, thereby achieving the process of unerasure.

My findings for this theme reveal that these feminist literacy practices seem to inspire women to contribute to conversations that matter to them, both on a local and global level. The act of creating and communicating, while defying society's rules, are actions that impart a variety of lessons that foster community conversations that could lead to transformational changes in society. Therefore I feel comfortable in defining feminist literacy practices as the production and actions associated with the production of feminist meaning making, undertaken

by either an individual or a group.

The question this definition brings about is: how significant is it for an individual to see something happen versus just reading about it or hearing about it? If I bring in my own example here as evidence, I can say it is very important. After discovering short online videos that teach viewers how to create meals (such as the Tasty videos offered through the online website Buzzfeed), I found that my cooking skills improved greatly, although I had not taken any steps, such as taking formal classes, to become better at making meals. Being a visual learner, I am rationalizing that my enhanced skills in the kitchen come from seeing a meal being prepared step-by-step, versus my usual way of cooking: reading a recipe and having one image of the finished product to guide me through the process. But perhaps there is something else I should consider: being inspired by what I see is helping me as I actually see each step as a separate action scaffolding toward a final goal. As I looked at images of feminist street artists working on their projects, I realized how many of these pictures were not of the completed piece, but of the different stages demonstrating the diverse actions that led to the final creation. In many cases the final piece would be shown without the street artist in the frame; however, the build-up to the completed work would be illustrated by several images of the street artist creating it in a public space.

In the next section of this chapter I will discuss examples I have researched that support the idea that the actions undertaken by feminist street

artists, when producing feminist street art, can be regarded a literacy practice that encourages feminist ways of meaning making and participation in public spaces.

Feminist Street Artists' Actions as Literacy

When I visited Montreal in August 2015, I stopped at Rue Masson to watch Jessica Sabogal and Elizabeth Blancas, two female artists, paint a wall as part of the Decolonizing Street Art event mentioned in Chapter 5. The 30-foot mural depicts a lesbian couple affectionately looking at each other with the following words in French painted on the same wall, "Our experience will no longer be silenced. We require no explanations, apologies or approvals" (Figure 20).

Individuals walking or driving by would have seen Sabogal and Blancas over a period of five days using a lift truck to create the mural on a massive wall while dealing with challenging weather as the temperatures soared that week, while it also rained intermittently, very hard at times. Aside from the powerful communication that was etched permanently on the wall, the artists were also projecting an important message of resistance to traditional expectations on the roles women can have in public, by simply taking up space as they worked on the mural day after day until it was completed.

I reflected in my visual research diary on the subversive, yet educational nature of such actions:

We are learning without knowing that we are learning about social injustice but that things can change when people act and other people watch what they are doing. (Research Journal, August 21, 2015)

Figure 20. Jessical Sabogal and Elizabeth Blancas work on a mural in Montreal. Credit: A.A.Rodrigues, 2015.

Their actions can be interpreted as a feminist literacy practice and several of the feminist street artists interviewed echoed this interpretation of feminist street art as well. Carlie felt that by practicing street art women are confronting head-on the traditional narrative dictated by society, that prescribes what women should or should not do outside the confines of their homes. Zoe stated that street art could be “a positive inspiration for action”, as women had told her that the act of seeing her creating public street art had encouraged them to reclaim space on the street to transmit their own messages. Another street artist interviewed, Coco, felt that when women were seen as the creators of street art and graffiti they might also change the minds of men who feel women should not depart from the traditional roles forced on females through established social norms. An interesting discussion point ensued when the street artist mentioned how the actions of female street artists in public could force those who adhere to patriarchal values to re-assess their positions.

An example of how the public actions of a female street artist can change the traditional viewpoints of a man can be seen in a video documentary[49] that showcases the work of Bastardilla, a Colombian street artist whose street art focuses on feminist themes. In this short documentary, Bastardilla is seen working on several projects in different public areas. Speaking in Spanish and with English subtitles, we learn about Bastardilla’s motivation to create work on the street, as she explains the feminist values entrenched in her creations, and

[49] The documentary can be seen at this link: http://www.fatcap.com/article/832.html

how she uses the images of women in her street art to provoke a conversation on women's rights.

As her narration continues in the documentary, the video cuts to shots of her creating street art on a wall tucked away in a corner off a busy street. Bastardilla is seen working alone and during that time she is even stopped by the police and watched by many passersby as the day progresses. It eventually grows dark but Bastardilla continues working into the night as the street empties of pedestrians and even traffic. As the documentary continues to show the street artist working on her project at night, the viewer sees a man walking along the street and suddenly spotting her working in a corner. He walks past her but then the camera shows a shot of him watching her from a distance, as he leans on a pole, for what seems to be an extended period of time. The video ends with various shots of Bastardilla finishing her piece and finally packing up her supplies while it is still dark. The man is nowhere to be seen.

This interaction, or perhaps best described as a lack of interaction, between the female artist and an unknown male on a quiet street in the middle of the night, sends a powerful message to both men and women on feminism. While women are taught to be fearful of being out alone at night as they run the risk of having unknown males accost them verbally or physically, Bastardilla continued her work until it was finished. In most circumstances, a woman who would find herself alone on a dark street, void of others except for an unknown male who is watching her, would make the decision to stop what she is doing and

leave. In fact, women are taught from an early age that when a man or a group of men are harassing you, you deal with it by removing yourself from the situation. Bastardilla did not do that and through her actions, and the completed work that can be seen by the public in daylight, she has made a powerful statement on who has the right to communicate on the street with the public[50].

The feminist street artists interviewed noted how claiming space on the street is always a hard-fought challenge for a woman, but yet such an important one to take on. Carlie said:

> The first time that I tried creating in the street, I thought I would die of fright. It was a morning in 2011, around 6:00, down where I live. I decided to hang my creations at a blooming tree. It required a half an hour of bravery, of intense fear, and uncontrollable bursts. I went to the end but I said to myself that urban art wasn't for me. I had to understand the prison that I was trapped in, to name all the prohibitions keeping me back like, "girls should not be outside ", "you'll get raped", "you'll get mugged", "you are who you are and you dare take your place?". "You exist and you dare to show it?" and be able to get over it all. Another year later, it was good and I was ready. I like equally the idea of showing that the streets is (sic) also our territory that we can question, create, and play, us as women, and not just pass by.

[50] It can be argued that Bastardilla continued to work on her piece because a cameraperson was there as well. Without speaking to the street artist, it's impossible to know however the video shows her continuing to work despite being watched by a man and so those actions are what other women (and also men) who watch the video see.

Those actions that defy patriarchy and all that feeds gender inequality takes on even more significance when one realizes how the women themselves have grappled with ideas of safety, legality and breaking out of those well-defined roles established by society for females. Having the images of women doing that online certainly allows for those actions of meaning making that support feminist values to reach an even wider audience.

The street artists whose Facebook pages were monitored seem to understand the power behind images that show them creating work on the street, as most of the artists uploaded pictures that showed them working under the attentive gaze of men, women and children. Zoe, one of the feminist street artists interviewed, sees the importance of using online spaces, such as Facebook, to assist feminist street artists in creating a greater presence in their communities. She said:

> As for the activist community, I think that there are not enough strong female voices around me. And having a social media following feels like I'm counter-balancing all the Facebook manarchists a little, and encouraging other women to take up space.

Carlie agreed with that statement by expressing the importance of female street artists being watched actually creating the art in order to be seen outside of the very systems that wish to silence and erase them. The type of resistance that is encouraged by street art is inspirational and Soleila, a feminist street artist I interviewed, feels it is a way for women to “dream big and reject the restricted

roles and definitions offered to them by advertising and culture".

Chemaly (2013) notes, "the way bodies take up space are territorial displays" (para. 7), and seeing a woman take up space and engaging in actions in a public area where they are not typically expected has an effect on both females and males. Feminist street artist Carol agreed that being a street artist comes with great responsibility due to the power attached to being seen creating work in public. She recounted how working with elderly women on a street art project in a European city one year had demonstrated to her the power of public art:

> I'm sure they were very proud and happy to take part in what became an important moment of their life. They felt needed and important and beautiful. I could see the tears in their eyes. It was something that made them respectful in the eyes of their community.

Giroux (2004) writes that "profound transformations have taken place in the public space" (as cited in Hickey, 2010, p. 498). I reflected on Giroux's statement on the power of actions that happen in public spaces while reading an article on how the words written by a teenager on a wall started the 2011 revolution that led to the Syrian conflict (MacKinnon, 2016). Naief Abazid, who was 14-years-old at the time, spray-painted the words, "It's your turn, Dr. Bashar al-Assad" on a school wall.

The statement would have been understood by anyone following politics in the Middle East as it came on the heels of the Arab Spring revolutions in Egypt

and Tunisia. The graffiti was suggesting that the current government in Syria, run by dictator Bashar al-Assad[51], would be ending as well (MacKinnon, 2016). Abazid and some of his friends, ranging in ages 10 to 15, were arrested and tortured by government forces. Due to the "Assad regime's violent reaction" (Mackinnon, 2016, para. 7) to those words painted on a public wall, protests ensued and continued despite the regime's attempts to stop them. These events eventually culminated in the Syrian conflict (MacKinnon, 2016).

It is obvious that the Assad regime understood how incendiary words such as those left on a public wall could be. Feminist street artists, such as Jude, echo that sentiment. Jude believes that "when you do something in public, it is very powerful and that's why there are laws in place to control it." When an act of dissidence is performed in public by a person or a group who do not have a great deal of power, that becomes an influential act, as noted by feminist street artists who view their work to reclaim public space as vital in marginalized communities. In an online article, Vexta, a feminist street artist, explained the importance of not only taking back these spaces from corporations and government entities, but of ensuring that the members of a community understand "they are what makes a city" (Shafter, 2016, para. 17).

The actions of the female street artists seen online also seem to be a source of inspiration to women. One comment, which seems to be from a

[51] Bashar al-Assad has been the president of Syria since 2000 and is still in power at this time.

woman, based on the name and the profile picture, was left on a post featuring an image of feminist street artist Panmela Castro working on a mural. It stated:

> You're incredible! Your work empowers all women. (Julia Abreu, 2016, translated from Portuguese)

A comment left on another post showing the same street artist in a series of images working on a different piece (also seemingly from a female - again based on the name and the profile picture) says:

> You kick ass Panmela! When I grow up I want to be just like you! (Mayara Albuquerque, 2016, translated from Portuguese).

A documentary[52] on Shamsia Hassani, a female street artist from Afghanistan, inspired several comments, seemingly from women, who were affected by seeing her work in the video. I've pulled two comments as examples:

> Really i am in love with your art!! And with woman's power and how u are shining with your work!!!prouuuuuuud!!!!!!♡♡♡ (Nadia AlHariri, 2016).

> Wow <3. Such a soulful powerful art!! May you be blessed and inspire many, amin! (Rachel De Schrijver, 2016).

Some of the female street artists interviewed also felt creating street art in public areas was modeling a positive behaviour that might provide a platform for those who typically are rendered voiceless by society. Matti, one of the street

[52] The documentary can be seen at this link: https://youtu.be/FsJc8li48Dc

artists interviewed, felt the production of street art is an effective way to help women not only learn about the challenges facing the communities they live in, but also to encourage them to look at ways to fix the problems. She said, “I think it can communicate in a way to educate, inform or influence action within the community.”

I reflected on the importance of amplifying community concerns and finding support in messages, even anonymously, as I happened upon a thought-provoking form of communication in a back alley off Boulevard St-Laurent, in Montreal during the summer of 2015. Chalked on the ground were several messages that appeared to be meant for someone specific, but could also resonate with a passerby, such as myself. I found four along the same stretch, each saying something different but following a theme of support. Two of the messages can be seen in Figures 21 and 22.

Figure 21. Chalk message in back alley, off Boulevard St-Laurent, in Montreal.

Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2015.

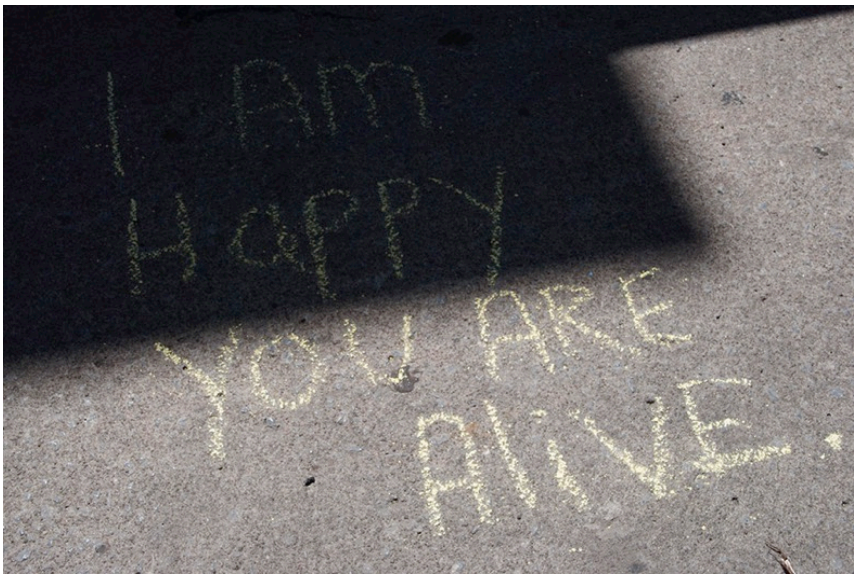

Figure 22. Chalk message in back alley, off of Boulevard St-Laurent, in

Montreal. Credit: A. A. Rodrigues, 2015.

The other two messages read: “It is going to be ok” and “I am proud of you”. As all four were found in the same area and facing the same direction, a row of businesses with what seemed to be apartments on the second floor, I deduced that they were connected. I performed an Internet search on the area where I found the chalk messages to see if I could relate it back to something that had happened, but my investigation did not reveal a concrete link. The true purpose of those messages may never be known, and although creating them may seem an inconsequential deed, the act of creating them would have spoken volumes to the person intended to read them and others in the community who may have possibly known their purpose.

Of Artifacts and Actions: Toward a Feminist Literacy Praxis

Findings related to the theme feminist literacy practices were looked at within the framework of the definition I have adopted to describe a feminist literacy practice: the production of feminist meaning making and its associated actions by an individual or group of individuals.

This chapter focused on the processes feminist street artists engage in when creating street art, because it is important to not only attempt to grasp the impact those undertakings have on individuals, but also to explore how the actual act of creating street art in the public eye might provide an entry point for females to participate in conversations that affect them, both online and offline. My research seems to indicate that such public actions by feminist street artists are

impactful, as seeing females producing feminist street art emboldens women to take up space in public areas and contribute to community conversations. That multimodal dialogue, as seen with the examples provided in both chapters, can be at times agentive, contemplative, inspirational or all of the above. Whether the feminist street art was analyzed as an end-product or through the processes associated with creating, there seem to be synergies between both that I bring into focus in the remainder of this chapter, as I bridge artifact and action while engaging with the concept of praxis.

Freire (1999) defined praxis as “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (p.126) or in other words, individuals engaging in informed action that is transformative in nature. hooks (1984) brings in a feminist viewpoint when stating that feminism cannot be effective without praxis. She believes that if the objective is to end sexist oppression, theorizing and reflecting without action will not lead to change, because “feminism is neither a lifestyle nor a ready-made identity or role one can step into” (p.26).

The street art examined in this chapter, by Jessica Sabogal and Elizabeth Blancas (Figure 20), serves as an example of feminist literacy praxis. The content contained in the 30-foot mural, comprised of image and text, becomes a free and open learning opportunity to anyone who walks or drives by the area, on a variety of socio-political issues. In addition, the actions involved in the effort to complete the project, which were very public, showcased the two feminist street artists defying societal expectations in a number of ways. Those actions are still

available to see online through images that were posted while the artists worked, including a Facebook album[53] with over 20 photos capturing the stages needed to complete the mural from start to finish. There is a reflective dimension to this street art aside from the reflections that the artists who created the work would have engaged in. When encountering the women working on the piece, I acknowledged my thoughts in my visual research diary. Other individuals who engaged with the project in person or online, would have possibly reflected on what they were seeing as well. I believe that when the division between artifact and action is disregarded what emerges is a blended educational effort with the ability of "transforming the world – of giving it meaning" (Freire, 1985, p.155) in the form of literacy.

When looking back at the examples of feminist street art I have provided in both Chapters 5 and 6, I believe many of them can be considered feminist literacy praxis once the product and the production are considered as a single expression. Each final artifact is communicating a message that originated from an idea that was put into action by a feminist street artist. Although the artifact and action is not always intended to be transformational in nature, it does accomplish that it many instances, not only for the street artist but also for the audience who sees this form of pop-up pedagogy in public spaces.

[53] The Facebook album showing the work on the mural from start to finish can be seen at this link: http://bit.ly/2B859kA

Chapter 7

Concluding Thoughts

> I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance - as location of radical openness and possibility. This site of resistance is continually formed in that segregated culture of opposition that is our critical response to domination. We come to this space through suffering and pain, through struggle. We know struggle to be that which pleasures, delights, and fulfills desire. We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space, which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world. (hooks, 1990, p. 209)

This research study has explored the possibility that street art, created by feminist artists, can produce pop ups of informal, public spaces of learning, on the street and online. While investigating street art's potential as a type of informal education, an attempt was made to understand how feminist street art might be regarded as a feminist literacy practice, one that provides an alternative and non-traditional point of entry for women to contribute to the shaping of community and global conversations, both online and offline. This participation can, in turn, lead to transformative actions by the women in their communities.

My findings show that feminist street art as artifact can be considered a form of feminist public pedagogy that is facilitating learning about social justice issues outside of traditional educational systems. My research also indicated that a feminist literacy practice can be considered to be not only the production of feminist meaning making but also all of the actions associated with the production of such artifacts. Finally, when feminist street art as product (artifact) and process (action) are regarded together, reflective practices and action unite into a feminist act that can ultimately have a transformative effect.

The analysis of data, which includes interviews, images that were taken over the past five years, observations written in a researcher's diary, Facebook posts and comments, and online articles and documentaries, revealed the presence of two dominant themes: informal learning in public spaces and feminist literacy practices. Although the findings were organized along these two themes, an overarching question was hovering just above this research: what sort of impact does institutionalized education have on learners who do not fit into its rigid systems of learning and teaching? Those who do not do well in that type of setting will not enjoy learning, as they spend years in an educational system that does not meet their needs nor inspires them to learn. Another scenario finds those who do not fit the mold leaving the system to learn outside of traditional schooling; however, the knowledge acquired thereby may not be valued since it is not attached to a credential. As well, knowledge creation outside of sanctioned and structured organizations is positioned differently from

traditional education, especially in western societies. It can be seen as a threat to the status quo, as it cannot be controlled, regulated or tested and therefore, in many cases, is rejected as unauthentic learning.

Earlier in this dissertation, I discussed the reason this research was important from an academic perspective. At that point, I wrote that I felt this investigation was significant, as I have found only one article that focused on exploring the potential pedagogical value of feminist street art. Furthermore, there is no research that I could locate that has investigated the potential of street art to create informal, public spaces of learning both online and offline. There are, however, differences between something that is considered important in academia and something that matters outside of it, and so I have returned to the question of why this research matters quite a few times in the past months. It was by writing thoughts down in my visual research diary, reading them over time and reflecting on the sentences that I realized how much this research matters: it becomes a form of resistance by offering a counter-narrative to normative educational systems.

For example, I wrote on June 25th 2016, in my diary, “Does it matter if people learn something this way????” “This way” is referring to seeing street art, and also seeing it being created by female street artists. A few days later I wrote, “Because it makes learning more accessible, democratic, easy, p… I think that matters.” Another note without a date but also written a few days later states, “Remember – non-discriminatory bec. anyone can make meaning.”

This unstructured way of working through thoughts by writing them out as they occur led me to recall what bell hooks (2014) said during a talk at a university. hooks had noted that many cultural productions, such as movies, advertisements and music, attack feminist values persistently; therefore, seeing works that represent the opposite of those viewpoints creates a rich space for the development of critical consciousness, which can then lead to dialogue, knowledge-making, and changes to the oppression occurring in an unjust society (hooks, 2014).

This research project may provide an opening for people to consider street art created by feminist street artists as something other than vandalism, as one form of the counter-hegemonic expressions that are working toward erasing social inequality and providing a voice to those who are rendered invisible in society, due to race, sexual orientation, economic status, gender, mental illness or even age.

Around the world the production of feminist street art by female street artists is making societal changes, as seen in the following example found in New Delhi, India. Women in that city are creating street art in neighbourhoods in an effort to make public spaces more inclusive to groups of people, such as females, who have been sidelined from spending time in these areas due to cultural norms (Anand, 2017). Street art's power can be found in the significance

embedded in Blue Bra graffiti[54], found on many walls in Egypt, a powerful symbol of resistance to government and military oppression, and in the anti-Trump street art that has sprung all around the world in protest of the current president of the United States of America.

Street art is helping smash stereotypes associated with age through the artistic endeavours of Lata 65, a non-profit organization in Portugal that teaches senior citizens how to create street art through workshops run by street and graffiti artists. The participants, who are women over the age of 60, have not only beautified the cities they live in with their creations, but have also subverted the trope many times associated with unsanctioned public art: those who create street art are criminals (Buffenstein, 2015). Teaming street artists who are consigned to the margins of society with elders, who are also often cast to the sidelines due to ageism, provides an immense opportunity for learning about each group's lives and the challenges they face. Through this type of collaboration and mutual understanding, solutions to problems are discussed and knowledge is created which can lead to actions that work to change social inequities. These elders' counter-normative actions become educational lessons that can be considered informal learning that is also transformational. Their actions not only change them and those around them, but also affect those who

[54] In 2011 video was recorded of a woman being beaten by several members of the military force known as Supreme Council of Armed Forces during a protest in Cairo, Egypt. The woman's abaya was ripped during the attack revealing her blue bra, which then became a visual symbol of resistance against oppression around the world (Higgins, 2011).

are reading the stories of their efforts online, or watching the videos that have been created to showcase Lata 65's activities.

Comparing the Data

This research project looked at data generated from interviews with feminist street artists, as well as online data collected from public Facebook pages that belong to feminist street artists. Although the data came from two very different sources, both data sets contributed equally to this dissertation. The interviews and the data collected online were matched in importance as each data set complemented the other when it came to examining the findings. That can be seen for example when the wheatpaste What about our girls was discussed in Chapter 5. The information found online provided the background needed on that piece of feminist street art encountered on the street. By way of another example, topics that were mentioned in an interview were confirmed by data collected online, such as when several of the interviewed street artists explained the importance of being seen creating work in public spaces. Those comments were backed up by several images that were posted online of feminist street artists creating street art. In conclusion, though this research project could certainly have been completed using just one data set (either interviews or online data), it is the integration of both sources of information that allows my findings to provide a more complete exploration of the questions this project was examining.

Limitations

As I reflect on my findings and the limitations of this research project, I keep in mind Hall's (1997) words:

> It is worth emphasizing that there is no single or 'correct' answer to the question, 'What does this image mean?' or "What is this ad saying?' Since there is no law which can guarantee that things will have 'one, true meaning', or that meanings won't change over time, work in this area is bound to be interpretative. (p. 9).

Despite the excitement of discovering, photographing and decoding street art with social justice themes, it must be remembered that my interpretation of the pieces reflects my understandings of social justice framed through my own life experiences. Although some of the work's intentions are very clear, an immense amount is open to interpretative analysis, and as Hall (1997) reminds us, various viewpoints will muddle the process. Consequently, it must be recognized that the narrative power of street art is also a drawback, as it becomes "a debate between, not who is 'right' and who is 'wrong', but between equally plausible, though sometimes competing and contested, meanings and interpretations" (Hall, 1997, p. 9). Reasonable, likely and possible are words that do not align with educational outcomes and therefore using street art as a possible tool in education becomes difficult.

The issues of legality surrounding street art was also a limitation when doing this research, as the people creating this art form must, in many cases,

keep their identities secret. For example, three of the female street artists who participated in my research project had chosen to be interviewed via Skype, but then changed their minds and decided they would only respond to questions via email. Two of the street artists were available to be interviewed in person, but not being able to connect with all of the female street artists in face-to-face conversations did not allow for a deeper understanding of the work they do.

Another limitation was my lack of observations of community interactions with street art. Although I had imagined it might be difficult to observe members of a community interacting with street art, it became quickly apparent that I might spend many days "watching" a spot and not see any interactions. Having the opportunity to see reactions to street art on Facebook was very helpful, though it was not an ideal replacement for "real life" observations. To deal with that limitation in the future, it is suggested that a researcher spend a few weeks living in the area where the street art is located, which will allow for more access to the street art throughout the day, hopefully resulting in more observations of community interactions.

Implications and Further Research

Recently, when speaking about my research as part of a lecture series at a library, a member of the audience asked me the following using an incredulous tone, "A Ph.D. in street art?" I smiled and answered, as I have had much practice in the past five years responding to the same question or variations of it, such as:

“How can something illegal be educational?” Or “What can we learn from scribbles on a wall?” These questions, I must say, used to frustrate me as I wondered why those individuals were not seeing the potential that I see in street art, nor why were they not excited by the possibilities offered by this art form. I am not so exasperated now as I have come to understand that the reason may lie in how well trained we are to accept only traditional standards of education, and anything pushing outside of those well-defined boxes gets cut back and is not encouraged to grow. I must admit it took me some time to commit to the idea of investigating street art’s potential to educate, albeit informally, as it is not a natural fit with pedagogy for a number reasons, including its random and transient nature. More problematic is the fact that creating unsanctioned street art is a criminal activity in Canada, as it is in other parts of the world, becomes an issue when wanting to frame it as pedagogical. However, once those traditional notions of education were re-framed, I began to see latencies that seem to have the potential to develop new models of education outside of traditional institutions while experimenting with different forms of community-based knowledge creation.

Broadening the characteristics of what might be considered education is a script in which I see street art playing a part. Feminist street art could be regarded as an informal learning opportunity, specifically for women, since this art form seems to provide an opening to critical thinking outside of syllabi, schedules, and the usual four walls found in traditional education. It would seem

these opportunities could be considered pop-up pedagogy due to the unpredictable, ephemeral nature of street art. Despite its lack of structure, it can still be very powerful once unleashed in a public setting, by being accessible, multimodal and democratic. Street art seems to have the potential to disrupt the institutionalized pedagogical arc of continuity, competition and credentials by allowing those with informal educational experiences to participate in the creation and mobilization of knowledge, not only in their own communities, but also across the world. For these reasons, this research seems to demonstrate connections between feminist street art, informal education opportunities and alternative literacies.

In Chapter 6 I discussed my findings pertaining to the second dominant theme that I identified in my analysis: feminist literacy practices. Beyond the educational stories the feminist street artists share through the street art they have created, it seems their actions, spirited and tenacious, can be framed as pedagogical as well. A message of empowerment and resistance seems to be found in the act of public creating street art, and those actions seem to inspire other women and girls to take up space and participate in local and global conversations that affect their lives, as seen in some of the examples discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Feminist street artists are teaching through their work that marginalization does not equal failure; nor does it prevent those forced to the sidelines of society from participating in community discourse, or contributing to the public sphere.

That is something communicated, not only in the content produced by these women, but also through their collective actions, which are messages those relegated to the fringes of society often do not hear. Unfortunately, when people find themselves increasingly sidelined from the public sphere in their own communities, added disengagement occurs, further eroding a sense of belonging. Consequently, the exclusion from mainstream society can discourage people from taking on agentive roles and participating in community discourse (Brown & Hannis, 2008).

The research in this project seems to show that the artifacts created by feminist street artists, and the acts associated with their creation, are a form of informal education, whose strength and transformative abilities lie in the power of women and those who identify as women mobilizing to effect change in the communities they belong to.

It must be acknowledged that the various communities, online and offline, lose collectively when those privileged with alternative ways of knowing are silenced for the simple reason that contemporary society has yet to redefine what is considered valuable knowledge. Creating those places for learning that are outside of institutionalized pedagogy, spaces where individuals who do not fit into the traditional educational system can flourish, should be one of our goals in becoming an equitable society.

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Tatyana Fazlalizadeh. (2016, May 26). Sakia, Sakia, Sakia, Sakia" is a mural I completed earlier this week in Newark, NJ. #SakiaGunn was a teenage girl who stabbed by a man after her and her friends refused him on the street. She was 15, black, a girl, and gay. This month marks the dates of her death (May 11) and birth (today, May 26). It felt really appropriate and important to paint her portrait. However, I was nervous because I had trouble getting in touch with her family to get permission before starting

the mural. But a few days into it, through social media, we found each other and there was nothing but love. This mural is a part of a mural project called #GatewaystoNewark to spans over a mile on McCarter Hwy and features dozens of amazing artists. Because the murals are off of a highway, we had to work overnight for only a week. 9PM - 4AM everyday (sic). I'm not from Newark. I didn't know Sakia personally. But she was a young black queer girl and deserves to be seen and her story heard. While painting, many people drove by a yelled out her name. A few people got out of there (sic) cars to tell me they knew her. This is the stuff that public art is good for. #sayhername. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from http://facebook.com.

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Appendix:

Interview Questions

What is your educational background?

How long have you been creating street art?

What type(s) of street art do you practice?

How did you begin creating street art?

Are you part of an art collective?

Why do you create street art and who is it for?

What are the difficulties that you have encountered when creating street art?

In what ways do you think the street art you create is impacting the women in the communities you are creating it in?

In what ways do you think the act of creating street art as a woman impacts the women in the communities you are creating it in?

Do you think street art can be educational for those who might have difficulties with literacy?

Do you think street art can educate women on issues affecting them and the communities they live in?

Do you think some street art could be regarded as a feminist literacy practice?

Are there any examples that you have of women who live in the communities where you have created street art might have learned something from your works?

If there's anything else you would like to add on this topic, please feel free to add your comments here.