Youth as/in Crisis

Young People, Public Policy, and the Politics of Learning

Sara Carpenter and
Shahrzad Mojab (Eds.)

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Edited by

Sara Carpenter
University of Alberta, Canada

and

Shahrzad Mojab
University of Toronto, Canada

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SARA CARPENTER AND SHAHRZAD MOJAB

1. YOUTH, POLICY, AND RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Post 9/11, our research, like many of our colleagues, has turned towards the complex social phenomena that are related to the global expansion of capitalism and imperialist interventions around the world. Beginning with projects looking at the relationships between so-called "radicalization" and liberal democracy, we have explored questions of citizenship, migration, national security, post-war reconstruction, democracy promotion, and neoliberal social policy. Increasingly, the threads of these activities began to illuminate changing social conditions around young adults. The financial crisis of 2008 and the resulting escalation of youth unemployment, austerity measures, and the emergence of social movements has increasingly directed our attention to the forms of social, political, and material crises facing youth. Our heads were also turned by the students in our classrooms, many of whom live in conditions of economic precarity and are highly vulnerable to forms of cultural and state violence. From our students, we heard demands to address the conditions of their lives, both with activism and scholarship, but it also became clear that existing explanations of the relations between youth, capitalism, and the state were insufficient.

We turned our attention to how youth, understood to categorize individuals from the age of adolescence through age 30, are uniquely positioned within the cultural, economic, and policy landscapes of political, material, and social insecurity. From the perspective of public policy, young adults are a population who require educational institutions and social services to organize their social, political, and economic participation in society. Securitization policy targets young people as the "threat" against which notions of security are constructed (Giroux, 2003, 2009). For example, questions of national concern across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom include: staggering statistics on youth unemployment and underemployment; youth participation in informal/illegal economic activities and violence such as gang affiliation and street drug trafficking; the susceptibility of youth to radical and fundamentalist worldviews; and the mode and operation of their political expression (Hagedorn, 2008; Kennelly, 2011; Tilton, 2010; Venkatesh & Kassimir, 2007). Paradoxically, social policy also seeks to construct young people as particular subjects such as flexible knowledgeable workers and virtuous and engaged moral citizens (Kwon, 2013; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015; Tilton, 2010).

Research suggests that there is a mutually reproductive relationship between the erosion of social services at the community level, transformations in education, and

the shift from a professional approach to youth that advances notions of human development and social integration to one based in competitive individualism, criminalization, and control (Giroux, 2003, 2009; Saltman & Gabbard, 2010; Vanketesh & Kassimir, 2007; Wacquant, 2009). Within this shift, several noticeable trends in the lives of youth emerge: social problems stemming from the insecurity of youth, such as poverty and youth deviance, become framed as criminal problems; processes of policing overshadow and marginalize the social service mission of public institutions and hasten the decline in the rehabilitative ideal in relation to youth; there are systemic increases in racial profiling within public institutions serving historically marginalized populations such as Aboriginal and immigrant communities; differentiated raced, classed, gendered effects can be observed, such as an increased emphasis on the behaviour of boys, obscuring questions about sexualized violence; and the construction of a school-to-prison pipeline (Giroux, 2003, 2009; Kupchik, 2010; Rios, 2011; Saltman & Gabbard, 2010; Tilton, 2010).

The age group "youth" has acquired a prominent place in global and national policies. This population has been recognized as "precarious" vis-a-vis a wide variety of social and economic institutions, particularly in relation to interrelated crises of war, displacement, national and economic security, and transformations in global capitalism that affect their political, cultural, educational, economic, and social well-being. Youth is seen as an age group readily "radicalizable", technologically prepared to engage in "digital revolution," culturally ready to absorb and propagate ideas, and with an enormous appetite to consume a vast array of commodities. Youth is also considered *the* force to be recruited, organized, mobilized, trained, or skilled by the state.

In this book, we propose that the field of adult education can expand and renew its methodological, theoretical, and practical approaches by embracing the category of youth not as distinct from adults but as a social category that is being equally regulated and invoked by the same social, cultural, economic, and political forces. At the same time, we speak back to the field of youth studies, which often redirects our gaze to either social institutions/spaces (e.g. schools, civil society, social movements) or social processes (e.g. "transitions" or "radicalization") that are meant to stand in for, and represent, the experiences of youth. Youth studies is, perhaps, as guilty of fetishizing the concept of youth as adult educators are of fetishizing the concept of "adult". Either construction, we argue, fundamentally obscures the social relations that constitute human life. As Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) argue, "something happens when we start thinking of a minimum wage worker in his or her 20s as a youth or emerging adult, rather than, for example, a member of the working class" (p. 25).

THE POLITICS OF INCLUDING AND ELIDING YOUTH

We approach the study of youth from our standpoint as researchers and practitioners in adult education. Adult education, which has a long history of education work

outside of formal institutions, has an ill-defined and anxious relationship with the concept of youth. Our research on youth and young adults, which has already met with resistance from within the discipline of adult education, unsettles the well-understood and theorized age-based category of adults. Youth appears as necessarily, and perhaps *naturally*, outside the scope of a field that is designated as *adult* education. To make this argument requires notions of identity (youth and adult) as having innate characteristics, whether they be biological or psychological in origin. For example, relying upon the notion of adults as intrinsically self-directed and youth as inherently deficient in this regard, would exclude youth from adult education on the basis of their relationship to formalized schooling. Youth would be seen as lacking an agentic character and too extensively disciplined by the demands of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. From our perspective, such an age-based demarcation of youth/adult obfuscates our understanding of the population, which consists of a network of interlocking hierarchies of age, gender, race, class, language, ethnicity, and sexuality. One can argue, as Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) do, "…it is often unclear what the term "youth" marks out that is particularly distinctive or unique in society, that is not also shared by many adults" (p. 3). It is this inter-constitutive understanding of youth/adult as social groups that opens up the possibility and space for us to engage with their lives as they are being constructed and (re)produced through differentiated relations of power, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality.

By recognizing designations of youth and adult as social constructions we understand their parameters and meaning to change over time and in relation to political, cultural, and material conditions in a given historical moment. It is undeniable that in our historical moment the concept of youth has particular salience, both in terms of how policymakers, researchers, and corporate executives understand young people, but also crucially in terms of how youth understand themselves. We want to take seriously Sukarieh and Tannock's (2015) position that the concept of youth as a social category is particularly malleable as a political category, one that has often been deployed at historic moments in which reorganization of cultural norms is key to the reproduction of capitalist social relations. In this way, we suggest that one way to read the papers collected here is not simply as an attempt to capture the contours of youth, or the state's response to a "youth crisis", but to glimpse a set of preconditions that are important in terms of understanding the kind of historical change we currently live within. This is has long been an important aspect of the development of adult education scholarship.

Adult education, as an interdisciplinary field, is uniquely positioned to respond to these so-called "crises" and the tumultuous political and material environment that characterizes this historical moment. For example, the field of adult education has made significant contributions to the understanding of the relationship between learning/working and social categories of gender, race, class, sexuality, migration, lifelong learning, various sorts of "skills," and training (Cooper & Walters, 2009; Guo, 2013; Livingstone, Mirchandani, & Sawchuk, 2008; Mirchandani & Poster, 2016). Canadian adult educators undoubtedly have been at the forefront of theorizing and

documenting war, diaspora, learning, masculinity, militarization, transnationalism and globalization (Gorman & Mojab, 2008; Mojab, 2010; Taber, 2015). Further, adult education has profoundly expanded the body of knowledge concerning activism, social movement, civil society, popular education, and participatory democracy (Brookfield & Holst, 2011; Choudry, 2015; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Hall, Clover, Crowther, & Scandrett, 2012; Manicom & Walters, 2012; Mayo, 1999; Mayo & Thompson, 1995; Welton, 2005). This body of knowledge has helped us to explicate the connection between capitalist social relations, labour market dynamics, adult learning, resistance, social movement, and community organizing.

However, after decades of transnational and empirical research in social movements including women, anti-racism, anti-imperialism, anti-war, and student movements, we have noticed the circulation of some key conceptual categories such as "civil society", "movement learning", "training", "organizing", "prior learning", "experiential learning", "incidental", "lifeworld", and "community". As researchers working in areas concerning women, war, poverty, migration, feminist resistance, and democracy, we found these conceptualizations provided only partial descriptions of the conditions we observed in our research. We found, as Dorothy Smith has argued, that "the concepts that interpret the social are treated as if they were its underlying dynamic" (Smith, 2011, p. 22). To address this problem, we had to go beyond the boundaries of our disciplinary home and read deeply in feminist theory, cultural studies, political economy, history, migration studies, youth studies, geography, philosophy, anti-colonial studies, and then return to foundational texts of adult education, including Freire, Gramsci, Marx, and their seminal interpretation by Paula Allman.

For example, civil society was conceptualized as mostly confined to a "sphere", a "third space", autonomously functioning outside the realm of the state and market. This approach isolated civil society as a space of hope and as an alternative community structure where the hierarchies of social, racial, sexual, cultural, and gender relations could be overcome and the forces of the state and capitalist market economy could be challenged and altered through grassroots mobilization. The theorization of skill training and lifelong learning, as another instance, predominantly excluded the experience of racialized workers. Studying the experience of migrant female workers' access to jobs, we posited lifelong *learning* as lifelong *training* when it is applied to women of colour, and skill *training* as "deskilling" and "reskilling" or "skill *learning*" for the majority of migrant workers (Mojab, 2009). Another study of women, war, incarceration, and violence concluded that we need to expand our learning theories beyond the understanding of trauma and healing in order to be able to observe the resiliency of women, their enormous capacity to resist and survive, hence the notions of "survival" and "resistance" learning (Mojab & McDonald, 2008; Mojab & Osborne, 2012). This reworked observation encouraged us to make critical interventions in knowledge production in our field (Carpenter & Mojab, 2011, 2017). Recognizing the collective and transnational totality of our being, doing, and learning under the patriarchal, imperialist, and racist conditions of our

time, we proposed that our field should cross the network of geographical, social, historical, cultural, and political borders set up for us by the persistent liberal, white, male vision and imaginations.

This knowledge intervention, we suppose, can also guide us in our response to the current economic and social upheavals. The massive population displacement, dispossession, rise in poverty, joblessness, violence against women, racism and emboldened white supremacy, the threat of fascism, and the continuation and expansion of imperialist wars make extraordinary demands on education in general and adult education in particular. Today, global neoliberal capitalist relations have consolidated and congealed their structure and ideology to the extent that any forms of social relations cannot be understood as independent and autonomous phenomena; from class formation to racialization, indigeneity, to gender and sexuality or even the category of youth and adults, these relations cannot be understood as de-linked, isolated, and functioning outside capitalist social relations.

This analysis suggests that we should read, analyze, and understand youth as a concentration of many determinants in this widely confusing, shifting, and contradictory capitalist order. Youth are embraced by this complex system as either agents of change or perpetrators of violence, as consumer/client of cultural products or subject of/subjected to "cultural imperialism", and radicalization; they are seen as a "threat" or are "threatened"; they are "securitized" or "empowered", or they are treated both as-risk and at-risk, they are "in" crisis or they "are" the crisis (Carpenter, McCready, & Mojab, 2016). These material and ideological conditions of youth life should be the focus of a renewed theorization in the field of adult education.

To achieve this, we would like to suggest that adult education theoretically and politically is well poised to revive the overlooked notion of *class struggle* as a point of entry in explicating the lived experiences of youth/adults, and as a learning theory/ method where we can all be persuaded to transform our living conditions through engaging in collective action. *Class struggle* as an entry point of analysis directs us to discover and uncover the contradictions in our lives as an expression of conflicting interests in socially stratified communities, locally and globally. Comprehending life as *class struggle* will move us beyond a learning or pedagogical approach designed to change "consciousness without changing the world" (Bannerji, 2015, p. 172).

Thus, with this book, we argue that the field of adult education should be responsive to a new wave of theoretical and political debates emerging from other disciplines such as geography, anthropology, political science, women's studies, diaspora, cultural studies, and in mobility and migration studies. Our field has evolved enormously in the last couple of decades from focusing on individual learning and practice through the lens of psychology and behavioural science to now building the discipline through borrowing from women and queer studies, critical race and cultural theories, or modes of organizing communities and workplaces through cooperative practices or expounding race, class, gender, migration, and work.

As we contemplate expanding our knowledge of the lives of young adults and the ways in which they experience this world, we recognize a hesitation among

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adult educators to open up or revisit the socially constructed, age-based categories of youth/adult. While both the definition and social/cultural boundaries of youth/adult remain relatively fuzzy, a tenuous relation between these two social categories has already been articulated (Grace, 2013; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). Still, both categories appear to be feeble to us, especially when we want to speak about *things* that happen to men and women or *things* that they can make happen in order to change, improve, or enrich their lives. In our analysis, therefore, youth/adults enter into complex and interconnected social, political, cultural, and economic relations. The works collected here are an introductory and nascent attempt to take up this complexity utilizing strong analytical contributions from the field of adult education.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The chapters contained herein represent a wide range of research conducted within Canada, beginning in 2014 to the present. Some aspects of this research are specific to Canadian federal or provincial policies regarding young people, but we believe that they are particular examples of increasingly universal discourses and practices concerning youth and young adults. To this end, we have organized the chapters in three sections to help facilitate a discussion between theory and empirical research. Across these chapters, you will see authors take up, from differing perspectives, various debates, including: resiliency and resistance, intersectionality and social relations, precariousness and insecurity, agency and subjectivity.

First, this introduction and the two subsequent chapters provide an entry into the debate of youth as/in crisis from the standpoint of epistemological and methodological considerations of how to approach the experience of young people and the theorization of social crisis. Specifically, in Chapter 2 ("Youth" as Theory, Method, and Praxis), Genevieve Ritchie critiques a theorization of youth and the crisis of young adults as articulated by policymakers and researchers relying upon the assumptions of human capital theory, liberalism, and bio-cognitive developmental approaches. She embeds this critique within a broader articulation of the ideological centrality of the concept of youth within the neoliberalization of capitalist social relations. In Chapter 3 (Critical Youth Participatory Action Research: Ideology, Consciousness, and Praxis), Paula Elias takes up a critique of the epistemological and ontological foundations of youth participatory action research by interrogating what constitutes "critical consciousness" within the methodological framework. Through her critique, she argues that the hegemonic constructions of choice and desire infuse critical research with youth, thus calling into question knowledge production with, for, and about young people that is fundamentally grounded in abstraction from social, material, and historical relations.

The second section of the book includes critiques of policy and programmatic initiatives across Canada that attempt to address various crises of young people. In Chapter 4 (Alternative Futures for Work-Related and Vocational Education: Stratification and Entrepreneurialism) Kiran Mirchandani and Meaghan Brugha trace

efforts to promote entrepreneurialism amongst youth in Canada, in both government policy and career education literature, arguing that such efforts build upon, and exacerbate, existing forms of social marginalization. In Chapter 5 (The "Youth Crisis" in Nova Scotia: An Examination of Masked Relations) Stephanie MacKinnon examines the problem of "out-migration" of youth from the Maritime provinces of Canada seeking employment elsewhere. She discusses policy response by the government of Nova Scotia, arguing that state responses to depressed labour markets are to transfer the burden of employability and job creation onto youth themselves. In Chapter 6 (The Ontario Youth Outreach Worker Program as Racialized Spatial Praxis) Ahmed Ahmed and Sara Carpenter discuss the development of the Ontario provincial youth outreach program and its reorganization utilizing a model of behavioural change. They argue that through the targeting of particular communities for intervention by the province, the program pathologizes youth of colour and low income youth, constructing them as subjects in need of control by the state. In Chapter 7 (Difference Is: Sexual and Gender Minority Youth and Young Adults and the Challenges to Be and Belong in Canada) André Grace explores the forms of repression and violence faced by sexual and gender minority youth in Canada. He offers a model of cultural work, the Comprehensive Health Education Workers Project, to make suggestions on how educators might change their practice to address marginalization of sexual and gender minority youth.

The third section of the book includes a number of empirical case studies providing insight into the relationships between young adults and the forms of learning that emerge within particular political and material relationships. The notion of youth and crisis is broad and these chapters provide entry points based on research concerning employment, health, political engagement, leadership development, migration, sexuality, and race. In Chapter 8 (Where Do I Begin? Educational Citizenship and Sexual Minority International Students in Ontario) Trevor Corkum explores the experience of young people negotiating sexual and gender identity in the contexts of migration and diasporic communities. In Chapter 9 ("Isn't the Right to an Education a Human Right?": Experiences of Precarious Immigration Status Youth Navigating Post-Secondary Education) Tanya Aberman, Philip Ackerman, and members of the Toronto-based Non-Status Youth Network, utilize poetry and creative writing to explore the forms of exclusion and violence faced by non-status youth, specifically the problem of access to post-secondary education. In Chapter 10 (Exploring Transitions of Young Black Men Who Have Sex with Men [MSM] in Canadian Urban Contexts) Lance McCready and David Pereira explore the contested notion of "transition" from the standpoint of young Black MSM, arguing that their particular positionality in Canadian society challenges dominant conceptualizations of youth experience and transitions to adulthood. In Chapter 11 (The Politics of Participation: The Progressive Potential of Young Adults' Formal Political Engagement) Chloe Shantz-Hilkes examines the political participation of young adults, challenging dominant constructs of apathy and disengagement, and describing young people's approaches to navigating alienating political environments. In Chapter 12 (Youth,

Crisis and Learning: The Experiences of Ontarian Young Adults in a Leadership Development Program) Scott Zoltok researches a provincially sponsored leadership and social entrepreneurialism program, exploring the dynamics faced by young adults as they confront precarious economic futures while navigating state discourses of individualism and exceptionalism.

The work collected here serves as the foundation for our current project, Youth, War, and Migration, in which we take up our proposed analytical framework and build upon long-standing commitments in adult education to fully explore the lived realities of young people. We argue that adult education already has the theoretical and methodological tools necessary to utilize a feminist, anti-racist, and critical orientation to the study of the lives of young people, particularly given commitments to reflexivity, participation, multiple avenues for expression and voice, critical institutional analysis, and commitment to an anti-oppressive framework. From our standpoint, adult education necessarily involves the ethical, political, and epistemological commitment to fleshing out the complexity of our social world as it is lived and changed by everyday people.

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Sara Carpenter
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta

Shahrzad Mojab
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

PART ONE

THEORIZING YOUNG PEOPLE

GENEVIEVE RITCHIE

2. "YOUTH" AS THEORY, METHOD, AND PRAXIS

INTRODUCTION

The category "youth" appears as a stage in the *natural* progression of an individual's life. There is, however, deep and expansive politics that give meaning to the category youth. Within contemporary debates, the struggle to define youth has positioned young adults at the centre of policy frameworks, state-led initiatives, and international development discussions, which are concretizing various distinctions between "emerging" and established adults in terms of a range of characteristics, including their civic and economic participation. The efficacy of the category youth can be linked to its broadening reach, expanding both upward into age ranges above 25 (and even 35 in some cases), and downward to incorporate those in their late teens. The ballooning category is then politicized by threats of large mobs of disaffected and jobless youth, or a promise of the economic potential that lies latent within a population of young people eager for the correct education and training (Damon, 2004; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015; United Nations, 2016; World Bank, 2006). Historicizing the social construction of youth, Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) demonstrate that the category youth has never simply described an age range, and has usually been deployed to serve the changing needs of the elite. For example, characterizing youth as a time of leisure and unconstrained consumption normalizes white middle-class family formations and occludes the economic and social struggles of working-class and racialized people. In their assessment, moreover, today's understanding of youth has its roots in the rise of industrial capitalism and the associated configurations of public and private spheres. Constructing youth as not yet completely independent participants in the public sphere has engendered a transitional life stage between child and adult, which is both a potential threat and a great resource. The category youth, therefore, must be understood as bound to the norms of social reproduction, and the ballooning of the category should give us reason to pause and reconsider the relationship between capitalism, neoliberal ideology, and the rise of youth as a distinct (and extended) period in one's life.

The following analysis begins with the observation that across policy discussions, which draw on a framework known as the positive approach to youth, young adults are being described in contradictory terms. Rather than attempting to resolve the contradiction that the positive approach espouses, my analysis seeks to understand the epistemological and ontological rooting that form the contradiction "youth at-risk"/"youth as-assets". Situating the positive approach to youth within human capital

theory, I argue that dominant articulations of youth are part of the ideological fabric constituting the neoliberal form of capitalism. The contradictory position of youth can then be understood as a tool for naturalizing human capital, and individualizing the social relations that young adults experience as racialization and gender.

The latter phases of the discussion are broadly organized by the question of how to challenge dominant social relations. If we do not accept human capital as the universal solution to the challenges faced by young adults, which threads should we tug on to unravel capitalist social relations? Sociological discussions of youth have been largely organized by a metaphoric transition into adulthood, which characterizes youth as the transitional stage between child and adult. Surveying the literature that employs, rejects, or re-orients the youth as transition metaphor, I broadly sketch out the conceptual moves that gave rise to the generational approach to today's youth. Although the generational approach has overcome some of the limitations of the youth as transition framework, it perpetuates an atomizing ontology. The ontological foundation of the generational framework mirrors the positive approach, and thus the two approaches articulate distinct yet complementary frameworks for explicating the experiences of today's young adults. At the crux of my critique is the argument that we cannot understand the particularities of youth experienced today in abstraction from the history of accumulation and dispossession. The discussion concludes by emphasizing the historical and capitalist social processes that form the preconditions for contemporary formations of youth. Rather than viewing youth as historically and socially distinct, I contend that the ideological apparatus constituting the youth formation engenders the appearance of distinctiveness, while the material essence, firmly rooted in the capital/labour contradiction, simultaneously exhibits continuity.

The overarching analysis is rooted in a dialectical epistemology and ontology, which understands phenomena through their internal contradictions. A dialectical contradiction is the internal struggle between two opposite forces that mutually and reciprocally shape the relation as a whole. For example, the capital/labour contradiction is constituted through, and takes its shape from, the ongoing struggle between capitalists and workers. While the appearance of a given phenomenon, such as youth, may articulate the contours of a particular social relation, we must also grapple with its essence to understand the relation as a whole. There is, in other words, an internal contradiction of essence and appearance that constitutes youth. This is not to say that appearances are somehow less real or do not orient consciousness and praxis; rather, my concern is that if appearances are interrogated in abstraction from material essence only a partial explanation can be formed leaving us ill-equipped to critically transform social relations as a whole (Allman, 2007; Marx & Engels, 1970). Explicating Marx's dialectical theory of consciousness and praxis, Paula Allman (2007) notes that critical/revolutionary praxis cannot be imposed upon people and instead must be chosen through a thoughtful engagement with their material conditions. While consciousness (and praxis) is the active sensuous and relational practices/experience of humans, critical/revolutionary praxis requires knowledge of both the essence and appearance of phenomena. Drawing from the

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weighty philosophy of Marx and Allman, the following discussion rethinks the appearance of the youth formation, that is, a particular formation of theory, method, and praxis coalescing into the category youth, and situates this formation in the ongoing struggle between capital and labour.

CATEGORIZING YOUNG ADULTS

Today's young adults are confronted by a complex arrangement of economic frameworks and political policies that depict youth as lacking employable skills, while simultaneously removing access to socialized services. Drawing a contrast with the labour market conditions of the 1990s, the United Nations (UN) notes that young people entering the labour market today are significantly less likely to be able to gain secure employment. Furthermore, a "staggering number" of young people are not currently in education, employment, or training (a phenomenon referred to as NEET) "delaying their full socioeconomic integration" (UN, 2016, p. 12). In the United Kingdom and Australia, at the very same time that NEET young adults became the target of government policy initiatives, social welfare policies for those under 25 were being cut, making it harder for young adults to access income supports. Accessing tertiary education, however, is also understood as prolonging the transition into adulthood when it is accompanied by lower levels of financial independence, and remaining in the family home (Bessant, 2002; Furlong, 2006, 2009; Lawy, Quinn, & Diment, 2010; Roberts, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2000). What is striking about the depiction of youth as ill-equipped and overly dependent is that the status of adulthood becomes harder to attain at the very same time that austerity measures critiqued so-called social (welfare) dependency. Failing to attain the markers of independence, synonymous with adulthood, can then be constructed as a problem faced by individual youth, and the category youth at-risk emerges as a social problem in need of attention.

Linking the rising global youth unemployment rates with illiberal political conditions or cultural inequalities, youth are described as at-risk. Everything from bullying, racism, and political activism to gun violence or militarized extremism has been employed to illustrate the seriousness of ignoring disaffected youth (The Ministry of Child and Youth Services [MCYS], 2014; World Bank, 2006). At the crux of the youth at-risk problem is the argument that youth who do not participate in the labour market and liberal democratic traditions will have their individual development and personal agency impaired, which is said to breed mistrust in public institutions and cause social disengagement (MCYS, 2014; UN, 2016; World Bank, 2006). Bessant (2002) argues that the youth at-risk category is a wide net cast far enough to include all young people, thereby making policy interventions both responsible and necessary. The formulation youth at-risk theorizes individual development as a problem for social stability and economic growth. In this sense, youth at-risk embody a complex array of social problems, and youth policy interventions are a method for tethering individual development to economic growth.

The category youth at-risk, however, does not work alone. The notion of youth as-assets forms the complementary opposite to youth at-risk. From the perspective of the World Bank, youth is an important transitional period of intense learning when the human capital necessary for thwarting the intergenerational transmission of poverty can be acquired, which will, in turn, encourage private investment in the economy (World Bank, 2006). The skills learned and developed by young adults are thus placed at the centre of an economic development model, and the acquisition of human capital is positioned as the primary purpose of training and education. In developed capitalist societies the so-called demographic dividend that youth embody is said to ease the economic strain of an aging population, and, if managed correctly, can reduce costs to social services (MCYS, 2014; World Bank, 2006). There are a number of observable tensions that arise from the categorization of youth as simultaneously at-risk and as-assets. For example, contemporary cohorts of young adults constitute both a burden on, and solution for, state expenditure. Moreover, no matter if youth are NEET, lacking skills, victims of racism and bullying, or highly educated yet not financially secure, fostering the human capital of youth can transform all young adults into society's greatest asset. On the surface, the contradictory position of youth (that is, youth at-risk/youth as-assets) could be said to dissolve into the multitude of individuals, or atomized units, that constitute society as a whole. If, however, the contradictory position of youth is problematized as indicative of a deeper formation of social, political, and economic relations, then we need to question not only the contemporary appearance of the youth formation but also its epistemological and ontological rooting.

Before delving deeper into the contradictory position of youth, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider the liberal ontology that undergirds dominant articulations of youth. As Himani Bannerji (2015) argues, from a liberal vantage point the social whole is conceived as a collection of discrete issues, or atomized units, that can be arranged into different aggregations for the purpose of analysis. The atomized ontology of liberalism thus precludes the mutual constitution of phenomena and building knowledge of social formations presents the cumbersome task of establishing links between abstract categories. Both Dorothy Smith (1999, 2011) and Himani Bannerji (2015, 2016) argue that the epistemological fracturing of social relations constitutes an ideological practice of knowledge production that renders the social relations of ruling less visible. More than simply a synonym for politicized discourse, ideology is a historically specific practice of knowledge production, rooted in the specialization of intellectual labour, that grants primacy to concepts, and as such, ideas are positioned as the prime movers of history while individuals are reduced to the bearers of discourse. Liberal ideology, and thus by extension neoliberal ideology, conceals its atomizing ontology by naturalizing the separation of the individual from society and then reconstituting the social whole through a democratic contract articulated as legal rights and responsibilities. The contradiction between the liberal tenet of formal equality, and the observable continuation of exploitation and oppression reflects both the severing of ontology

from epistemology, and the historical interweaving of capitalism and liberal democracy. At the very same time, the disharmony between theory and experience presents a fissure that can be cracked open to expose the obfuscations of liberal and neoliberal theory. Turning now to the conceptual apparatus constituting youth, it is important to be attuned not only to the particular concepts that are deployed as a response to the contradictory position of youth, but also the extent to which youth discussions conceal or mystify broader social and historical relations.

The Positive Approach to Youth

A common thread that runs through more recent youth policy initiatives is the positive approach to youth development (also termed the ecological approach). Explicitly rejecting the idea that young people are in some way deficient or lacking self-sufficiency, the positive approach to youth argues that young people are intrinsically resilient and capable of contributing to society (Damon, 2004; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2008). The notion that young people are naturally resilient and capable is not in itself an ideological premise. However, youth resilience sits at the centre of a linear and universalizing model of human development that is oriented by the neoliberal theory of human capital (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2008; World Bank, 2006). Theorizing the transition into adulthood, the positive approach positions the abstract young individual (devoid of race, class, and gender) as separate from society, and the praxis of becoming an adult is conflated with the acquisition of human capital. While the model of youth development presented by the positive approach abstracts young people from the socio-historical relations of race, class, and gender, it must contend with the concrete realities that young people face. In other words, having severed young people from material social relations, the positive approach must create the ideological glue to reconstitute the social whole. The resilience and capabilities of young adults is that glue.

By challenging social welfare frameworks, which aimed to shelter young people from the pressures of the economy, the positive approach argues that youth ought to bear their full share of rights and responsibilities. The resilience of young adults has been used as a justification for scaling back income supports, as well as linking youth services to entrepreneurship, internships, and volunteerism (Damon, 2004; MCYS, 2014; World Bank, 2006). In other words, the asset embodied by youth is unwaged labour. The precarious and insecure work experiences of young adults are concealed behind the ideological premise of natural resilience. Furthermore, targeted as youth at-risk, Aboriginal, newcomer, racialized, and queer young adults are described as facing additional barriers to gaining work experience and accessing education. Here again, the trifecta of unwaged labour, that is, volunteering, internships, and entrepreneurship, are positioned as a method for building capacity, which will help young people overcome individual barriers to social participation before they reach adulthood (Damon, 2004; MCYS, 2014; World Bank, 2006). Funnelling complex histories of colonization, patriarchy, and racialization into the contained category youth at-risk allows the positive approach to individualize and temporally delimit

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the experiences that inform and organize racism, homophobia, and misogyny, while simultaneously erasing the historical relationship between unwaged labour and capitalist accumulation. Various manifestations of discrimination can then be treated as ontologically separate from one another (and histories of dispossession), and human capital is positioned as the universal solution. Not only does the positive approach to youth position capitalist social relations as the solution for, rather than precursor to, oppression, but it also attempts to naturalize class relations by imbricating human capital in the process of becoming an adult.

Discussing the social construction of youth, Sukarieh and Tannock (2008, 2015) argue that the rise of the positive approach to youth coevals with neoliberal political economy. As such, contemporary articulations of youth must be situated within the broader neoliberal objective of fortifying the class power of the capitalist elite. In the hands of neoliberal advocates the contradictory position of youth is deployed to valorize liberal capitalist democracy and erase or vilify the praxis of young adults when it strays from liberalism. The more general denial of youth resistance gestures to a preservationist thread within neoliberal ideology. In the aftermath of financial and refugee crises, and with the intensifying rumbling of fascism, the unresolvable contradictions of liberal capitalist democracy are festering. Drawing youth into the class project of reproducing neoliberalism is a mode by which the current form of capitalist democracy, and its corresponding forms of consciousness, might be preserved. The reproduction of existing social relations implies a predetermined end, and as such youth must be positioned as the heirs to, rather than the architects of, the future. The relationship between youth, that is the next generation of workers, citizens, parents, and caregivers, and the trajectory of social relations brings the importance of youth into view; which is to note that at the heart of the youth formation is not only a model for the future but the question of class struggle. The struggle to define youth is, therefore, an arena for reproducing, reforming, or critically transforming social relations. The question that needs to be brought forward into the following section is the extent to which scholarly debates either normalize or confront the existing form of capitalism, and its associated neoliberal ideology. Are youth conceptualized as the bearers of neoliberal discourse, or as agents of critical/revolutionary transformation?

Surveying the debate that surrounds the school-to-work transition, the following section sketches out the epistemological terrain that gave rise to the generational approach to youth. Early discussions pertaining to youth transitions, which predate neoliberalism, have largely been dismissed as too simplistic or falsely universalizing a single step transition into adulthood, and for this reason, I have not included them in the discussion. It is worth noting, however, that some earlier class-based critiques of a universal youth experience, such as Willis (1977), have been de-emphasized by the epistemological trends of the 1980s and '90s, which focused attention on individual identity formation (Furlong, 2009; Rudd, 1997). I have chosen to pick up the thread of youth transitions after the epistemological turn toward individualism because I am explicitly interested in the less visible convergences between neoliberal ideology and the theoretical framing of youth consciousness and praxis.

THEORIZING YOUTH

From a Transitional Stage to a Distinct Generation

The metaphoric transition into adulthood articulates the idea that young adults move through a set of stages, attain predetermined markers signalling independence, and then arrive at the status of adult. As such, the transition metaphor describes an abstracted process that will be influenced by the contextual particularities of a given milieu. Implicit in the transition metaphor is the notion that young adults have not yet reached the status of full citizen/worker, and that the transitional period can be smooth (single step from school-to-work), prolonged, or interrupted. Following the logic of youth as a transitional stage, the primary role of education, training, civic engagement, and preliminary labour market participation is to aid the process by which one reaches the endpoint known as adulthood. Research done with a transitions approach has successfully delineated the ways in which deindustrialization, the rise of service sector jobs, and the increased labour market participation of women have reshaped the general character of the school-to-work transition (Furlong, 2006, 2009; Lawy, Quinn, & Diment, 2010; Rudd, 1997; Thompson, 2011; Wyn, 2014). Conversely, calling into question the explanatory power of the transition metaphor authors, such as Davis (2014) and Raffo and Reeves (2000), suggest that greater attention needs to be given to cultural or ethnic identities, and individual narratives of young adults. At the crux of this debate is a deeper, unresolvable tension between whether emphasis ought to be placed on either the forces of socialization (embodied in the family, workplace, etc.) or the individual agency of young adults. Reframing the central tension between agency and socialization, we can also note that the transition metaphor is premised on the universality of experience (all people become adults), while agency-centring approaches highlight the particularities of individual experience.

Retracing the conceptual divide between agency-centring and transition-based approaches, Woodman (2009) notes that the current orthodoxy in the sociology of youth is to work with a middle ground approach. Such approaches tend to emphasize notions of bounded agency or structured individualization. Furlong, Woodman and Wyn (2011) critique the middle ground approach for its failure to transcend the false binary of structure and agency, and instead argue for a focus on social generations. Similarly, Wyn (2014) and Cuervo and Wyn (2014) argue that emphasizing notions of belonging in connection with an analysis of a social generation is a way to explore the relationship between subjectivity and place (or context). Although the notion of a social generation moves beyond the false binary of structure and agency, I contend that the generational approach is rooted in an atomized ontology and depicts social relations as interactions between units of analysis. Taking a closer look at how the generational approach has been elaborated by its primary theorists Wyn and Woodman, I find reason to question the extent to which the framework provides a theoretical basis for challenging the various forms of oppression, exploitation, and dispossession that young adults are currently confronted by. Additionally, it is

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worth noting that although both authors gesture to the fact that race impacts the lives of some young adults, neither has taken up an explicit consideration of race or racialization. Thus, my analysis begins from the observation that race has been relegated to an individual subjective experience and/or discrete category, rather than a formation of social relations that orient the consciousness and praxis of all young adults, albeit in very different ways.

Distinct Yet Partial: Explicating the Current Generation

The generational approach outlined by Wyn and Woodman (2006) starts from the premise that there are distinct material conditions and associated subjectivities that constitute the current generation of young adults. For Wyn and Woodman, a generation is more than simply a birth cohort, it is also formed through the social, political, and economic context that organizes the lives of individuals. The distinctiveness of our current moment is emphasized by pointing to the increasing prevalence of non-standard work hours and employment insecurity, as well as increasing access to, and time spent in, education and training (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011; Wyn, 2014; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). A social generation, therefore, is not a universalized phase of life, but rather is a commonality of conditions and experiences that mark each contextually specific grouping of young adults. For Furlong, Woodman and Wyn (2011), moreover, cultural responses to shifts in material conditions "can no longer be neatly mapped onto structural positions such as class or gender" (p. 363). The political economy of what they term to be *late modernity* reconfigures the experiences of young people so that class-based resources are less important than individual aptitudes (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011). To summarize, their analysis is balanced on the premise that there has been a decisive shift in material conditions that more or less aligns with the current generation of youth. Social change sits both at the forefront of the framework and creates a definite temporal division in the characteristics of capitalist social relations.

The centrality of social change is not the sole defining feature of Wyn and Woodman's theory of a social generation, however. For Wyn and Woodman (2006) the implications of social change must be understood through the distinctive features of generational subjectivity. The dual foci of context and subjectivity are intended to emphasize the fact that young adults actively navigate and respond to changing labour market demands or consumptive cultures. Young individuals are said to build subjective narratives of personal choice, cultural capital, or self-management as they attempt to find their place or sense of belonging within the generational context. Today's young adults, moreover, are said to understand the self as a project and engage in so-called identity work, which enables them to be adaptable (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011; Wyn, 2014; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Viewed through the generational approach, the process of becoming an adult can also be understood as a subjective process of navigating and making sense of one's social, political, and economic context. As such, the emphasis on a normative or universal transition into

adulthood is pruned back to expose individualized aptitudes and generational values within a contextually bounded social moment.

Having summarized the generational approach to youth, I would like to pause for a moment and reconsider the units of analysis that the framework builds and deploys. The generational framework is premised on the segmentation of temporality and begins from the vantage point of western liberal capitalism. In other words, the generational approach grounds its conceptual apparatus in two implicit, yet decisive, divisions: firstly, late modernity is severed from earlier forms of capitalist production and accumulation; secondly, the capitalist core is severed from colonial history. The uneven history of capitalism, therefore, falls from view as the relationship between self and society is articulated in primarily local terms. Further, there is an interesting tension linked to the framing of history and dynamics of social change. Societal change and subjective agency are positioned as central to the framework, yet young adults are presented as managing or coping with the current form of capitalism, rather than active participants in defining the character of today's, or future, society. Generational subjectivity is limited to making sense of one's location within the generational context, which simultaneously elevates ideation and elides the praxis of young adults. Concerned with neither past nor future forms of youth consciousness, generational subjectivity is shaped by, and tacitly oriented toward, the reproduction of existing social relations.

Although the generational approach may not be explicitly oriented toward the reproduction of neoliberal political economy, the framework, nonetheless, accepts the norms of neoliberal capitalism and thus mirrors the positive approach to youth. A clear point of convergence between the generational and positive approaches can be observed through the utilization of the categories of marginalization and exclusion. Furlong, Woodman and Wyn (2011) note "not all young people 'fit' into a generational patter." In their words, "A generational approach may possibly lead to a lack of sensitivity to marginalization and exclusion if the focus is not extended to the different units that occupy a single generational location" (Furlong, Woodman, & Wyn, 2011, p. 367). In other words, the experiences constituting a generation are understood as discrete units occupying dominant and marginal positions within the generational whole. The categories "marginalization" and "exclusion", however, are abstractions empty of concrete experiences and capable of describing any manifestation of oppression. Empty of concrete human praxis and social history, marginalization and exclusion can only be articulated in individualized terms. Much like the reliance on so-called barriers to participation within the positive approach, notions of marginalization and exclusion construct the self and society as binary opposites and confine the question of transformation to the individual.

Not only does Wyn and Woodman's theory of a social generation flatten and individualize the social relations that constitute oppression and exploitation, the approach mutes the cacophony of rhythms that make up youth experience in general. In more concrete terms, despite residing in western countries and being surrounded by youth who "fit" the generational framework, the norm for refugee

"youth" includes long interruptions in education (due to war and displacement), low wages, inadequate access to age-appropriate public schooling, experiences of racism, as well as feelings of isolation and alienation (Bonet, 2016). Beginning from the vantage point of so-called excluded youth, we can note that the generational whole is posited despite its contradictory parts, rather than through the concrete particularities of youth consciousness and praxis. A middle-class western subject position is, thus, implicitly constituted as the norm, and the categories marginalized and excluded stand in for the experiences of migrant and racialized young adults. In short, the theory of a generation subsumes experience.

Although the generational framework begins from a different point of entry to that of the positive approach to youth, the shared ontological underpinning orient both analyses toward the reproduction of existing social relations. Thus, the question that remains is how to conceptualize and explicate the experiences of young adults in a manner that reveals something about our current moment and how to critically transform it. On that note, Bannerji's critique of ideology is, again, instructive. As Bannerji (2016) explicates, when concepts are divorced from their material grounding they "admit no epistemological disclosure as to their own construction", and as such they become highly mobile, arbitrary frames for interpretation (p. 9). The limitation of the generational approach is not that it highlights the distinctive characteristics of the current social moment, but rather that it does not situate the particular experiences of today's young adults in the historical evolution of the relations that are now defined as youth. Distinctiveness is taken as definitive, and thus the epistemological disclosure that the youth formation might admit is swept away. Built upon abstractions, concepts such as barriers, exclusion, or marginalization can only rearticulate their ideological forbearers. The task for building anti-ideological knowledge, then, is to reverse the ideological severing of ontology from epistemology, and to understand concepts as particular formations of social relations rather than the determinants of reality (Bannerji, 2015). Taking a wider view of the youth formation, the remainder of the discussion fleshes out some of the historical and social conditions that were de-emphasized by both the positive approach and the generational framework. Situated in the ongoing cycles of capitalist accumulation and dispossession, the relationship between the essence and appearance of the youth formation begins to take shape.

A Materially Situated Approach to Youth

Historicizing the relationship between the labour of young adults and capitalist accumulation, Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) illustrate the cycles of integration and removal that characterize the role of youth in the labour market. They note that early industrial capitalists targeted young unmarried, often female, adults as a source of cheap, temporary, and easy to discipline labour. This particular characterization of youth labour was later transported to formerly colonized regions and became the norm of factory production during the 1970s and 1980s. Prior to

the global relocation of industrial production, the labour market participation of teens and young adults in the core capitalist regions declined as secondary and tertiary education expanded. However, the expansion of the service sector, in the latter part of the twentieth century, saw a rise in jobs targeted at young adults irrespective of who performed them. From the vantage point of capitalists and governments, one of the key advantages of utilizing the labour of young adults is that they have been historically constructed as non-adults, which justifies lower wages, employment insecurity, and irregular work hours. The casting of service sector jobs as youth jobs serves the dual purpose of normalizing the claim that students ought to have a part-time job, and that service sector workers do not depend on their paycheques or require job security (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). The larger picture of youth labour is, thus, one of expansion and contraction where young adults are pulled in and out of the labour market relative to the cycles and locations of accumulation.

The participation of young adults in today's labour market continues to be geographically uneven, and international migration for the purpose of employment is becoming increasingly significant. Global youth unemployment has shown a fairly steady upward trend and currently sits at 13%, with the highest rates in Africa and the Arab states at around 30%. Moreover, the percentage of employed young adults living in poverty is above 25% in the Arab states and around 75% in Sub-Saharan Africa. Low wages and poor working conditions were also a significant factor in the increasing willingness of young adults to emigrate from the Caribbean and Latin America. Although the global unemployment rate for young women remains higher than that of young men, unemployment rates aggregated by sex across locations are uneven. For example, the unemployment rates for young women are lower than those for young men in Europe, Eastern Asia, and North America, but significantly higher in Africa and the Arab states. In developed countries, the rate of NEET young adults increases significantly for those between the ages of 19 and 30 (International Labour Organization, 2016). Importantly, this snapshot of youth in the labour market echoes the partial explanations given by both the positive and the generational approaches. Deindustrialization has shifted the labour market experiences of young men and women in developed areas, and the staggeringly high levels of underemployment and unemployment in formerly colonized regions are greatly concerning. Conversely, the picture that the current youth labour market paints is not dissimilar from the broader history of young workers, particularly in the formerly colonized areas, constituting a highly-exploited section of the labour force. Young adults are a prominent grouping in the unemployed and underemployed population, and the ideological apparatus constituting the youth formation is routinely deployed to minimize the rights of workers and increase rates of exploitation. In this sense, youth labour simultaneously expresses a distinct appearance and the historical continuity of class exploitation. The significance of the contradictory position of youth can be seen through the manner in which global accumulation shapes, and is shaped by, the youth formation.

In a recent discussion of imperialism, finance capital, and dispossession, Judith Whitehead (2016) reconsiders the current relationship between the active and reserve army of labour. She notes that in 2012 the reserve army of labour (those unemployed and underemployed) exceeded that of the active army by a billion people. In Whitehead's assessment, the dominance of finance capital, which is increasingly delinked from labour, has created the conditions for dispossession and accumulation without proletarianization, particularly in the global south. In other words, contemporary modes of dispossession are creating a mass of pauperized people, many of whom are young adults, but not reabsorbing them into the working class; our current moment is, thus, one of labour expulsion (Sassen, 2014; Whitehead, 2016). Whitehead connects the intensification of authoritarianism, patriarchy, and fascism to the global dynamics of finance capitalism and pauperization. Given that the youth formation exists to both discipline highly exploited labour, and silence dissent, her analysis underscores the significance and utility of youth. Her analysis, moreover, raises the issue of the relationship between labour expulsion, youth, and racialization and begets the question: In which ways will the pauperization of young adults reshape the character of racialization and migrant labour in the capitalist core?

CONCLUSION

Viewed through its internal contradictions, youth can be understood as a particular formation of ideological constructs and corresponding forms of consciousness and praxis. More than simply an age range or transitional stage, the youth formation provides insight into the contradiction that mutually shapes labour and capital. While the current generation of youth does display distinct characteristics, theoretical approaches that elevate the current experiences or subjectivities of young adults elide the broader historical processes that pull young people in and out of the labour force. At the centre of both liberal and neoliberal approaches to youth is an atomized ontology that individualizes the consciousness and praxis of young adults. Recasting experiences of race and gender, or marginalization and exclusion as individual challenges severs human praxis from knowledge, and contributes to the ideological fragmentation of social relations. Confronting the social and historical relations that organize the experiences of young adults requires that we begin by reconnecting ontology and epistemology.

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Genevieve Ritchie
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

PAULA V. ELIAS

3. CRITICAL YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Ideology, Consciousness, and Praxis

INTRODUCTION

We are living in a "moment", so to speak. As young adults, the aggressive nature of gendered, racialized, and capitalist violence and dispossession appears in our everyday interactions, and manifests in our generation's increased disenfranchisement from political leadership, state, and institutional infrastructure. The general sentiment is that our social world may worsen in relation to our struggle against this violence and dispossession before it "gets better". The urgency for "critical" action looms over all of us. But what constitutes "criticality" within this call for action, and how does it manifest in our understanding and investment in supporting young people's engagement with "critical" action? I am just coming to terms with the limits of my own response to these questions as a young adult engaged in community-based, anti-racist feminist social justice projects. For me, and several of my fellow peers, taking critical action demanded that we look at how race, gender, and class intersect and shape the nature of power and privilege in our lives; that educating ourselves about this power and privilege was the first step towards agency in breaking glass ceilings and historical barriers; and in doing so, our generation had already made more strides in opportunity for a better world than the choices allotted to our ancestors. This articulation of critical is one that I also recognize in critical youth participatory action research (YPAR), which, as a graduate student, I have engaged in over the past two years through work as a research assistant, co-facilitator, and participant through several YPAR-related projects, classrooms, and professional/scholarly trainings.

Critical YPAR can be described as a means of knowledge production and social action that involves academic researchers, community- or school-based educators, and young adults. Collectively, these co-researchers investigate local issues as an entry into building towards long-term societal-wide change. Critical YPAR builds on, and departs from, the traditions of participatory action research that take up issues of consciousness, praxis, and social change in critical and adult education (Falls Borda, 1980; Freire, 2005). As critical YPAR scholars like Torre (2014) have argued, the explicit interrogation of society within critical participatory research prompts researchers and educators to ask, "how might the research ignite individual and social transformation?" (p. 1326). While this question is a pertinent one, I want

to extend it by asking what entails criticality in the praxis for social transformation. I have not only come to take up concern with the claim that critical YPAR "transforms" young people's lives, but I also have a serious interest in the pedagogical moment I described earlier, where participants, young and old, oppressed and privileged, learn about what constitutes critical social change.

To unpack the transformation claim, I will argue that projects like critical YPAR produce *ideology*. I draw from my active learning in anti-racist Marxist-feminist work (Bannerji, 2015a, 2015b; Carpenter & Mojab, 2011; Smith, 1990) to understand *ideology* as a particular type of abstraction where, in our efforts to understand how one part of our reality is socially encompassing and historically and materially shaped, our understanding is clouded. This is not because of deficits in how we learn or conceptualize our reality, but because of the ruptures created and reproduced by capitalist social relations. Ideology functions as both the set of tools we use to make sense of our everyday relations, as well as our method of producing and reproducing these same relations (Smith, 1990). To understand how this manifests in critical education projects like YPAR, I want to examine the meaning of radical activities like critical consciousness, praxis, and social transformation, and consider how these terms are shifting in ways that express these ideological activities. Drawing from Marxist-feminists like Dorothy Smith and Himani Bannerji (and their interpretations of Marx's *The German Ideology*), I will explore how ideology produces a particular understanding of critical consciousness, praxis, and social transformation that ultimately limits critical youth participatory action research. First, I consider how critical YPAR is currently being conceptualized by scholars, followed by a review of the conceptual tools that I rely on throughout the chapter. Then, I illustrate how ideological knowledge production persists in the ways that the experience and epistemology of youth are conceived, generating ideological shifts in the meaning of "critical consciousness", "praxis", and "social transformation". Ultimately, I argue that critical YPAR proponents reproduce capitalist social relations through a reproductive praxis centred around individual *choice* and *desire* as forms of social change.

CONCEPTUALIZING CRITICAL YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AND IDEOLOGY

I will begin with a brief review on the epistemological positions taken on by critical YPAR researchers and introduce some of the conceptual tools that I find useful in unpacking their claims about transformation. Scholars use "critical YPAR" as a term to describe two related bodies of literature: critical participatory action research that includes the participation of youth; and youth participatory action research that draws on critical theorizing on the topics of youth, education, and social location. Critical YPAR is described as a project where participants, acting as multigenerational collectives, take up issues of social injustice seeking to understand their social surroundings and elicit action towards these issues. In a departure from

participatory research that uses youth in a consultative and tokenistic manner, critical YPAR researchers and educators understand young adults to be politically engaged individuals by the nature of their experiences and participation among a wider community facing unequal relations. Scholars have argued that critical YPAR provides youth and their communities the opportunity to talk or theorize back at centres of power (Guishard & Tuck, 2014; Torre et al., 2008). Many critical YPAR researchers consider their work to be forms of youth resistance research, where critical inquiry serves as transformational resistance (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Dimitriadis, 2014). Proponents of critical YPAR also describe their work as rooted in an epistemology of social justice that enables their knowledge production to generate more equitable and just experiences for young adults, and which constitute transformed lived conditions (Cahill, 2007; Cammarota, 2012; Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Thus, it is fair to distinguish critical YPAR from other youth-based participatory projects that invoke the need for social transformation.

The concepts of critical consciousness and praxis appear in the literature through critical YPAR researchers' effort for transformative knowledge production. For educators and researchers, critical consciousness and praxis are developmental and/or experiential milestones observed by young adults in critical YPAR. These critical milestones are described through a particular language and process that highlights the experiential reflection on one's social context. For example, YPAR scholar Julio Cammarota (2012) describes the emergence of critical consciousness as it pertains to the areas of the self, the community, and society at large:

> In relation to the first area of the self, young people participating in YPAR projects can cultivate knowledge that establishes a positive, high regard for their sociocultural identities and confidence in their ability to effect change…The second area of community involves the awareness that individual advancements link with community improvements. From this perspective, definitions of success become separated from the narrow confines of individualism to a broader humanistic perspective of collective rights and gains… Finally, YPAR seeks emergence of critical consciousness on a societal or perhaps global level. Youth participating in YPAR projects engage in the practice of research, which often leads to their awareness of how research can aim at producing knowledge for the betterment of humankind. Engaging in research and becoming part of a larger community of practice provides a much broader picture of oppression, suffering, and liberation and enables young people to realize that problems within their own social contexts are not exclusive…Once young people can understand and thus empathize with the suffering of those outside their own community, they are better situated to understand and address the problems within their own lives. (pp. 2329–2330)

While Cammarota provides a detailed explanation on each "area" that entails critical consciousness, the impression is that criticality is inherent in the acts of claiming identity and developing agency. The "self" is at the centre of this critical exercise,

with the act of internal deliberation as a distinct site for study. This mode of thought persists in other academic contributions to critical YPAR. Cahill, Rios-Moore and Threatts (2008), as academic and youth researchers (respectively), illustrate the centrality of the self in their learning about what entails critical work:

> Opening our eyes and seeing the world – and ourselves – with different eyes is akin to what Freire identified as *conscientizacao* (1997 [1970]), a process of awakening our critical consciousness. As "subjects, not objects" (1997 [1970]: 49), we practiced a pedagogy of citizenship, transforming ourselves as we reaffirmed our capacity as agents of change. (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 100)

In this instance, criticality is assumed within the act of changing one's perspective about the self and its respective locale. The self weighs so prominently in constituting the learning and actualizing of one's consciousness that it gives the impression that a tapestry of multiple cohesive or contradictory "awakenings" translates into transformation because of its emergence in a collective exercise like YPAR.

In each of these excerpts, consciousness and praxis for social change are largely theorized through the areas of critical race, critical youth, postcolonial, and poststructuralist thought. Critical YPAR is argued to embody intersectionality in its diverse range of socially located collaborators (Patel, 2012; Torre, 2009) – a diversity that also makes critical YPAR collectives so resourceful. In seeking action towards inequitable conditions, participants articulate their historical and material forms of privilege and/or oppression that they've experienced. Just as the self comes to consciousness through the intersectional terms of their distinct and particular identity and agency, so follows the unconstrained and undefined praxis of the self. In Patel's work (2012), she theorizes about the relationship between contact zones and critical consciousness within a critical YPAR project. Consciousness and praxis are presented as spontaneous and customizable attributes or processes for the individual:

> The design of the critical internship project was to support critical consciousness and the self-study of societal contexts, including professional worlds…Within these contact zones and in keeping with the goals of critical and action-oriented analysis of society, the youth engaged in dynamic iterations and negotiations of meaning-making… As with many other critical consciousness projects, this happened but … not always in line with a strict adherence to analysis of the internship workplace sites. In fact, the most telling critical analyses occurred as students made sense of and incorporated their research, experiences and interpretations of their own lives, their communities and the internship locations. In this sense, the critical internship project contained the element of flexibility in content. There could not be a predetermined flow of learning objectives and prescribed activities and still a maintained space for our personalized learnings about status, capital and power. (p. 342)

In light of this flexible and personalized learning, the social-material substance of consciousness and praxis – its materiality – are barely unearthed.

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While there is no doubt that these reflections on the self provide meaningful contributions related to countering the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of young adults that have been previously erased or silenced from histories, the substance that makes these experiences so dynamic extends beyond the site of the individual. Emphasis on the individual self, identity, and agency limits our understanding on the materiality (within and beyond critical YPAR projects) that makes young people's experiences so *critical*. As theoretical concepts, intersectionality and multiplicity are meant to illustrate a particular kind of consciousness about the self, offering a discursive level of understanding on the relationship between the self and their social context – a discursive logic that manifests in how critical YPAR proponents seek to respond to social injustice. As Torre and Ayala (2009) illustrate, the object of critical praxis begins with the individual, and the subsequent myriad of individual selves in discursive deliberation:

> A [critical] PAR for social justice must assume multiplicity and hybridity among its participants, if the goal of meaningful liberatory action is to take place. The more a research collective values, grows and builds on the strengths' of collective members' various selves, relationships and histories, opportunities for participation increase and windows for action open. The nature of a collective's participation, the co-researchers and even the research participant, should be understood *en movimiento* – as complex, flexible and shifting. When fully engaged, this multiplicity can ignite creative and rigorous questions and methodologies, highly nuanced analyses, and complex forms of action. (p. 389)

Through critical YPAR, young people learn that their meaning-making can constitute critical acts in consciousness and praxis. But more scrutiny is required to understand that meaning-making occurs beyond the realms of "identity" and "agency", and that this meaning-making manifests in the kind of action that is conceived as transformative.

Critical YPAR offers a particular understanding on the relationship between the self and their social context that never strays beyond the level of a discursive understanding or response to social injustice. As Aguilar (2015) describes, there is a "material ground" removed from the self and all its configurations/intersections in an attempt to "centre all arguments on the plurality of identities and social divisions, as if doing so denies the totalizing logic of capitalism (Meiskin Woods, 1995: 246)" (p. 211). Subsequently, critical consciousness and praxis are reduced into concepts that conflate theoretical analyses with materiality. Under this function, the full depth of experience that co-researchers – youth, scholars, and educators – bring into critical YPAR projects is barely unpacked, and the potential for social change within that experience is seemingly widespread but undefined. Experience is a vital piece of critical conscientization and praxis, but we must also be wary of limiting ourselves to an understanding of our experiences on a surface level: a surface which embodies an ensemble of social and historical relations by human beings; an ensemble that is clouded by *ideology*. The absence of materiality in our

conceptualizing of experience, consciousness, and praxis requires that we draw on different conceptual tools to reveal what is happening – socially/materially – within and beyond these projects.

Ideology, Abstraction, and Capitalist Social Relations

Anti-racist Marxist-feminists offer important tools to address the activities of consciousness and praxis in educational projects for social change. Building on Marx's critique of philosophers in *The German Ideology*, Marxist-feminists argue that no *actual* social transformation is possible without unpacking and mapping *ideology* in our everyday lives (Allman, 2010; Bannerji, 2015a; Carpenter & Mojab, 2017; Smith, 2011). To clarify, I am not referring to the liberal, mainstream understanding of ideology as a set of principles and beliefs held by a particular group of people and in a specific context. *Ideology* is a mode of thought that is particular to capitalist social relations; a mode that removes the human and historical content in what we know (Allman, 2010; Bannerji, 2015a; Smith, 2011). This mode of thought would not exist without *abstraction*, an "act of human consciousness" (Carpenter & Mojab, 2017) in which we create concepts that organize our interpretation of the world, and in which these concepts can work like the boundaries of our knowledge production (Sears & Cairns, 2010). As human beings, we are actively conscious. We form and build consciousness in our everyday lives as we interact with the world: people, ideas, texts, institutions, states, etc. Through *ideology,* ideas, knowledge, and other components of our social relations are actively separated from its producers (humanity). This constitutes the kinds of abstractions that occur within capitalist social relations. Ideas are separated and treated as pre-existing and independent phenomena that produce our humanity (Bannerji, 2015a; Carpenter & Mojab, 2017; Smith, 2011). In the process of this fragmenting, people become experts or specialists in these ideas and phenomena. Thus, an idea appears to have a life or energy in and of itself, and becomes a "ruling idea" that the ruling class (producers of our exploitation) can distance themselves from, both knowingly and unknowingly.

But *ideology* is not a kind of default *abstraction* that our consciousness is determined to do. As Carpenter and Mojab (2017) explain, "We are able to use our consciousness to interrupt this process and to interrogate the problem of abstraction. When we do not, we continue to produce ideological forms of knowledge through ideological modes of reasoning" (pp. 20–21). Our ongoing production of *ideology* illustrates reproductive praxis, where – as human beings and producers – we actively reproduce ideas and other forms that obscure our social-material relations, including our prospects for actual social transformation (Allman, 2010). Critical consciousness and praxis for social transformation requires us to understand *ideology*, and our experience as the entry point into countering these *ideological* abstractions (Smith, 1990). However, in our current moment of capitalist social relations, our experiences are also an aspect of *ideology* that we must counter, as well as our epistemological explanations of how it comes to be produced.

Experience, Epistemology, and Fetishism

Like Critical YPAR scholars, anti-racist Marxist-feminists also argue that experience is a central site for critical consciousness, praxis, and social transformation (Allman, 2007; Smith, 1990). Allman (2007) explains that Marx observed "experience" as illustrative of the social-material relations that human beings actively produce, and argued that it has the greatest impact on our consciousness and praxis. This argument goes beyond interpreting immediate experience and epistemology alone, which critical YPAR researchers have built a scholarly tradition around. Returning to the concern for reproductive praxis, Allman (2007) explains that this reification, where an idea – like "critical", "experience", and "epistemology"– is personified as a thing that can produce social relations, can be so extreme and formative that it becomes *fetishized*:

> More insidiously, reification frequently develops into a form of distortion where the attributes and powers, the essence, of the person or social relation appear as natural, intrinsic, attributes or powers of the 'thing'. When this happens, thinking becomes fetishized, or in Marx's terms, fetishism attaches to the 'thing' (p. 165). Accordingly, social relations between people are misconstrued as relations between things. (p. 37)

These *fetishized* forms of things encompass our *ideology* in capitalist social relations, and are the most common and prevalent aspects of our experience, so much so that it also becomes a part of an individual's desires (Allman, 2007, p. 39, 76). Provided with these conceptual tools, I want to illustrate how ideological knowledge production occurs within critical YPAR, where experience and epistemology function as *fetishism* that privileges an ideological understanding on what is critical, and reproduce a consciousness and praxis that clouds our social-material relations. This clouding obscures our material reality of global exploitation – in its capitalist, imperialist, patriarchal forms, as well as in its global and local manifestations – that continues to thrive within our existing social relations despite arrivals to, or claims of, criticality and transformation. To begin unpacking how this *ideology* manifests in critical YPAR, I will consider how youth experience and epistemology are *fetishized* in the knowledge production that occurs in critical YPAR; I will consider how this fetishizing manifests into an ideological mode of critical; finally, I will illustrate how ideology generates reproductive praxis in which *desire* and *choice* serve as the limits of social transformation possible in critical YPAR work.

FRAGMENTING THE CRITICAL IN CRITICAL YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

What constitutes critical consciousness, praxis, and transformation among researchers and young adults participating in critical YPAR? A good amount of the critical YPAR scholarship has already moved in directions that challenge

liberally progressive adults (researchers, educators, and the like) to interrogate their relationship and solidarity with young people. The most important of their contributions have directly challenged mainstream hegemonic knowledge systems and knowledge creation processes in the effort to highlight marginalized young people's experiences as critical (Evans, Fox, & Fine, 2010; Fine & Torre, 2004). This includes disrupting the racist, Eurocentric, heteropatriarchal uses of terms and activities like democratic participation, citizen, and public science (Cahill et al., 2008; Fox et al., 2010; Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012). At the same time, I want to reiterate that the respective criticality that emerges in critical YPAR projects goes beyond the empowered or transformed self and their immediate experience. These critical experiences are fragmented as a plurality of distinct and disjointed entry and departure points on the consciousness and praxis of learning for social transformation. Critical YPAR proponents individualize these mutual experiences while they simultaneously shift the meaning of social transformation in directions that reproduce unequal and exploitative capitalist social relations.

Youth Experience and the Epistemology of Youth

Critical YPAR is understood to be rife with opportunities for young people to express themselves. Scholars have argued that it enables youth to deconstruct the origins of injustice (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009), write their "personal troubles" into histories of political struggle (Torre et al., 2008, p. 33), and connect one's perceived "maladaptive behaviour" with its corresponding societal roots in oppression so that youth can build towards positive attitudes and behaviours (Romero et al., 2008, p. 138). In each of these descriptions, young adults are asked to centre themselves and their communities as knowledge producers, as they offer unique insights on the experiences of inequality and oppression. However, scholars also ideologically conceive young people through their amplified study of the youthful self, obscuring how "youth" and their praxis express the social-material relations of capital (Ritchie, 2016; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). The experiences and epistemology of youth are fetishized within this ideology. A central aspect of developing the empowered self entails that youth come to know how their experiences and identity are resourceful. Throughout critical YPAR projects, youth participants are encouraged by their adult allies to harness their critical knowledge in creative and active ways as a response to the need for social change in their social context. For example, "funds of knowledge" – a Freirean concept – is used in many critical YPAR projects to argue that young people can identify, acquire, and harness their knowledge funds in order to improve their conditions, in part by being able to express and share these funds with adult researchers and educators. Critical YPAR is conceived as an opportunity for educators to learn about racialized youth as they migrate between home and their ancestral land (Sanchez, 2009–2010, p. 57), and as the bridge that fills in the gap between youth knowledge funds and the school curriculum (Cammarota & Romero, 2011, p. 490). The youth researcher harnesses "funds" to manage the social

and material inadequacies of their structural and personal relationships, an act that proves to be equally meaningful for adult researchers and partners.

Critical YPAR researchers ask youth to reveal their experiences as a means to generate more positive and equitable development for young people and their communities, particularly through the hope that it will offer more resourceful futures for these youth. As Morrell (2006) demonstrates, this resourcefulness – in the forms of academic and critical literacy – is speculated to transform individual youth participating in critical YPAR, although transformed social relations are not as apparent:

> I fully expect that many of these students will become teachers, researchers, and organizers for educational change, engaging in a trying but rewarding struggle that will last a lifetime…The short-term successes lead me to be much more optimistic about the impact of the [critical YPAR] seminar on the life chances of students than I am about necessarily transforming urban schools. That journey will be much longer, much tougher, and filled with more disappointments than successes. (p. 125)

Youth are ideologically conceived as being uniquely vulnerable or at-risk because youth – as an idea – is thought of as a naturally predisposed moment to intervene or shape the livelihood of individual's selves. Critical YPAR researchers often resolve that, in spite of the far reach of transforming social relations, at least individual life successes can be translated into small steps for critical social change. This ideological argument disregards an important contradiction. Conceiving the youth subject as vulnerable also entails thinking about how to minimize or manage the risks for the experiences of the future adult subject. As Kelly (2006) argues, a driving force behind the concern for "vulnerable" youth is the risk/potential for youth to become entrepreneurial, responsible, and active in the performance of exchange relations of capitalism (p. 29). This concern translates into the attempt by critical YPAR researchers, educators, and community partners to move discursively away from the discourse of "youth at-risk", and towards a discourse of youth as "assets" and "agents" (Cahill et al., 2008; Cammarota, 2011; Ginwright & James, 2002). In the process, the conception of youth and their respective experiences reproduce the material and social livelihoods, mechanisms, and infrastructures of global capitalism.

One aspect of reproduction occurs in the rampant celebration for texts that are produced on/by the epistemology of critical YPAR's participants. Youth knowledge is shared through various dissemination strategies: from research products like co-authored academic articles, analyses of findings, and conference presentations (Evans et al., 2010; Romero et al., 2008; Torre et al., 2008); to non-academic texts that report back and discuss research findings through items such as reports, curriculum, outreach work, and forms of artistic performance with community, institutional, or state powers (Cerecer, Cahill, & Bradley, 2013; Fox & Fine, 2012; Sanchez, 2009). The material production of these texts reveal that young people, by articulating their experience, must be creative and resourceful to support critical YPAR research

given the precariousness of their social and material conditions. Meanwhile, critical YPAR researchers are encouraged to develop academic-, institutional-, and policy-based partnerships to produce diverse and relevant scholarly and non-scholarly items (Cahill & Torre, 2007) that express the findings of critical YPAR work. Within the task of knowledge production, there is not simply a contrast between the roles and responsibilities of critical YPAR scholars and youth that produce youth epistemology. Scholarly production fuels the ongoing academic industrial complex, although critical YPAR researchers and others have framed research as social capital that can change individual and community lives in today's "global knowledge society" (Appadurai, 2006; Evans et al., 2010). Young people are not only exposed to a particular kind of consciousness as empowered individuals, but this transformed self becomes materially resonant for the production of scholarly work in critical YPAR. Thus, social transformation is theorized in the experiences of individual youth, while the material relations that make such milestones feasible are actively reproduced by building a scholarly tradition on youth epistemology.

Ideological Manifestations of the Term Critical

Through critical YPAR, experience and epistemology are fetishized into items that are theorized to translate into social transformation. In the process, the understanding of the term "critical" moves farther away from a dialectical one, and towards one that is ideological. This ideology is especially evident in the content of critical YPAR projects, where individual and collective learning emerges around one's social location. The content of what youth "know" or come to know, which is most critical for social change through YPAR, is an understanding of the self in all their social and discursive configurations. In navigating questions about for whom, or why, critical YPAR is so useful, many researchers return and centre YPAR within the activity of self-locating, as Cahill and Torre (2007) do:

> One's location – the fluid, geographical, political, emotional, gendered, classed position – is, we think, perhaps more important than the distinction between academic and non-academic researcher. Importantly, who is inside and outside is a question that is influx as we ourselves shift our perspectives and/or standpoints. (p. 203)

In one sense, critical YPAR participants integrate intersectional analyses in their critical consciousness-raising and knowledge production. But in another sense, these particular and individualized analyses use social location to present the appearances of unequal and unjust relations, in contrast to articulating the depth of capitalist social relations. This ideological act reproduces uninterrogated social-material relations, regardless of how these appearances are collectively woven into an array of linked reflections. It also manifests in the growing trend of critical YPAR that asserts to reclaim, redefine, and recreate new subjectivities irrespective of the ongoing social and material conditions (Cahill, 2007). Critical empowering consciousness-raising

comes in the form of individuals that articulate social location, but "decentring" the western subject and articulating individualized and localized oppression is not enough to unpack and transform the constitutive relations by which classed, gendered, and racialized locations are mutually and actively produced on local and global scales (Aguilar, 2015; Bannerji, 2011). Critical YPAR researchers and participants reproduce an understanding of critical learning that limits the kind of challenge that can be produced towards oppression, as social location serves as only one appearance of the socially/materially dynamic oppression that participants experience.

Thus, critical YPAR scholars produce ideology through a consciousness about our conditions that can only produce a mutual kind of critical praxis. Rather than generate profound disruption towards state and civil bodies, critical YPAR works towards an understanding of critical that seeks inclusion, accommodation, and ultimately reform from institutional sites where oppression is reproduced. For example, Irizarry (2009) argues that the recommendations of young people in critical YPAR are important for inclusion in multicultural education reforms, and that the plurality of diverse perspectives constitutes critical reforms. Upon theorizing about knowledge production in a critical YPAR project, Torre et al. (2012) state:

> We have created a clearinghouse of youth justice data to be integrated into city council testimony for ethical policing in schools; youth-parent-community organizing against school closings and high-stakes testing; and community education against sexual and sexuality harassment of youth by police and peers. We consider this a form of generalizability for organizing. (p. 182)

Thus, critical action consists of representing and including the narratives of experience for reform-based change among institutional, governmental, and civil society groups. Sharing "experience" allows individuals to diversify their discursive representations of marginalized and oppressed young people, but it also privileges learning about one's *self* – even in the most nuanced of articulations – over learning the intricacies of capitalist social relations as they appear in one's experience and conscientization about their life. The youth critique is said to be transformative in that it offers, "new methods, new theoretical frameworks, new ways of seeing things, and new ethical positions that make returning and reverting to old ways impossible" (Guishard & Tuck, 2014, p. 187). The novelty of it all may stem in representing the marginalization of young, racialized, working class, queer youth, but it doesn't extend to articulating the historical and ongoing social relations that are produced within the experiences of young people, during and beyond critical YPAR work.

Through critical YPAR, the youth critique comes to embody a consciousness about social location that represents and diversifies youth experiences through narratives. This ideological shift in critical conscientization also enables participants – and consumers of their research – to "reform" their practice while bypassing the ongoing production of social relations. In arriving to this new, critical knowledge, critical YPAR scholars come to generate an ideological and reproductive praxis in the *choice* and *desires* that are imagined to be opened for young people and their communities.

"Choice", "Desire", and "Risk" as Reproductive Praxis for Social Change

In this so-called transformative praxis, critical YPAR scholars target the cultural elements of our social relations and its structures. However, these same structures are treated as a necessity for critical YPAR work to generate more opportunity or choice for young people, without considering how these structures are also a necessity for ongoing capitalist social relations. For some critical YPAR projects, increasing the representation and power of marginalized youth in structures like schooling or policy is a step towards social change (Cerecer et al., 2013; Morrell, 2008). In other projects, the potential for social change is considered "higher when the 'system' itself supports YPAR initiatives aimed at providing youth the tools to 'speak back' regarding their concerns and needs" (Guerrero, Gaztambide-Fernández, Rosas, & Guerrero, 2013, p. 120). This theoretical flexibility allots critical YPAR scholars the room to suggest that ideas such as "citizen", "public", "rights" (Ginwright, 2008), and community or youth "development" (Cahill et al., 2008; Kelly Pryor & Outley, 2014) can be reimagined into more transformative terms. It also reproduces the argument that social change work requires youth to participate among stakeholders from the areas of schooling, policy, and academia, engaged in a conversation about their varying social locations but not their social-material relations. Fox et al. (2010) describe critical YPAR as the "collective efficacy, of what [collaborators] can accomplish together, [and] is reinforced in the expectation that everyone present must contribute to the effort" (p. 635). This is, of course, irrespective of the social and material relations that bring all of these collaborators together. Participants fall into the same trap that Himani Bannerji (1995) recognizes for those involved exclusively in identity politics: "Evading contradictions in their own lives and world… [individuals] have encouraged political projects which are as riddled with inscriptions of power from which they wish to escape" (p. 35). Critical YPAR projects disregard the contradiction between a new and transformative consciousness and a praxis that returns to the same material structures and tools that reproduce oppression, further illustrating that critical YPAR produces a consciousness and praxis that reforms – not transforms – capitalist social relations today.

New theorizing has emerged about the role of (critical) consciousness and praxis in the reimagining that occurs through critical YPAR. Critical consciousness is seen as differential, complex, or even inadequate as a concept to reflect on the praxis of marginalized young adults. The praxis-building of critical YPAR participants are reserved for discussions in the "third spaces" (Tuck et al., 2008), in the sites of the "in-between" or "borderlands" (Ayala, 2009), or within "contact zones" (Torre, 2009; Patel, 2012): the meeting place of participants and allies of various social locations. Within the "paradox" of power that is situated "everywhere", critical YPAR is imagined to enable youth to create new subject positions for themselves, so that they see themselves and their local research collective as multi-situated in power with "attention to individuality, to each other's *desires* to accomplish their dreams despite the overwhelming structural barriers and stereotypical profiles which limit

access to *opportunities*" (Cahill, 2007, p. 286 [emphasis added]). Eve Tuck expands on the notion of *desire* in research (including in critical YPAR and youth resistance research), explaining that desire is assembled throughout our lifetime experiences, where the individual pieces together the "whole" that is their reality. "Desire is both the part of us that *hankers* for the desired and at the same time the part that *learns to desire*. It is closely tied to, or may even be, our wisdom" (Tuck, 2009b, p. 418, [emphasis in original]). So if a young adult engaged in critical YPAR critiques corporate capitalism, then buys a pair of exclusive, corporate-brand shoes, their desire embodies an apparent navigation of *choices*, rather than a reproduction of the contradiction that entails living within capitalist social relations. Or, participants may come to exhibit "moments" of critical consciousness and praxis (Guishard, 2009), which is enough to suggest that there are transformative gains and potential at the end of critical YPAR work. In the pursuit of a multiplicity of consciousness and *choice*, critical YPAR scholars argue that contradictions strengthen the individual subject (Ayala, 2009, p. 80; Tuck & Yang, 2014, pp. 6–7).

Once again, this framework of *choice* and *desire* enables adult and youth researchers to theoretically reconstruct the young adult subject as transformed in their knowledge about, and ownership of, the contradictions that they appear to embody. *Desire* is treated as an innate human quality, while the social relations that constitute humanity and the human activities of desire and choice are not centred within the contradictions that young people encounter. As Tara Silver (2011) argues, since power is treated as a "paradox", the concept of desire offers no way to theorize or act outside of this paradox, and resistance can only function as a form of "play". The subject *remains* at the margins of our social-material reality, and our pedagogical tasks are drawn from the individualism of late capitalism, where the material elements of our everyday activities are omitted (pp. 199–200). While Silver referred to this as problematic in the activities of public pedagogy and cultural memory, I want to draw parallels with critical YPAR that, as a mode of inquiry that seeks social change, is limited by its focus on how social oppression appears rather than the ensemble of capitalist social relations embodied within these appearances. Critical YPAR scholars and participants rely on *desire* and *choice* as theoretical concepts that reimagine the appearances of their oppression as opportunities within historical and ongoing social relations, generating reproductive praxis that preserves inequality and oppression.

In all instances, youth participants and their adult collaborators begin with the immediate appearance of injustice experienced by the individual youth and their communities. Their attempt to historicize this oppression, and its respective critical action, further generates reproductive praxis by building a plurality of distinct but disjointed moments of action. Far from their intention, critical YPAR scholars frame history as an element of a wider study of "cross-site analyses" and personal narratives weaved together into new critical findings (Torre et al., 2008, p. 35). These narratives are also drawn to reveal a tradition of youth resistance, a legacy by which critical YPAR scholars seek to continue (Tuck & Yang, 2014). For example,

in one such critical YPAR project, participants built an oral history of racialized youth and their school experiences in the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* decision in the United States; As Morrell (2008) argues, the collection of historical counter-narratives enables participants to build "critical public history, where youth [can] work to uncover voices largely absent from traditional historical narratives of the experiences of communities of color in [Los Angeles] schools" (p. 179). The efforts to historicize critical action are important, but presenting these traditions as a plurality of counter-narratives obscures the implication of time on the social/material relations that produced these moments; it also removes these moments as the preconditions for our current moment of ideological, reproductive praxis for critical, youth-based social change work. In obscuring the relations between historical and contemporary action, it appears as unnecessary to investigate the totality of social-material relations by which these moments are drawn. This ideological mode is another aspect of how critical YPAR generates reproductive praxis to reform, rather than transform, social relations.

Ironically, this historical obfuscation also allows critical YPAR researchers to avoid the contradiction of risks in youth resistance and action today, even though scholars continue to draw links to historical struggles where risks were undeniably present. Eve Tuck (2009a) describes the issue as follows:

> Though we entertained it, taking it to the streets and calling for revolution wasn't realistic for us either. Despite our respect for those who engage in civil disobedience, most youth [from critical YPAR collectives], because of their social locations, could not financially or academically afford to be arrested. (p. 55)

The issue at hand, contrary to Tuck's response, is not the paradox (or "double bind") of incremental or revolutionary change; it is the implication that the privilege of being more financially or academically secure affords the individual more *choice* in social change. Marginalized youth do not need to engage in civil disobedience to be at risk of expulsion, incarceration, or even death. But jeopardizing their financial and academic futures is understood as reducing the *choice* for youth to be (adult) subjects of critical praxis. Thus, critical consciousness and praxis invites the youth researcher to see their social world differently and act upon it in creative and transformative ways that avoid risk and invite individual and community-based *choice*. It is transformative in the sense that everyday experiences, knowledge production, and research products are infiltrated by this new, critical, youth-oriented knowledge. It is a form of critical consciousness that is constituted by a theory of liberal individualism, and that also generates reproductive praxis among researchers and participants that rely on critical YPAR as a form of social change work.

Paula Allman (2010) argues that if critical educators and researchers cease to resist capitalist social relations, we either train people to cope with its consequences or educate them to, "employ their critical faculties on those areas of extant knowledge that are unrelated to social transformation or the type of social, economic and political

critique capable of challenging the system" (p. 150). What can young adults do with their emerging criticality at the end of critical YPAR work – their youth-centred funds, counter-narratives, desires, and choices? The possibilities are endless within the conceptual confine of the power paradox. Regardless of the new choices and subjectivities available to young people, their ongoing participation within capitalist social relations is still reproduced. Just as young people are encouraged to embody the contradiction that are their conditions, critical YPAR scholars have generated a consciousness and praxis that reproduces ideological and contradictory logic while building towards social transformation.

CONCLUSION

In its current conception, critical YPAR is an ideological project that fetishizes experience and epistemology, while fragmenting their criticality and generating reproductive praxis. Young people and their adult allies (as researchers and educators) enter into critical YPAR with genuine intentions of confronting and changing social injustice. But more importantly, they conclude this work as adults of choice and desire: with new knowledge, new subjectivities, and an articulation of social location that obscures ongoing capitalist social relations. Throughout this chapter, I've attempted to build a more dialectical understanding on critical YPAR, using conceptual tools from anti-racist Marxist-feminists that counter the obscuring of capitalist social relations within our everyday experiences (and our understandings about these experiences). The ideological consciousness and praxis generated through critical YPAR also warrants a stronger understanding on the limits of deconstruction as a form of oppositional and critical thought.

What do these concerns mean for pedagogical work seeking to produce critical and social transformation for young adults? There are serious limits to the theoretical claims that critical YPAR projects produce, claims generated across pedagogical projects that feel increasingly thin in the face of heightened dispossession and violence that young people encounter every day. At a recent conference, I encountered another young adult like myself engaged in critical YPAR as a graduate student (albeit – I assume – with an entirely different set of experiences, social location, and set of conceptual tools). In a small group discussion, I expressed my concerns about living in this pedagogical moment where claims of critical action and social change contradict the local and global manifestations of oppression that still organize our experiences. I was not only admonished by the facilitator to "stay on topic" (and explain how critical YPAR changed the lives of the young adults that I had worked with), but this fellow graduate student replied that it was not their concern to think about "big" problems like global oppression or capitalism; the youth from their project stated they were empowered, happy, and this was the most important takeaway. I sat with guarded patience until it was my turn to respond: by sharing the narratives of young adults – and my own – who had worked together in critical YPAR, I noted that despite our consensus that our work was transformative,

we still live with the reality of working-class, anti-racist, and queer struggle. The least we can do as researchers and educators is step back from the celebration of our pedagogical work with young adults and ask ourselves what constitutes these celebrations, and why the struggle remains for young adults and their communities.

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Paula V. Elias
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

PART TWO

YOUTH, PUBLIC POLICY, AND PROGRAMS

KIRAN MIRCHANDANI AND MEAGHAN BRUGHA

4. ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR WORK-RELATED AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Stratification and Entrepreneurialism

INTRODUCTION

Many countries in the world have developed vocational education and work-related training programs and policies to alleviate what has widely become known as the employment crisis amongst youth. This "crisis" has many facets but in this chapter, we focus specifically on one aspect: the integration of young people into labour markets. We trace attempts being made to foster entrepreneurialism amongst youth in Canada – an orientation which is actively promoted in work-related education and training practices. Rather than a focus on the promotion of self-employment per se, this entrepreneurialism promotes both a particular identity (that of the enterprising self in the context of neoliberalism) and a way of working. Based on an analysis of federal and provincial websites designed to support youth seeking careers, along with samples of vocational education program guidelines, we argue that such an approach to entrepreneurialism exacerbates rather than ameliorates exclusion based on socio-economic status, race and gender. We argue instead that vocational and workplace educators need to encourage participants to be "entrepreneurial" in a different way, specifically to challenge the precarity and exclusion which youth are particularly exposed to in contemporary labour markets.

The Youth Employment Crisis

Youth under and unemployment has been recognized as being amongst the most significant social problems of this decade. At a recent Group of 20 (G20) meeting, unemployed youth in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe were characterized as a "global time bomb" (Podesta, 2013; Pylas, Giles, Hatton, & Paphitis, 2013). In a study of youth labour force participation from 2008 to 2014, Bernard (2015) indicates a decline in youth employment (15 to 24 year olds) from 67.3% in 2008 to 64.2% in 2014, which was described as "the first significant, prolonged decline in youth labour force participation since the early 1990s" (p. 1).

There are several explanations for this contemporary crisis of global unemployment experienced by youth around the world. Often, explanations are situated within economics-oriented discourses of supply and demand, that is, the assumed mismatch

between "supply" and "demand" side factors in the labour market. Demand side factors include the dramatic rise in precarious jobs, which has disproportionately affected young workers, even those who are well educated (Ortiz, 2010). As Sandell (2012) summarizes, "the number of middle-tier jobs have stagnated. Job growth has [occurred mostly] in the low-wage service economy and in the well-paying knowledge economy" (p. 3). Youth under and unemployment has increased in conjunction with the demand for low-wage labour, which has skyrocketed. Competitive global firms require low-cost and flexible workers. Industries such as agriculture, routinized interactive services, and construction employ temporary just-in-time workers to meet short-term or seasonal needs, while middle- and upper-class professionals require low-cost service, domestic, and childcare workers to work in their homes (Standing, 2011). The result of these economic trends is that youth face chronic under and unemployment, spurring protests and calls for action around the world (McDowell, Rootham, & Hardgrove, 2014). While in the past youth under and unemployment was limited to "at-risk" youth, the current crisis cuts across class, race, and gender lines – it is not uncommon for high-achieving students who have experienced success in school and graduated with strong university credentials to be underemployed in service occupations with few career ladders.

Other theorists focus not on the rise of precarious labour, but rather on what are termed "supply" side factors, specifically, the assumed mismatch between employer needs in the context of global economies and worker aspirations. As Bell and Benes (2012) summarize,

> There is a profound incongruity between the optimistic projections for Gen Y's careers and today's labour market reality. On one hand there are reports of significant skills shortages across many economic sectors and on the other hand a growing population of youth who are having significant challenges integrating into the labour market. (pp. 5–6)

There is a wide consensus that youth today need adequate training, access to good quality jobs either within established enterprises or through self-employment, and opportunities for lifelong learning (Bell & Benes, 2012; Canadian Public Policy Forum, 2012; Jackson, 2014; Lehmann, 2005; Marshall, 2012; Taylor & Servage, 2012).

The framing of the problem in terms of demand and supply, as we argue in the section to follow, both arises out of, and supports, ideas around entrepreneurialism in the context of neoliberalism. O'Malley (2000) characterizes uncertainty as a "distinctive way of governing of 'enterprising subjects'" (p. 460). Uncertainty about their economic futures, for example, transforms youth into "prudent subjects of neoliberalism" who "practice and sustain their autonomy by assembling information, materials and practices together into a personalized strategy that identifies and minimizes their exposure to harm" (O'Malley, 2000, p. 465). The economic framing of the problem of youth under and unemployment in terms of supply and demand serves to suggest that individual agency and action, rather than the systemic

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economic reliance on low-wage labour, is the root cause of the problem. As a result, many of the interventions proposed as solutions to under and unemployment focus on the need to develop entrepreneurialism amongst today's youth.

Making Entrepreneurial Youth

Work-related education initiatives and training discourses in Canada and around the world are infused with narratives of entrepreneurialism. Many of these initiatives are targeted towards youth, although they may also include a focus on individuals forging careers in the trades, immigrants deskilling to gain entry into professions without certification barriers, or workers attempting to advance their careers. Entrepreneurialism, as Carla Freeman writes, is a touchstone of contemporary neoliberal society – it is a "way of being" which pervades all aspects of life. Through her ethnography of middle-class women in Barbados, Freeman (2014) shows how women's attempts to set up business ventures in fact entail "action and imagination, an ongoing process of envisioning and becoming as opposed to a given position, status or state of being that is achieved and established through economic means alone" (p. 2). Rather than being just about the creation of a business, Freeman argues that entrepreneurialism is about the formation of the self. The self is envisaged as a project with many facets – work, children, physiological make-up, mental health – all of which need to be managed in ways which are flexible and adaptable. Freeman notes that becoming an enterprising citizen is based on the infusion of emotional and aesthetic labour into work, making one's job part of how one looks and feels. This is the crux of neoliberal entrepreneurialism – the "blurring boundaries between enterprise-as-business and the self… as business, between social relations of business and intimate economies of love and support" (Freeman, 2014, p. 209).

In particular, youth are encouraged to become this type of flexible and enterprising subject, to work constantly and reflectively on themselves as though they are not only the enterprise but also the entrepreneur that must develop it. Youth at-risk, as Kelly (2006) argues, have been a particular target of the pressure to conduct themselves as enterprises and as entrepreneurs, constantly developing and working on themselves. They are targeted for interventions that drive the adaptation of entrepreneurial selfhood because of the many risks they must already manage, including risks associated with school, relationships, employment, and sexuality (Kelly, 2006). The aim of these initiatives is to foster the capacity in youth at-risk to maintain themselves as an enterprise, with the implicit warning that if they are unsuccessful in this approach to selfhood they may not be able to keep up with the global marketplace.

In a similar way, Gooptu (2013) draws on her research with security guards in India to show how enterprise culture is one where "individuals are optimistic and passionate doers in all fields of life" (p. 3). Expanding on this, there are several interrelated features of neoliberalism that promote this enterprise culture and the concept of the entrepreneurial self: "Government is conceived as the community

of free, autonomous, self-regulating individuals with an emphasis on the "responsibilisation" of individuals as moral agents" (Peters, 2001, p. 68). Rather than making claims on the state, enterprising citizens are required to take responsibilities for themselves, are self-disciplining, and engaged in continual projects of self-betterment.

Implicit in this ideal of the entrepreneurial subject is a valorization of "lifelong learning" and a construction of learning as inevitably good. Berglund (2013) observes that entrepreneurship education pervades many kinds of employability training programs including those designed for school children. They serve the purpose of "giving shape to individuals who have everything to "win" and nothing to "lose" for working to improve themselves" (p. 729). As a result, this "principle of potentiality" lies at the core of the enterprising self (Berglund, 2013, p. 723, as cited in Costea, Amiridis, & Crump, 2012), whereby individuals are encouraged to think of themselves as always works-in-progress.

Ironically, the promotion of enterprising subjects can lead to a diminished access to the development of tasks and skills required for jobs. Through an ethnography of low waged workers employed at a call centre, Sallaz (2015) shows how employees are required to conceptualize their jobs as a "learning game" and engage in a process of permanent pedagogy, or constant learning in order to avoid customer abuse and poor job evaluations. Providing workers with inadequate training for their jobs serves as a form of control since it is deeply disconcerting for these workers in customer-facing occupations to not be able to properly answer queries. As a result, they engage in rapid and constant learning while at the same time their jobs are conceptualized as "low skilled".

Indeed, several theorists have noted that entrepreneurialism in fact fosters its supposed opposite, that is, deference. Ameeriar's (2015) study of foreign trained nurses who attend work-related integration classes in Canada reveals that much of the curriculum focuses on the "pedagogies of affect" through which nurses are encouraged to be entrepreneurial in developing alternative understandings of themselves. The nurses' entrepreneurialism in this case involves making themselves into workers who can suppress their emotions, respond to the authority of doctors with deference or docility, and control their rage when faced with injustice. Ameeriar argues that women attending educational programs do so in order to learn to be the idealized "docile Asians" who are conceptualized as legitimate nurse workers.

The promotion and valorization of entrepreneurialism, often supported through media and popular cultures where business developers are "worshipped as saviors of our times" (Berglund, 2013, p. 729), also leads to the emergence of the figure of the failed subject. Maitra (2011), based on her research on highly educated immigrant women excluded from the labour market in Canada, observes that "those who can successfully take advantage of the opportunity and compete in the open market are described as enterprising… [while] those who remain unemployed or underemployed are blamed for their individual inability and deficiency to compete with others in becoming "productive" members of the state and the society" (p. 24).

Youth, perhaps more than any other age group in contemporary society, are embedded within cultures of entrepreneurialism through their interactions with arenas directed towards their education and labour market integration. In the sections below, we explore an example of such a state-driven arena, specifically, apprenticeship education as promoted through a national career information website. Our analysis shows that vocational and work-related education plays a key role in the promotion of cultures of entrepreneurialism. While such approaches seem to foster the notion of the learner as an active agent in control of their future, entrepreneurialism often leads to the failure to focus on actions in which workers must engage, in order to enrich their jobs or fight for better working conditions in the context of contemporary labour markets.

Vocational Education: Promise and Opportunity

In launching a new loan program to encourage youth to pursue apprenticeships, the former Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, made the following impassioned comment: "Apprenticeships play an important role in Canada's post-secondary education system and are a key provider of the vital skills and knowledge necessary to power and grow the Canadian economy" (Office of the Prime Minister, 2015, para. 8). The promise of apprenticeships is especially poignant in light of high rates of youth unemployment because of the close association that exists between educational curriculum and job requirements within such programs. Vocational education and training (VET) is often promoted as a solution to the youth unemployment crisis, and a key "driver" of national economic growth.

The promise that is inherent in the proliferation of VET comes, however, at an interesting time – in particular, a time when many apprenticeship programs themselves are in crisis. There is an emerging consensus that marginalized groups have had limited access to the "VET promise" of social and economic mobility. In many countries, gender and race hierarchies intersect and complicate class positions that accompany specific "pathways" between education and employment. As a result, educational practices and discourses, including vocational training and work-related education, contain both promise and peril since education and training are key sites within which both social inclusion and exclusion are fostered.

Canada-wide, there has been a doubling of the number of registered apprentices since the year 2000 (Refling & Dion, 2015). More significant than the rise in total numbers of apprentices, however, is the enormous shift in the occupational composition of apprentices (Figure 1). Specifically, between 2006 and 2012, there has been over an 800% increase in one profession – user support technicians. These include call centre workers as well as technical support workers. Other professions which have experienced substantial growth in numbers are early childhood educators, food service workers, and plumbers. Trends in Canada are mirrored in many other countries around the world.
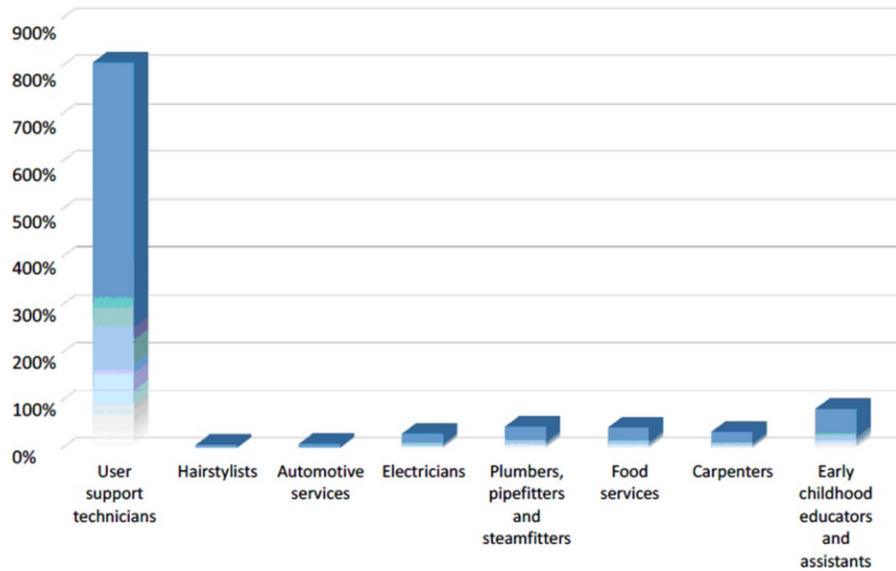
Figure 1. Percentage growth from 2006–2012 in number of apprentices in Canada by occupation.
(Source: Refling & Dion, 2015)

There are two significant consequences of these shifting occupational trends within apprenticeships in Canada. First, current high growth occupations are ones in which precarious jobs are rampant. Precarious jobs are those where there are "high levels of uncertainty, low income, a lack of control over the labour process, and limited access to regulatory protections" (Noack & Vosko, 2011, p. 3). As a result, despite the fact that apprenticeship education prepares workers to easily enter the labour market, working as a call centre worker, hairdresser, or early childhood assistant may not allow workers to earn wages which allow them to maintain a good quality of life.

A second consequence of the shifting occupational segregation within apprenticeship programs in Canada is the growing number of women within these programs. The lower rates of female participation within apprenticeship programs is often lamented by policymakers. As research by Taylor, Hamm and Raykov (2015) along with Taylor, Servage and Hamm (2014) reveals, only 11% of those who completed apprenticeship programs in 2007 were women. More than half of these women in Alberta, for example, specialized in hairstyling and food services. Canada-wide data reveal that apprentices in certain occupations – such as early childhood education or hairdressing – are around 90% female (Refling & Dion, 2015). Given this occupational gender segregation, it is not surprising that the median income for a female tradesperson is 55% of that of a male tradesperson.

Despite state efforts to promote apprenticeships, in line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development efforts, as an opportunity for young people to earn and learn, a 2013 survey of youth reveals that less than 20% were favourably inclined to choose apprenticeship routes. In fact, most apprentices in Canada are older – in their 20s and 30s – when they begin their programs and similar to many other countries, completion rates are low. In the context that apprenticeships do not challenge the occupational divisions of labour or the feminization of occupations in terms of the low levels of pay within many female-dominated sectors, they by and large fail to facilitate the economic mobility of young adults, particularly young women, in Canada.

These trends are not limited to Canada. Jørgensen (2015) links VET programs in Denmark specifically to what is referred to as the "boy problem" in education. VET is conceptualized as an alternative for boys doing badly in the academic streams, and those with low socio-economic resources. The 109 programs in Denmark are deeply gender segregated where half have 90% of either women or men. VET enrollment rates in Denmark are falling, and completion rates are dismally low – only about 50%. In this context, VET programs not only support gendered occupational segregation but also fail to address the underlying reasons for poorer academic achievement for boys in schools.

In Canada, apprenticeship programs are also frequently promoted in terms of their potential to help bridge the gap between the experience of highly skilled immigrants and the need for skilled labourers. www.settlement.org, a widely used and state-supported organization, advises new immigrants that if they are in a regulated profession such as medicine, dentistry, nursing, engineering, or social work, then they should choose an "alternative" profession to gain local experience. Taken from their website, they state:

> Some jobs are regulated in Ontario. This means you need a licence. It can take some time to get a licence, if you were trained outside of Canada. You might want to work in a non-regulated job in your field first. This can be a good way to use your skills and get Canadian work experience. (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2016, para. 1)

A foreign-trained doctor, for example, can go to vocational college for a year and become a medical laboratory technician – with a job that includes taking and analyzing blood samples. A nurse or teacher is directed towards an apprenticeship program in early childhood education. Yet, as many studies have revealed (Guo, 2010; Shan, 2015) such "deskilling" and redirection of highly skilled immigrants from occupations with stable to precarious jobs, rather than dealing with the racism which structures occupational exclusions, does not represent effective long-term labour market integration.

Guo (2009), quoting an article from the *The Globe and Mail* describes the experiences of one foreign educated immigrant in Canada who pursued the apprenticeship route:

> Prior to moving to Canada, Tina Ureten was a physician from Turkey, a specialist in nuclear medicine, a hi-tech field that uses radioactive materials for diagnosis. Almost every province in Canada had a shortage in nuclear medicine. Ms. Ureten noted she was willing to serve anywhere in Canada. Expecting difficulties to get her license here, she never realized it would be such a "bureaucratic, disheartening and ultimately fruitless journey" (Jimenez, 2003, p. F9). First, it took her two and a half years to hear back from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons after sending in her application. Then it took two years to write three of the Medical Council of Canada's evaluation exams, each with a six-month gap in between. She passed all three tests but was not accepted in the medical residency program because she was competing with 150 people. Eventually she gave up her true love and dream and became an ultrasound technician, for which she felt overqualified. (p. 45)

In other countries, even deskilling of this nature through apprenticeship programs is not available to immigrants. Chadderton and Wischmann (2014) provide a vivid example of such a trend where they document the underrepresentation of youth who are people of colour within apprenticeships in Germany and England. Refugees and asylum seekers face particular challenges with vocational education and training programs in many European countries given the inflexibility of systems, the underfunding of language assistance, the lack of recognition of prior international experience, the poor availability of advice, and the lack of support for families (Chadderton & Edmonds, 2015).

Gunderson and Krashinsky (2014) note that apprenticeships in Canada are often seen as a solution to the under and unemployment not only for immigrants but also for Aboriginal people and male high school dropouts. Yet, little has been done to challenge the exclusion of these groups because of the low apprentice wage and high dropout rate within many trade programs. This mounting evidence requires pause for thought. To use a metaphor developed by the American journalist David Brooks, we ask how vocational education and training can serve as a ladder rather than a cushion in relation to poverty reduction programs (Brooks, 2015). This involves confronting a central problem, which is that VET programs are often attractive to marginalized students because of the promise that they can provide social and economic mobility. Yet these programs fail to challenge, and sometimes even exacerbate, gendered occupational segregation, as well as labour market inequalities related to race and migration.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of the gendered and racialized nature of apprenticeship pathways for both youth and older workers, it is in fact entrepreneurialism and conducting oneself as an enterprise that pervades the promotional materials of these programs. Such a mismatch illustrates Peters (2001) argument that enterprise culture lacks "the language of equality of opportunity and it does not attempt to redress power imbalances or socio-economic inequalities" (p. 66). As the evidence in this section has shown, despite the promise of upward

social and economic mobility for marginalized youth often assumed to accompany work-related and vocational education, there is a growing recognition that many vocational and work-related education programs continue to reify gendered, racialized, and socio-economic occupational stratification. Promotional materials on youth employment services do not, however, contain any reference to such structural inequalities; instead, as argued in the remainder of this section, they aim to develop particular forms of entrepreneurialism. The national level youth services website, www.youth.gc.ca, as well as the policies and practices around youth skill development within pre-apprenticeship and traditional apprenticeship programs in selected provinces are analyzed.

Fostering Youth Entrepreneurialism

In response to labour market trends, which reveal that a large number of youth in Canada face uncertain career trajectories and short-term employment contracts, there is considerable emphasis within state policy and programming on encouraging youth to discover and develop their work futures. Starting with "careers" curricula in schools, youth are encouraged to consider alternatives to the traditional education-to-work pathways.

The federal website for youth, www.youth.gc.ca, offers myriad resources on topics such as job acquisition, voting, managing money, and filing taxes. These resources imply a youth audience interested in learning ways to manage the different parts of their lives and encourage a type of enterprising self that derives success from the awareness of one's own skills, strengths, and weaknesses and how to utilize them for personal and career fulfilment. The tab "Finding a Job" directs youth to the tasks they should complete to facilitate their job search, which typically involve a follow-up with a variety of agencies to ensure that the youth has an appropriate CV and the legal paperwork required to work. The site directs prospective job seekers to a series of websites where jobs are advertised, but also makes prominent note of a "hidden job market." Only by being entrepreneurial and utilising networking skills can one access this job market. Youth without access to networks are encouraged to make cold calls to employees in the yellow pages, and a sample script is provided on the website:

> Hello, my name is_____, and I understand that you are a (or work as a) _____. I'm currently exploring this career/occupation as a possibility for the future. I wonder if I could take about 10 minutes of your time to find out more about what you do (your career field). (Service Canada, 2011, para. 5)

Rather than any discussion of the exclusion implicit in approaches to hidden hiring, youth are encouraged to transform all of their social relationships – with families, friends, neighbours, community members – into economic ones. The class bias implicit in this encouragement of entrepreneurialism is stark, as it is clear that youth

who are marginalized from networks of economic power will have much more limited opportunities for accessing the hidden labour market than those who are not. Youth unable to properly network are assumed to require better scripts or training in making cold calls, rather than having different access to those with social and economic power.

Entrepreneurship is a prevalent theme throughout the website with a "Start a Business" tab on the main page under the column titled Life Events. Under their Checklists and Guides, sector-specific suggestions are made for venture creation. Many of these are directly related to skilled trades such as the Child Care Start-up Checklist for those interested in starting a child care business, the Specialty Trade Contractor Start-Up Checklist, the Restaurant and Catering Start-Up Checklist, and the Event and Conference Planning Start-Up Checklist to name a few. There are extensive resources available for all parts of conceiving, creating, and running a business, including learning about sector needs, setting up the business, complying with regulations, managing finances, hiring and training employees, protecting the business, among others. More than these hard tools, however, there is an underlying assumption that interested youth must seek this information out for themselves. The state, in this sense, is positioned as an information provider rather than a body which provides resources such as capital or protection from unfair practices.

A link is also provided to the Canadian Business Network website, a national state organization which aims to support entrepreneurship and innovation. Through this link, youth will see an entrepreneurial self-assessment tool that aims to show the participant what skills and strengths they possess or lack that are considered necessary for successful entrepreneurialism. Many questions involve being innovative and seeing possibilities where others see problems, and projects the notion of taking one's destiny into one's own hands, a concept aligned with enterprising selfhood. Successfully carrying out projects, taking calculated risks, seeing many solutions to a problem, learning lessons from failures, making sacrifices in order to succeed, functioning in ambiguous situations, anticipating events and trends, as well as having and mapping out ambitions are all capabilities these resources purport as necessary for successful entrepreneurialism.

Such personal and professional self-development and entrepreneurial orientation is cast as universally beneficial for all youth. There are however, two glaring omissions in these narratives. First, little mention is made to the growing precarity of the labour market which is facilitated through the growing use of the "gig" economy where many employers are engaging in the unfair labour practice of characterizing workers as self-employed entrepreneurs in order to evade their responsibilities under labour laws as well as reduce their labour costs (Canadian Labour Congress, 2016). Second, those unable to undertake risk or make sacrifices are constructed as lacking the appropriate orientation for contemporary labour markets. As Maitra (2011) argues, those that do not fit within this idealized role are seen as failures, rejected from being considered productive members of society and the blame for which is solely on their inability to become enterprising selves, not on the structures that surround them.

Apprenticeship education is also prominently profiled on the main www.youth.gc.ca website, and links are provided to provincial and territorial programming and standards. It is promoted as a viable career pathway for youth, with colourful and engaging profiles of happy and successful tradespeople woven throughout the website. Evidence of enterprising skills is not difficult to find in Canada's varied pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities as is outlined below – the structure and materials indicate an environment and priorities that aim to equip students with the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional skills that are necessary and valued for organizational and self-growth. Additionally, there is an emphasis on pursuing lifelong learning throughout the trades as a necessary skill for career advancement. Materials advertising apprenticeship programming across Canada indicate the importance of an integrated delivery of curriculum, inclusive of life skills and employability skills that promote self-awareness and foster entrepreneurialism.

Apprenticeship programs are usually offered through a college or vocational school and lead to a Certificate of Qualification in a skilled trade. These programs are structured to provide both classroom learning (often about 20%) and on-the-job experience (approximately 80%). Students are encouraged in high school to access apprenticeships early instead of waiting until after graduation to become registered apprentices and work towards becoming certified journeypersons in a skilled trade, while completing their secondary school diplomas. These are referred to as Pre-Apprenticeship Training Programs and in Canada are typically up to 52 weeks in duration and include in-school, apprenticeship, and safety training components and an 8 to 12 week work placement. Many youth apprenticeship programs designed for high school students such as the Alberta Apprenticeship Program (Government of Alberta, 2016), Manitoba High School Apprenticeship Program (Apprenticeship Manitoba, n.d.), Nova Scotia O2 – Options and Opportunities (Government of Nova Scotia, 2016), High School Program, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) (Government of Ontario, 2016), and Teen Apprenticeship Program (TAP) in New Brunswick (Government of New Brunswick, 2016) as a sample of available programming, begin as early as Grades 10 and 11. Most pre-apprenticeship programs in Canada allow their participants to decide on their school/work schedule, pending agreement from the school and employer, encouraging the development of personal and professional responsibility. Additionally, it is up to the student to maintain their academic studies, inform their employer of any absences, arrange travel to and from work, and report all hours worked, which serve to strengthen this approach of self-responsibilization.

Examples of challenges from the intermediate and senior levels of the Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program curriculum for high school students include interviewing a Journeyperson, designing and displaying a career pathway chart for a trade, and community experience in the trades. These activities for high school students encourage the development of tenacity, resourcefulness, interpersonal relationship skills, and creativity. These activities also foster the understanding that no two career paths are the same and innovation must be utilized

to create one that works for them and the industry both, a responsibility that is placed on them, however, and not the industry; a lesson in using enterprise for self-growth. To advance careers in the trades, they may need to call on these skills to develop strategies for enriching their positions or fighting for better working conditions.

For apprenticeship programming intended for persons after high school, the course culminates in the attainment of a Certificate of Qualification in a skilled trade. Receiving a Journeyman Certificate in Canada typically involves the completion of at least 12 months of an apprenticeship program, including technical training, on-the-job hours, and passing all required examinations – a similar structure within all provinces and territories. The website for the British Columbia Apprenticeship Programs contain program materials related to specific trades, which is generally comparable across the national apprenticeship landscape. The skills-based curriculum can be broken down into the following categories: competence in describing and using tools related to their field, problem-solving (the gasfitters, for example, must be able to use mathematics and science specifically to problem-solve, whereas hairstylists must often call on interpersonal and communicative problem-solving skills), an ability to identify various risks in their environments, interpretive and analytical skills, the ability to effectively and appropriately apply applications and procedures, and the ability to stay flexible and adaptable to make necessary adjustments to practices. Programs vary, with some emphasizing technical skills, some design skills and others social skills, but the practice of being aware of and understanding how to appropriately manage one's cognitive, social, and emotional skill-set was inherent in all program materials, as was the importance of maintaining lifelong learning to stay competitive in their prospective roles.

On the Ontario College of Trades website, www.collegeoftrades.ca, advertising materials are featured for a few skilled trades that inform an awareness of the skillsets needed for success in the industry. They tell us that tool and die makers, for example, must be able to adapt to technological advances, a theme commonplace in apprenticeship program outlines, and one in line with lifelong learning (Ontario College of Trades, 2015b). From the same website, industrial electricians were described as needing to be detail-oriented, adaptable, able to work independently or as part of a team, have strong mathematical and analytical skills, have a mechanical aptitude and good manual dexterity, and they must be good planners and interpreters of schematics and drawings (Ontario College of Trades, 2015a). Truck and coach technicians must have strong mechanical aptitude and problem-solving skills, and should prepare for a career of lifelong learning (Ontario College of Trades, 2015d). Most apprenticeship programs require and aim to equip its participants with similar skillsets: the ability to comply with methods, procedures, and standards, yet use creativity and innovation to form career pathways of their own making, which encourages problem-solving, networking, flexibility, self-confidence, awareness and responsibility. In addition, they must be willing to undertake lifelong learning, and understand how to appropriately apply and adapt the skills they have learned in practice.

There were some programming materials that also emphasized the more traditional entrepreneurial curriculum, including but not limited to bookkeeping, assessing price points, reflective listening skills, knowing what questions to ask customers, promoting sales and services, developing and evaluating business and marketing plans, and educating clients using product knowledge. Some programs focus more on these skills than others, but not always because these participants are more likely to operate their own businesses. Instead, their focus on these entrepreneurial skills may be intended for students to become better prepared and more effective and enterprising employees. Failure to adapt to these more informal mechanisms of entrepreneurship, however, may serve as a rejection from the labour market.

As we have discussed, one of the fastest growing apprenticeship sectors in Canada is that of user support technicians. The prevalence of programs in this field provides a particularly poignant example of the promotion of entrepreneurialism in the context of the fact that many jobs in call centres are precarious and poorly paid. On the National Occupational Classification website, user support technicians are described as providing "first-line support to computer users experiencing difficulties with computer hardware and with computer applications and communications software" (Government of Canada, n.d., para. 1). Possible positions for those candidates trained in this sector include but are not limited to: call centre agents, client support representatives, computer help desk representatives, hardware installation technicians, hardware technical support analysts, help desk technicians, software installation technicians, and systems support representatives. Candidates in this field must therefore be flexible and willing to adapt to a variety of industries.

Training in user support technician services, similar to early childhood education training, has more of a focus on the formation of an academic knowledge base and not as much on practical business creation and operational skills. Newly graduated students, however, must use innovation and an understanding of personal skillsets to navigate the workforce since there is no linear path that a graduate takes in this sector. If no pathway is working, graduates are encouraged to manage themselves, their skillsets, and ambitions to create possible alternative selves that may better fit in an industry, which often comes at the sacrifice of wage and working conditions.

Overall, the www.youth.gc.ca website, a widely publicized national repository of information for young people, conveys information in ways which addresses its viewers as enterprising subjects. The site aims to provide information on opportunities available, and outlines the entrepreneurialism which users must embody to avail of these opportunities. The vocational and workplace education programming is similarly structured for enterprising participants, who must manage all aspects of their lives as an entrepreneur manages its enterprise to be able to fit within an industry, often at the cost of wage and/or working conditions. There is a silence on the website regarding the growing precarity of jobs (Noack & Vosko, 2011). Little information about the stark gender discrepancies between apprenticeship fields is presented. There is also no information about the employment conditions within occupations as carpentry, hairstyling, food services, early childhood education or

user support, or efforts underway to enhance wages and working conditions within these fields. Young people receive little education on their labour rights as well as state or employer obligations. As a result, youth learn to blame their failures in entrepreneurialism for their under or unemployment, rather than blaming labour market conditions (Brunila, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

State informational websites are peppered with a focus on enterprising formal and informal learning experiences and provide exposure to the knowledge, skills, and competencies required not only for start-ups or new business ventures but also for entry into the trades. Self-awareness and lifelong learning are promoted as keys to personal and professional success, while unemployment data suggests that graduation from a college apprenticeship program does not guarantee an escape from precarious employment. Apprentices are often forced to use their experiences and resources to navigate unfair and discriminatory labour market practices themselves. To be successful, they are forced to develop a network for themselves and learn how to navigate the workforce in creative and innovative ways that allow them to enrich their working experiences and make positive changes for workplace betterment.

Enterprising skills are making their way into educational programming in Canada and youth are tasked with using these enterprising skills and discourses to shape their futures. Entrepreneurship training has gained international recognition and political trendiness in recent years for building the types of skills that are needed for youth struggling with the current employment crisis to successfully enter and thrive in the labour market. The 2015 Ontario Budget, for example, called for an additional investment of $250 million over two years that will focus on "skills development, labour market connections, entrepreneurship and innovation" (Sousa, 2015, p. 5) with the intention of better equipping Ontarian youths to compete in today's global economy as well as a $23 million investment over two years in the Apprenticeship Enhancement Fund "for better equipment to help train more people" (Sousa, 2015, p. xxiii).

Yet, the frenzy of enthusiasm and activity around preparing youth for the new economy fails to challenge the structure of the labour market in which organizations are rewarded for minimizing labour costs rather than facilitating the incubation of youth aspirations and skills. Youth equipped with enterprising skills often face jobs in the service and retail sector which require compliant workers who have a high tolerance for repetitive work and expect low wages with poor benefits. Youth remain ill equipped to challenge the systemic exclusions they experience.

To date, vocational and work-related education is premised on the assumption that learning and working are, and should remain, deeply intertwined rather than as distinct sets of activities. Yet, the automatic up-waging that is assumed to accompany upskilling has not occurred, leaving many with stagnant socio-economic positions rather than the mobility associated with educational attainment. Many work-related

educational programs filter youth into occupations which are characterized by high levels of precarity – where workers are poorly paid, and work on contract. In this context, a key part of youth work-related education and training must focus on the fact that workers have to be entrepreneurial to have their basic rights upheld.

Being a worker in a precarious, contract, or temporary job means engaging daily in worker activism – developing connections with coworkers, investigating protection strategies which have worked in the past and learning about one's rights. The task before us as workplace educators, therefore, is to enlarge the much-established focus on neoliberal entrepreneurialism to include the development of knowledge about the precarity rampant in the labour market, particularly in sectors employing workers who are marginalized by virtue of their gender, migration status, or race. As Cunningham (1993) argues, "education is not about promoting the existing hegemony [but] about developing counter-hegemonic struggle… education is about democratization of power relationships" (p. 5). It is clear that the current structures and orientation of vocational education and training programming across Canada's landscape fail to provide the kind of education that is needed to foster equity in youth labour market integration.

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Kiran Mirchandani
University of Toronto

Meaghan Brugha
University of Toronto

STEPHANIE MACKINNON

5. THE "YOUTH" CRISIS IN NOVA SCOTIA

An Examination of Masked Relations

INTRODUCTION

Jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean, Nova Scotia is a peninsular province connected to the rest of Canada by a narrow stretch of land. Along with its neighbouring Atlantic Provinces (New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland), it is an often-forgotten corner of the country. When Nova Scotia is remembered, it is typically portrayed in a way which solely acknowledges its idyllic natural beauty, its 13,300 km of jagged coastline, its world-record-worthy changing tides, quaint small towns, and its slow-paced lifestyle. This portrayal has been widely adopted by tourist campaigns and is packaged and sold to potential visitors. The provincial adoption of this simplified representation of Nova Scotia is exemplified in the province's license plate, which proudly boast "Canada's Ocean Playground."

McKay (1992, 2000) argues that this representation of Nova Scotia is patronizing and insufficient. He suggests that it presents the province as both frozen in the past, and as a place that is open for the unrestricted and leisurely use of visitors. This is not to say that the province lacks beauty. Rather, this isolated depiction of quaint seaside fishing villages and rural farming communities systemically masks the historical challenges the province has experienced and the living material experiences of the residents as they try to foster sustainable livelihoods. Specifically, this common portrayal overshadows the systemic underdevelopment of the province, the solidification of its dependence on the federal government, and the consistent outmigration and underemployment of its residents.

The 1879 tariff wall imposed by the federal government was foundational in establishing the systemic underdevelopment of the Maritimes (Ibbitson, 2015). The goal of the tariff wall was to increase central Canada's manufacturing capacity, yet Maritime trade suffered as a consequence. This type of government intervention became characteristic for the Maritimes. Ibbitson elaborates to say that "[c]ut off from American markets and far removed from the Canadian heartland, the Maritimes withered into a mostly rural economy dependent on forestry and the fishery, which offered only seasonal work (2015, "To blame," para. 5)". In the years that followed, the federal government proceeded to support the development of unsustainable industrial initiatives, including coal mines and paper mills, to try and offset the damage caused by earlier development policy. Nova Scotia effectively went from

being a self-sufficient independent province to a peripheral forgotten corner of a country, dependent on the support of the centre.

With these relations as the unstable economic foundation of Nova Scotia and the Maritimes as a whole, outmigration from the province became a systemic way people learned to survive (Corbett, 2007). In other words, when people could not sell their labour-power within the province, they were forced to do so elsewhere. Some of the major migration periods out of Nova Scotia for work are post-World War II with the development of factories in Ontario, and since the 1970s to the oil fields (otherwise known as the tar sands) of western Canada (Stalker & Phyne, 2011, p. 4). The permanence of the role of migration west for work is argued to have intensified in the 2000s, with regular flight routes being established between Atlantic Canadian communities and the oil fields of Alberta (Ferguson, 2011).

Migration for work is a historic trend in Nova Scotia that continues to this day; many continue to move their families to other areas of the country. There are a growing number of people who continue to live in Nova Scotia and work labour jobs in other areas of the country. Ferguson (2011) notes that in 2005 there were 1,700 individuals from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia employed in the Tar Sands, this grew to 2,200 by 2008 (p. 108). He noted that long-distance commuting had become deeply ingrained into the way of life for Cape Bretoners, and explains that it was commonly colloquially referred to as "going out west" or "doing the back and forth" (p. 109). His work examines the impacts of this increasingly common way of life; acknowledging the monetary gains, as well as the unstable living situation and sense of vulnerability for families and communities. He importantly demonstrates that while the move to work in Alberta is framed as a choice, individuals largely feel that the decision is made for them based on limited (or non-existent) alternative options. This point becomes strikingly clear when employment opportunities in the oil fields are low, leaving people without work and in dire situations to sustain themselves.[1]

Mazer's (2013) work examines how this relationship between Atlantic Canadians and the rest of the country continues to be exploitative today. She outlines how the 2012 employment insurance reforms were part of an intentional plan to fulfill the need for labour-power in the oil fields by creating desperation and an increased necessity for Atlantic Canadians to migrate west. Mazer thus crucially reintroduces an analysis, which examines how the conceptualization, design and implementation of national policy and programming is embedded in a neoliberal agenda. She demonstrates how federal economic growth has been prioritized over the quality of citizens' lives, while those in positions of power continually try to equate the two. Foster and Foster (2012) importantly contribute to this conversation when they argue that a great deal of work has gone into framing Atlantic Canadians as *lazy dependents.* Specifically, they demonstrate how this manufactured identity of laziness complements the federal pressure for working-age people to migrate out of rural communities and work in a setting like the tar sands.

These outmigration and long-distance commuting arrangements have become ingrained in Nova Scotians minds as a method of survival. Many conceptualize

these challenges as a storm to be weathered, just as generations before had done. Outside of the province, many Canadians are unaware of the challenges unfolding in the Maritimes. It was these contradictory mindsets that enticed me to further examine the dominant framing and lived experiences, of Nova Scotian youth as they navigate underemployment and outmigration. More specifically, how exploitative conditions and forced migration could be conceptualized in a way which normalizes these experiences. As such, this became the subject of my master's thesis and is the research from which this paper was born (MacKinnon, 2016). One of the youths that I interviewed for my research described the present moment in a way which exemplifies the resilient yet characteristic acceptance of the status quo.

> …The gloom and doom and low economic growth, I mean we're used to that, its not something new, I know it's forecasted to get worse but… we're sort of hardened to those realities. (Kyle, excerpt from interview)

His perspective reflects that of many Nova Scotians who have come to understand their capacity to survive these circumstances as a rite of passage, or as a necessity that must be endured.

In recent years within the province, there has been a push to recognize that Nova Scotia is on the brink of a crisis of unprecedented proportions (oneNS, 2014). Statistics suggest that, at the current rate, by 2036 there will be 100,000 (20%) fewer working age people in Nova Scotia (oneNS, 2014). The "crisis of youth out-migration" is at the core of how Nova Scotia's economic woes are being conceptualized and analyzed. Many within the province continue to argue that generations before ours have dealt with more challenging hardships. Yet others fear the outcome of young people increasingly leaving the province, while a growing number of elderly individuals become more and more dependent on the provincial health care system. In other words, the ratio of people in need of social services is climbing, with fewer and fewer who can both contribute to the tax base for social services and directly care for aging residents. Some are saying this combination may cause the provincial health care system to implode or outright collapse if drastic action is not promptly taken (Pate, 2016). In other words, the relations between youth outmigration and other forces within the province are manifesting in widespread complications.

If any meaningful change is to unfold, it is crucial to understand the historical specificity of this moment, and not to simply normalize it as the "way things have always been." My research within this paper aims to be part of the process of unpacking what is happening in the current historical moment, how it is framed in recent research, and how this framing can problematically stifle what is considered possible moving forward. In order to do so, the experiences of youth in Nova Scotia will first be situated in the current context of the challenges youth are experiencing around the world.

This will be followed by an analysis of two major documents recently released on the state of affairs in Nova Scotia. The first document is a Commission report titled: *Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotian*s – *The Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy.* This report was published in

2014; it sought to draw attention to the mounting economic crisis unfolding in Nova Scotia and simultaneously call the population to action. The second document is a position paper titled *No More Farewells: Making a Place for Youth in Nova Scotia's Economy.* The paper was written by Students Nova Scotia, an alliance of provincial student associations, in response to the Commission Report; it emphasizes the experiences of youth in the current economic moment.

Finally, I will demonstrate the shortcomings of the dominant conceptualization exemplified in the documents. This examination will draw on a Marxist-feminist understanding of *ideology* in an effort to unpack how the dominant conceptualization may be problematic. As these documents are quickly becoming pillars upon which provincial policy is being built, I understand this analysis to be part of an effort to expand the ideas of what is considered possible for the future.

THE GLOBAL YOUTH CRISIS

In order to contextualize the challenges in Nova Scotia, it is important to understand that in their own particular ways, youth are currently experiencing similar challenges around the world. Sukarieh and Tannock (2008) argue that the 2001 establishment of a Youth Employment Network between the World Bank, the United Nations (UN), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), is one of the notable turning points in the global emphasis on youth (p. 302). Since the formation of this partnership, reports have spilled out of these organizations as well as others connected to them. Some of the reports include: the UN Secretary-General's 2005 report, *Global Analysis and Evaluation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment*, the ILO's 2005 background paper, *Youth Employment: From a National Challenge to a Global Development Goal*, the World Bank's 2005 *Children & Youth: A Framework for Action*, and the World Bank's 2006 *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation.* Within many of these reports on youth, there is an increasing focus on youth employment. This trend has also become apparent within Canada. A few provincial examples of the increasing emphasis on youth employment include: the development of a Ministry for Children and Youth Services in Ontario and their release of the *Stepping Up* report, as well as the call for a youth attraction and retention policy framework for Nova Scotia (StudentsNS, 2014).

Within Nova Scotia, this increased focus on youth and economic crisis manifested in the two major research documents mentioned above: the oneNS Commission Report and Students Nova Scotia's position paper. In an effort to unpack the dominant province-wide conceptualization of the challenges Nova Scotian youth are experiencing, I will examine those documents closely in the following section of my paper.

The Documents

*Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotian*s – *The Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy* (the oneNS Report), was

published in February 2014, with the support of the provincial government. The report was framed as a comprehensive analysis of the current state of Nova Scotia. In the introductory section, the report argues that Nova Scotia is "on the brink of an extended period of decline" (oneNS, 2014, p. vi). The commissioners explain that the purpose of their work is to address this looming crisis and facilitate a unified embrace of a positive future.

The report specifically identifies youth-outmigration and an aging population as major features of the mounting crisis. In an effort to address these factors, the report determines Nova Scotia should comprehensively focus on economic and population growth: "In the simplest terms, to build a better future Nova Scotia has to reverse current population trends and generate higher levels of economic growth than we have achieved in over the past decade or more (oneNS, 2014, p. 47)."

Thus, the core goal of the report was to stimulate an individually driven yet unified approach to economic and population growth. In other words, the commission suggests that there is no need to understand how this moment of crisis has emerged, but rather, it re-affirms that a crisis has arisen, and with this as a point of departure, emphasizes that "reversing it" is the individual resident's responsibility.

The commission repeatedly advocates that the goal of economic and population growth will only be achieved if people take individual ownership to change their circumstances. It consistently suggests that growth is a question of the courage, imagination, and determination of the population, and regularly reiterates that addressing this "crisis" is most certainly not the responsibility of the government.

> …[our goals] are not things that depend on massive increases in government expenditure: even if such new investment was possible in the foreseeable future (which the Commission doubts), there is little evidence from past experience, that in and of itself, this would dramatically improve our economic performance. (oneNS, 2014, p. viii)

There is an underlying tone of the inevitable responsibility of the individual to take passionate action to "catch Nova Scotia up" to the requirements of the global market so that it can once again become a place of prosperity. One of the major proposed means of achieving this prosperity is through directly targeting youth. The report consistently discusses youth in a way that exemplifies this call for courageous and risky action, it applauds those who skill-up or engage in entrepreneurial action and shames those who do not.

In response to the oneNS Commission Report, Students Nova Scotia (StudentsNS) published a position paper titled *No More Farewells: Making a Place for Youth in Nova Scotia's Economy*. StudentsNS intention behind publishing their paper was part of their larger mandate of supporting students to learn, work, and build lives in Nova Scotia. They explicitly state that their objective in writing their paper was to "increase the number of economic opportunities available to young people in Nova Scotia" (StudentsNS, 2014, p. 3).

The StudentsNS position paper aligns with the oneNS report in its advocacy for an economic-centred focus on building a brighter future for young adults and the province of Nova Scotia as a whole. Yet, the paper differs in how it suggests that this goal should be achieved; where the oneNS report largely focused on youth responsibility to skill-up and take risks, StudentsNS argued that government, business, and post-secondary institutions should more coherently support youth in their transition to the workforce.

The StudentsNS paper identifies youth as being individuals between the ages of 18 to 35. The paper explains that this age bracket was chosen to capture transitions to post-secondary education and to the workforce, recognizing that in certain circumstances this age range may vary (StudentsNS, 2014, p. 3). In order to lay out a method of how to support youth access to employment, StudentsNS dauntingly explores all the programs and policies related to youth in Nova Scotia. The paper reviews economic literature, including both federal and provincial youth labour market policies, as well as experiential and career development programs at all 11 of Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions (StudentsNS, 2014, p. ii). Their rigorous work details a multitude of challenges and realities that youth experience in Nova Scotia. Some of these include: youth are more than twice as likely to be unemployed in Nova Scotia (16.6%) as the rest of the working age population (7.6%) (StudentsNS, 2014, p. 1); that university is becoming increasingly expensive and nearly impossible to fund with minimum wage work; that a large portion of new jobs created are part-time; and that employers have misconceptions around youth being lazy. Again, it is important to recognize that these are trends happening around the world, but that this work examines the particularities of how these trends are manifesting in Nova Scotia.

Additionally, the StudentsNS paper notes that more youth are achieving higher levels of education and balancing part-time work with study than ever before. Thus, it importantly acknowledges that youth do not always need more skills; rather, there is often a disconnect between what youth have to offer and securing employment where their skills would be relevant. Overall, the StudentsNS paper paints a picture of a fractured and mismanaged province where youth are falling through the cracks.

While some youth leave to travel, or follow in the footsteps of friends and family, StudentsNS argues that it is with the above factors in mind that youth are making informed decisions to leave the province. They elaborate to say that:

> Young Canadians are graduating with the knowledge that they are more educated than any previous generation, but that they will find it harder to attach to the labour market, save for a mortgage down-payment, or pay the costs associated with having children, especially if they are graduating with significant debt. (StudentsNS, 2014, p. 41)

Their paper notes that while other periods of history may have provided more substantial challenges to youth in their transition to adulthood, the current circumstances are also quite bleak. As a result, many students have made up their minds long before they finish university, or even high school, to leave Nova Scotia.

As stated, StudentsNS' central goal in writing their paper was to support youth in gaining meaningful employment. As such, their paper finds that there is substantial federal and provincial funding available, but that the administration, program delivery, and review processes are fractured and disjointed. StudentsNS thus argues that although an estimated $100 million is spent annually[2] on making the climate of Nova Scotia more employable for youth, the lack of a specifically targeted focus on youth means that the benefits often do not reach them (StudentsNS, 2014, p. 49).

In terms of the programs themselves, their paper's major concerns were the overlapping mandates, too little emphasis on connecting youth to actual jobs, and a preoccupation with skill development or knowledge acquisition (StudentsNS, 2014, pp. 50–51). StudentsNS identifies that one of the major sources of these shortcomings is the lack of coordination between government departments and agencies. The paper further asserts that this disorganization makes it nearly impossible for youth to navigate the programs available to them, as they are unsure of where to look, or who to ask, for assistance (StudentsNS, 2014, p. 53).

StudentsNS thus argues that it is not the absence of programs, but the insufficiencies and disorganization within and amongst them that do not adequately help, or even perpetuate, the plight of precarious youth in Nova Scotia (StudentsNS, 2014). One of the major recommendations that came out of the StudentsNS examination of the programs targeted towards youth in Nova Scotia is their call for the immediate implementation of a comprehensive Youth Attraction and Retention Strategy (StudentsNS, 2014, p. 4). The paper recommends that the strategy be developed by the province and supported by the private and not-for-profit sectors as well as post-secondary institutions.

The Documents Inadequacies

While economic and population growth are certainly not *bad*, I argue that the way in which each of these reports respectively conceptualizes the youth crisis both individualizes and de-historicizes their analysis. In other words, while both reports achieve their stated goals, their epistemological approaches undeniably influence their findings. With regard to the oneNS Report, it overlooks *how* the challenges youth are experiencing in the province has unfolded in relation to the intensification of the neoliberal form of capitalism. Instead, it is built on an implicit belief that the continued adoption of the principles of neoliberalism (the reduced role of the state, the reorienting toward the market, and the increased emphasis on individual responsibility) will equally benefit businesses and all residents.

The StudentsNS paper approaches the issues it understands youth to be experiencing with a similar sense of urgency to that of the oneNS Report: that *something* must be done, and that a "business as usual" approach will continue to have detrimental effects. Yet they differ in who they feel should spearhead the task of supporting youth in accessing the market. Where oneNS predominantly suggests youth (and others in marginalized positions) should become more entrepreneurial,

StudentsNS advocates for a more coherent support system from government, business, and universities.

One of the primary ways we can understand how these documents promote the unquestionable adoption of neoliberalism is through a Marxist-feminist dialectical historical materialist understanding of ideology. Two of the foundational tenets of Marxist and Marxist-feminist modes of conceptualizing the world are: first that the only constant is motion, and second, that outside of the natural world[3] everything is a product of human relations, for example, the economy. Through this conceptualization, ideology is understood to arise when the object of inquiry – in this case, youth in the current context of Nova Scotia—is presented in isolation from its natural relations and from the human activity that has engineered this moment. This understanding of ideology is radically different from its colloquial usage.

Furthermore, Marx believed that how something develops is also part of what it is. Thus, he was not interested in studying *why* things change, as this would imply that change is external to the item of study rather than part of it. With this in mind, he focused on *how, when*, and *into what* things change (Ollman, 2003). In order to more accurately conceptualize constant motion, Marx used the process of abstraction. Abstraction is something we all do naturally, albeit often in a lazy manner. In watching movies, or listening to music, we focus on a particular aspect of the whole and draw artificial boundaries in order to generate an understanding of it. Marx's theoretical application of abstraction is part of his recognition that all of reality cannot be digested by the mind in its entirety; it must be broken down into manageable pieces (Ollman, 2003, p. 60). Yet, when an abstraction is not returned to its social relations, ideological knowledge is produced. While in theory this may seem harmless, through the analysis of the OneNS Report and the StudentsNS position paper, it will become evident that this mode of conceptualizing systematically isolates the knowledge presented and suggests that a continued adoption of the principles of neoliberalism is both inevitable and unchallengeable.

In an effort to demonstrate how an ideological conceptualization can be stifling to understanding the origins of a crisis, I turn to David McNally's (2011) work on the 2008 financial crisis. McNally notes that when the markets first crashed, there were comments from the ruling elites published in the likes of the *Financial Times* questioning who had made what decisions, how this circumstance arose, and if capitalism had a future. McNally (2011) refers to this phase as "The Great Panic" (p. 14). Yet, once the state agreed to use federal reserves to bail out the banks from the debt they had accrued through faulty loans, the discussion shifted to the economy as an uncontrollable entity, as if it had an agency of its own. McNally refers to this phase as "The Great Denial" (2011, p. 21). He argues that this marked a shift of responsibility for the 2008 financial market collapse from the human beings who ran the big banks to the *economy* itself, as if the economy was a living, breathing, being of its own accord. The responsibility of the individuals who had facilitated the faulty loans, and the historical emergence of the crisis at large, were eliminated from the dominant understanding.

This shift in emphasis to the *economy* as a subject has since been used to justify extreme austerity, especially cuts to social services, in order to balance government finances. What is often ignored is that this required balancing is largely to pay off the debt that government absorbed in bailing out banks.

> Through the financial equivalent of a complete blood transfusion, a stop was put to the bank collapses, but the consequence was a colossal build up in government debt… In short, the bad bank debt that triggered the crisis in 2008 never went away – it was simply shifted on to governments. Private debt became public debt. (McNally, 2011, pp. 3–4)

In other words, under the name of "stabilizing the economy," McNally argues that some of the poorest people have been made to pay for the mistakes made by the world's elites, all while it is presented as inevitable. This diffusion of government responsibility to uphold social services, coupled with support for the increased involvement in the market and individual responsibility for oneself, is characteristic of the foundational tenants of the neoliberal form of capitalism. Neoliberalism is a rebirth and intensification of one of the founding principles of capitalism, that "freedom" is really "freedom to access the market." In other words, the freedom promoted by the state is defined as being able to sell your labour-power when you have no alternative for survival. This is drastically different from freedom as human emancipation.

McNally's analysis of how the economy came to be understood as a subjective being demonstrates how the dominant conceptualization of the 2008 crisis is both abstracted from the social relations (how the crisis historically emerged) and silences the human activity that was integral in creating the crisis (the decisions real people made). Marxist-feminist scholar Dorothy Smith (1990) reinforces the problematic nature of an ideological mode of conceptualizing in saying that "the procedure discards the presence of the subject and re-conceptualizes actual activity as an *abstract noun capable of functioning as an agent* [emphasis added]" (p. 44). Thus, through the systematic erasure of human experience, connections become "mystically" drawn between concepts that have been granted subjectivity. When an ideological mode of conceptualizing is employed, these inadequate mystical connections become the dominant method for providing an explanation for existing phenomena. With mystical connections as the foundation of understanding, the relations of the ruling elites remain outside of analysis and remain unchallenged.

Again, with youth in Nova Scotia as the object of inquiry, we can begin to see that the strict focus on the concepts of youth, the economy, and the population mask the nuanced experiences of how relations of exploitation have manifested in the lives of particular youth. More specifically, through a Marxist-feminist framework, it becomes clear that the dominant conceptualization of Nova Scotia's "youth crisis" consistently separates the challenges experienced by youth from the historical and material origins of those challenges, and thereby limits our capacity to imagine alternatives of a more just future for all.

In other words, through an ideological mode of conceptualizing, the economy is often described in the Commission report as an entity capable of functioning on its own, as something that is beyond human activity. "Nova Scotia has the assets and opportunities, and *the global economy* [emphasis added] is reshaping to our advantage. As a small province with sophisticated institutional capacities we can come together within a shared project of mutual advancement (oneNS, 2014, p. viii)."

A few pages later, the report further reaffirms that the economy should be the main focus in working toward a brighter future for the province of Nova Scotia.

> In preparing this, its final report, the Commission has of necessity returned to its specific mandate as set out above. The main focus must be *the economy* [emphasis added] of the province, the foundation upon which so many other aspects of our lives together are built up and sustained. (oneNS, 2014, p. 3)

Through the reports abstract emphasis on the economy, youth unemployment and forced migration become reduced to a functioning of the "economy." This framework distances our understanding that the economy is made up of human relations and the activities of real people.

Once the report established the economy as an autonomous subject, austerity becomes a silent, but evident, point of departure for its future planning. There is a deep acceptance in the commission report that social services must be cut back and that people must faithfully submerge more and more of their life into the market. In this light, the report is not the historical overview or analysis of the current circumstance as they claim it to be, so much as an assessment of how Nova Scotia can embrace neoliberalism and collectively become more appealing for business investment.

Specific to young adults, this promotion of immersion in the market primarily takes place in the encouragement to engage in more courageous entrepreneurial activity:

> More young people need to come out of their education and training programs not just looking for a job, but with the knowledge, skills and confidence to create jobs for themselves and others. (oneNS, 2014, p. 60)

This solution is problematic on a number of levels. Specifically, it overlooks *how* the circumstance has historically unfolded where youth feel the need to leave or accept underpaying work. A second related point is the problematic continuation of the notion that if the economy is improved, all lives will be made better. In other words, the oneNS report adopts an insufficient belief that economic growth will solve all of society's social and political ills. As such, oneNS suggests a further intensification of the principles of neoliberalism and insists that the solution depends on youth creatively, passionately, and enthusiastically taking risks. This approach fails to acknowledge *why* youth are leaving or how those who remain may be struggling.

These insufficiencies are mirrored, if not amplified, in how the report addresses issues faced by other "minority communities" within the province. The report

acknowledges that members of the African Nova Scotian and First Nations communities are disproportionately unemployed and underemployed. Yet, rather than looking to understand *how* this has historically emerged, the report makes two suggestions: first, that workplaces should create more positions for minorities, and second, that minorities should gain more skills.

> In the 2006 Census the employment rate for First Nations people in the province was just over 53%, and for African Nova Scotians about 62%, compared with 68% for the total working age population (Employment Nova Scotia, 2010). The birth rate for these communities is higher than in the general population so they represent an important potential source of young new entrants to the labour force. Opening up our workplaces to greater participation by minority and disadvantaged people, and building job skills and entrepreneurship among these groups, are crucial objectives for social and economic progress in Nova Scotia. (oneNS, 2014, p. 24)

The utter dismissal of the disadvantaged realities of individuals and communities lived experiences is frightening but not shocking. The above framing masks the material relations that have manifested in these positions of exclusion, and recast exploitation as a potential source for market growth. This statement is another example of the primacy of stabilizing a subjectified economy above all else, but also an attempt to equate a stable economy and employment of the unemployed as the cure to all of society's social and political ills. Bannerji (2015) outlines how this type of framing is characteristic of liberal democracies, as they are organized to focus on individual rights rather than to challenge the unequal foundations of society that allows for, if not depends on, the continuation of private property, racism, and oppression.

Thus, with economic growth as their primary goal, the oneNS report contradictorily seeks to firmly equate this with the betterment of all Nova Scotians' lives. They paint a picture of what the future could look like if the people of Nova Scotia courageously embrace the report's advice:

> We will have become a province that is energized by the enthusiasm and creativity of our youth in schools and on college and university campuses, and by the determination and entrepreneurship of new immigrants First Nations and disadvantaged communities who are finding in Nova Scotia the freedom, resources and community support to realize their aspirations… Our business and industry will be providing leadership across sectors and in the wider community to *build the rising tide that lifts all boats* [emphasis added]. (oneNS, 2014, p. 46)

It is statements like the above, which make it clear the report advocates for a comprehensive province-wide adoption of a neoliberal, austerity-based, approach to growth. The idea of a "rising tide that will lift all boats" (oneNS, 2014, p. 46) is comparable to Adam Smith's "trickle-down effect," and is connected to the report's

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use of freedom. As mentioned earlier, the notion of freedom employed specifically means "freedom to access the market." In other words, freedom to sell your labour-power when you have no alternative for survival.

The report does not acknowledge its advocacy for the adoption of the principles of neoliberalism. Rather, through their ideological mode of conceptualizing, it suggests this course of action is inevitable. Youth are thus encouraged to adhere to the requirements of the market, while economic growth continues to be inaccurately equated with their well-being.

It is important to note that this is not an argument against the importance of employment. Rather, it is one which suggests that the report's mode of analysis isolates their understanding from the historical emergence of the crisis and places all of the responsibility to rectify it onto the backs of the most marginalized groups. The report thus ignores the historical relations that are connected to dispossession, racism, classism, sexism, and so on. Thus, the purpose of exposing the ideological underpinnings of the oneNS report is to challenge the course of action it presents as inevitable. Specifically, it is to question who will benefit from the further adoption of neoliberalism and to begin to imagine a path toward a future where the material relations could be addressed, and a more free and equal society for all the people of Nova Scotia created.

This same type of critical questioning is necessary when examining the StudentsNS position paper. The work that the StudentsNS paper has laid out is extremely important because it has organized the chaotic, disjointed, overlapping and unfocused policies and programs which greatly impact the lives of youth in Nova Scotia. Yet, similar to the oneNS report, the methodological and epistemological approach of the position paper does not trouble the historical emergence of youths' positions of precarity or insecurity.

While it is outside of their original stated goal, the paper systematically overlooks the changes in policy which have related to the intensification of the principles of neoliberalism, and as such presents increasing austerity, rising university tuition, decreasing stable employment positions and so on, as inevitable obstacles which must simply be dealt with or navigated. The paper describes the changes in the economy and the impact these have historically had on youth, but consistently presents the economy as a subjective entity. In other words, their work goes as far as seeking to understand the systems that have been put in place to support youth in navigating unemployment, high tuition rates, growing debt and so on, but they simply attribute these challenges to the recession or disorganization. Thus, through the paper's ideological method, "the recession" and "the economy" take on a subjectivity of their own. This conceptualization masks the human activity that was part of making the decisions which fostered the emergence of the "youth crisis." Furthermore, this methodological and epistemological framing narrows the ideas of what is considered possible for the future to further the adoption of the principles of neoliberalism. And once again, the exploitation embedded in capitalist social relations remains unacknowledged, and the positions of the ruling elites remain unchallenged.

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CONCLUSION

The intent in exposing the ideological underpinnings of these reports was to provoke people to think about how the youth crisis is being framed in Nova Scotia and around the world. Furthermore, the goal was to consider what the implications for this framing are and to try and uncover the relation at the core of the manifestations of oppression and exploitation. When a problem is constructed in a particular way, so too is the solution.

Both the oneNS Commission Report and the StudentsNS position paper effectively execute their stated goals of addressing the current crisis in Nova Scotia and suggesting ways youth can either support themselves or be supported to learn, work, and build lives in Nova Scotia. Yet, it is important to acknowledge the manner in which these goals were created produce a particular kind of findings, which further distances our understanding from the historical and material relations that have been integral in shaping the current moment of crisis. While amiable, teaching people how to navigate exploitative relations undeniably has its limits. I thus argue that if real sustainable change is to take place, the core relations that perpetuate the oppression and exploitation need to be addressed, not simply appeased.

In Nova Scotia, there is a deep-seated history of resilience, a history that people pride themselves on, as generations have withstood the challenges of outmigration intertwined with the collapse of primary industries. As such, this pride is woven into their individual and collective identities. It often surfaces in commonly uttered phrases like "we just need to pull up our bootstraps" or "we've weathered worse storms, no use focusing on the doom and gloom." In examining the current state of affairs for youth in Nova Scotia, I began to wonder how much this pride was being targeted in the dominant portrayal of the current crisis? How was the targeting of individuals with great pride a necessary part of ignoring the systemic, historic underdevelopment of the province? How does this relate to the policy implications and the decisions made to address the crisis? This is not a suggestion that individuals do not have the agency to make change, not in the slightest. As stated earlier, Marx argues that all things outside of the natural world are products of human relations (Allman, 2007, p. 37). Rather, it is a call for a collective consideration of how we got here, a desire for an analysis of what perpetuates the exploitative experiences of some more so than others, and a hope that in asking these questions we can then move toward a future which does not simply place the responsibility for improvement on the most marginalized.

NOTE

[1]   Over the course of 2015-2016, this process has accelerated. With the price of oil dropping, the oil fields of western Canada are laying off a large portion of their employees. The labourers from Atlantic Canada are finding themselves caught in a predicament where they are uncertain of how to sustain their livelihood after years of long-term commuting. While some are looking for work within Atlantic

Canada, the pay is often incomparable, so the popular discussions have become centred on "where they will migrate next" (Cryderman & Jang, 2016). Within this framework, little to no attention is given to the origins of this perceived necessity to migration: the exploitative and dispossessive nature of capitalist social relations.

[2]   This does not including funding directly distributed from colleges or universities.

[3]   The 'natural world' is meant in a very particular way. A tree that grows on its own in the depths of a forest is not the same as a tree that has been planted by an individual engaged in a wage-labour relationship with a company that is seeking to make profit off of that tree. This is also true of gold left unmined in the earth compared to gold in the vaults of banks. The planted tree and the bank's gold do not have a natural value, they are filled with the invisible unfree labour of people. To understand their value as natural is an ideological method of reasoning which severs the relational understanding of the human labour-power that extracted the precious metals from the earth, or planted the tree, and grants them their value (Allman, 2007, p. 37).

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Stephanie MacKinnon
University of Toronto

AHMED AHMED AND SARA CARPENTER

6. THE ONTARIO YOUTH OUTREACH WORKER PROGRAM AS RACIALIZED SPATIAL PRAXIS

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of at-risk youth has become a popular framework within Canada, along with other countries in the global north, as a way to conceptualize and organize public policy, school-based interventions, and community-based programming concerning marginalized young people (Riele, 2006; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2001; Tait, 1995). The language of at-risk constructs young people as both victims and perpetrators of social ills. Within this discursive rubric youth are supposedly at-risk of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and a range of other challenges all of which could result in violent and/or other deviant behaviour (Dryfoos, 1990; Edwards, Mumford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007; Logan-Greene et al., 2011). At the same time, the discourse positions society as at-risk from the impacts of anti-social behaviour of youth (Giroux, 2009; Kelly, 2001). Further, an important and interrelated theme of the at-risk youth discourse is a general lack of social integration of young people into traditional institutions (France, 2008). What has traditionally been understood as deviance is now often labelled as at-risk.

This discourse has been mobilized by the media, civil society, the state, and scholars to construct a familiar narrative of youth as delinquents while expanding the category of delinquency to include a character of potentiality, where any or all behaviours can be marked as risky (Foster & Spencer, 2011; Kelly, 2001). This at-risk discourse has been used to label a broad range of youth spanning race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and other social categories engaging in a variety of behaviours, for example, political disengagement, overeating, pregnancy, "risky" sexual behaviour, or playing "extreme" or dangerous sports. The at-risk discourse has been soundly critiqued for the tendency to individualize responsibility for social problems, focus solely on the behaviours of young people, and remove youth from the historical circumstances that produce their lives. At-risk youth however, is not only a discursive construction. The concept has been used to organize public policy and has influenced the proliferation of a wide range of community and school-based intervention programs, including: mentoring, drop-in programs, leadership development, arts-based programs, recreation and physical fitness programs, resiliency programming, culturally relevant programming, and a range of "prevention" programs spanning school attrition (drop-outs), violence, drug use, homelessness, STI/STDs, and suicide.

This paper investigates the organization of the Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) Program in the province of Ontario, primarily within the city of Toronto, Canada. Originally launched in 2006, the YOW program utilizes street outreach methodologies to provide services to marginalized youth in strategic neighbourhoods identified by the province. In 2013, the program was expanded to serve youth across the province of Ontario. In this paper, we explore the foundational logics of the YOW program that organize its approach to, and intervention with, at-risk youth. Drawing from various policy documents, we argue that the YOW program embodies and enacts a racialized logic to organize the delivery of outreach services to youth in Ontario. This logic is implicit in the theoretical and methodological approach of the program, but is obscured by its use of spatial and developmental logics.

Historical Emergence of the YOW Program

In 2006, the YOW program was launched as part of the Ontario Youth Opportunities Strategy, a sub-program of the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy, through a partnership between the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) and the not-for-profit organization East Metro Youth Services (Knoll, 2012). Specifically, the YOW program was launched as a response to the highly publicized spike in gun violence involving young people in Toronto in 2005, dubbed "the summer of the gun" (Ferguson, 2012). From its inception, the YOW program designated violence prevention as the major rationale for intervention. According to a 2008 program evaluation commissioned by the MCYS,

> The Youth Outreach Worker (YOW) program is one of several place-based interventions in the MCYS's tri-level campaign to prevent and intervene in the process of antisocial and/or violent behaviour among youth and to promote the development of skills and civic participation, including that of community/peer leadership. (Pepler, Knoll, & Josephson, 2008, p. 8)

Within this framework, outreach work was necessarily tied to specific spatial localities, however this approach is not necessarily new. Street outreach is a popular community-based response with young people identified as being at-risk in some way. It is often used in relation to HIV/AIDS prevention, street involvement or homelessness, chemical dependency, and gang intervention. While outreach programs vary in their approaches, basic premises of the model involve "(1) meeting youth in their environment, (2) forming a relationship with the youth, (3) providing the youth with services or connecting them to services, and (4) offering a variety of services in different formats" (Connolly & Joly, 2012, p. 529). The initial YOW program model operated in a similar manner. Outreach workers were hired at community agencies located in neighbourhoods identified under the City of Toronto's Priority Neighbourhood scheme, which is described in detail in the following section. These outreach workers "hung out" in spaces and places in communities where at-risk youth frequented, worked to form relationships with young people, helped identify

their needs and potential areas for supportive services, and worked to refer them to agencies that could assist them. Street outreach with youth, however, cannot be reduced to service referral. The work is emotionally demanding and often relies upon members of the community to develop networks of knowledge, and to provide legitimacy, as well as access to the outreach worker. For this reason, outreach workers themselves are often drawn from the communities identified as being at-risk; they often share life experiences, historical circumstances, and identities with the youth they work to help.

In its initial iteration, the YOW program employed 35 youth outreach workers who were housed in 21 community agencies in Toronto's 13 Priority Neighbourhoods, and used Positive Youth Development (PYD) as an intervention model (Pepler et al., 2008). As described in YOW program evaluation material, PYD "aims to prevent problem behaviours by promoting key features of healthy development referred to by researchers as the "five Cs": competence, character, confidence, connection, and compassion" (Pepler et al., 2008, p. 85). Significantly, the five C's of PYD are conceptualized as attitudinal "assets" of youth that can be developed in order to contend with a largely deficit-based public perception of young people. The literature on PYD provides little attention in the social conditions or relations in which young people actually live (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

Further, with its combined emphasis on both attitudinal and behavioural change in the context of violence prevention, the YOW program can be understood as a Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD) approach. The province of Ontario was, in many ways, reacting to earlier decisions by the Canadian federal government to deploy both CPSD and a "get tough on crime" strategy concerning youth violence (Dunbar, Waller, & Gunn, 2011). The get tough approach works through the criminal justice system to identify and contain persistent offenders, and criminalize "deviant" behaviours. This approach is closely associated with models of community policing and intelligence-led policing, such as the notorious "stop-and-frisk" policy known as carding in Toronto. Alternatively, the CPSD model stresses prevention by linking poverty and inaccessibility of social services to violence and crime (Community Safety Secretariat, 2004; Dunbar et al., 2011). CPSD became an official crime prevention strategy in the City of Toronto in 2004, one year prior to the spike in youth violence that would contribute to the prominence of the issue in Toronto's public consciousness (Poisson, 2012).

In many ways the YOW program, and the discourse out of which it emerges, are attempts to account for, and address, the marked shift in the lived experience and social perceptions of young people in the last 20 to 30 years (Giroux, 2009). The YOW program was introduced amid a growing body of evidence suggesting socio-economic causes for youth violence and, thusly, an interventionist response to escalating youth violence in Ontario (Community Safety Secretariat, 2004). Such a socio-historical approach to youth violence was emphasized in the province's own report, *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*, demonstrating that the state does in fact possess the capacities to recognize the importance of social context in

evaluating youth violence (McMurtry & Curling, 2008), and, further, to explicitly name the racialization of youth and experiences of racism within the Canadian context as contributing factors.

However, this attention to systemic marginalization is almost entirely absent from documentation concerning the YOW program. Instead, the YOW program repeatedly returns to a conceptualization of behavioural deviance within youth as a form of inherent volatility linked to abstract notions of risk associated with particular spaces in the City of Toronto. In fact, early documentation of the YOW program omits race as a category to identify targeted populations of young people, instead focusing on "underserved communities" where at-risk youth lived (MCYS, 2015). In the 2008 program evaluation (Pepler et al., 2008) youth are presented as a homogenous category with their place of residence as the only distinguishing and identifying characteristic. Throughout this evaluation the researchers discuss "the youth" within the targeted communities without reference to race or any other social markers. We argue that this absence is not a mere omission, but is in fact the result of an ideological construction with roots in Canada's colonial history and current neoliberal policies.

The Dual Logics of the Youth Outreach Worker Program: Space and Change

In order to look into, and beyond, the deployment of at-risk discourses, it is necessary to examine in closer detail two concurrent logics used to organize the YOW program. The first, "Priority Neighbourhoods", is a spatial logic resulting from City of Toronto initiatives. The second, Stages of Changes, is a program model adopted by MCYS for reorganization of the YOW program in 2011. In this discussion, we rely heavily on internal documentation of the YOW program, including 2006 City of Toronto documentation of the Priority Neighbourhoods Initiative, the 2008 evaluation of the YOW program, and the 2012 report on the implementation of Stages of Change. Through a more thorough examination of this documentation we are able to see the mechanisms through which racialization insidiously organizes the operation of the YOW program.

The racial logic of Priority Neighbourhoods. The YOW program's initial model used a "place-based intervention" in the form of Priority Neighbourhoods to identify at-risk youth; a strategy which places social precarity within a geographical rather than a strictly racial logic (Pepler et al., 2008, p. 8). In 2004, the City of Toronto, in collaboration with the United Way, developed the Priority Neighbourhoods list as part of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force Initiative (United Way of Greater Toronto, 2004). Priority Neighbourhoods was initially conceptualized as a CPSD violence prevention model aimed at reducing violence in underserved, poor neighbourhoods by directing limited city resources and funding to these communities. The City of Toronto and United Way collaborations explicitly acknowledged a lag between public investment and demographic change in Toronto (Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force,

2005). The research produced by the Task Force used a spatial analysis to identify Priority Neighbourhoods through (a) proximity to social services and (b) the need for those services by neighbourhood residents (City of Toronto, 2006). Along with proximity to social services, poverty (specifically the concentration of poverty in particular communities) contributed to the rationale to increase public services.

The research conducted by the Strong Neighbourhood Task Force in 2005 identified 13 neighbourhoods with low access to social services. The indicators included: recreation and community centres compared to total population; libraries compared to total population; schools compared to total children age 0–18; community health centres and hospitals compared to total population; community-based services for children compared to total children age 0–14; community-based services for youth compared to total youth age 15–24; community-based services for seniors compared to total seniors age 65+; community-based services compared to recent immigrants; community-based employment services compared to unemployed individuals aged 15+; community gardens, community kitchens and community markets compared to total population; and food banks compared to low-income population. Racialized people, including "newcomers" or recent immigrants to Canada, densely populated the majority of these communities. In a memo to city council the ethnic and racial demographics of these communities was made explicit: "10 of the 13 P.A. [priority areas] are fairly homogenous in that visible minorities represent a significant proportion (near or greater than 2/3) of the population" (City of Toronto, 2006, p. 3). By establishing Priority Neighbourhoods through a proximity-based risk evaluation model, the City of Toronto identified racialized communities as in need of social interventions and as "deficient" spaces within the urban landscape.

Priority Neighbourhoods became sites of activity, from expansion of social service organizations to youth development programs, including CPSD programs as well as the intelligence-led policing initiative known as the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy. Many of the YOW program's 21 initial locations were in Toronto's so-called Priority Neighbourhoods. As argued above, the context in which the YOW program was developed helped to form its content. Fear of "out of control" youth in low-income communities with diminished access to social services were seen as a threat to the general public (Giroux, 2009). However, the racial logic of Priority Neighbourhoods is more insidious than the long-standing relation between poverty and race in Canadian society (Kallen, 2010). This contemporary spatial logic is an extension of Canada's colonial history. According to Razack (2002), Canada's national mythology is premised on Europeans arriving to an "empty" territory, where "enterprising settlers" and their descendants subsequently developed the modern, civilized Canadian state. Later this mythology develops to include new "waves" of immigration. "The land," Razack continues, "once empty and later populated by hardy settlers, is now besieged and crowded by third-world refugees and immigrants" (2002, p. 4). In imagining itself as a "multicultural" nation, Canada has not been able to disentangle itself from its origins and realities as a settler colonial nation, nor from ongoing imperialist and capitalist pursuits that influence

both the racialized organization of global labour supplies and the displacement and dispossession of particular refugee populations. Canada's "multiculturalism" is, itself, an outcome of these geopolitical processes. The construction of Canada as a country of immigration, as opposed to emigration, results in a nationalism premised on the disposability and invisibility of Indigenous people, the "naturalness" of European migration and settlement, the "imposition" of migration from the global south, and the racialization of subsequent waves of settler immigrants within the "vertical mosaic" of Canadian society (Thobani, 2007). Razack (2002) argues that the Canadian state perceives these "crowds" as a threat to the order of the nation, requiring a high level of policing of (social) borders and coloured bodies.

This ideology is so profoundly normalized in Canada that the YOW program concretizes this reality without having to specify its intervention as designed for racialized people, and instead uses racialized neighbourhoods as a proxy for racial markers. Thus, the YOW program builds on an existing racial/spatial logic embedded in the concept of Priority Neighbourhoods. While the focus on poverty as a cause of youth violence may be viewed as a progressive move, (as opposed to older traditions that pathologize youth) the spatial narrative connected to poverty points to the racial logic embedded in the YOW programs' use of Priority Neighbourhoods to define its intervention areas. Even a brief look at Canadian history uncovers a precedent for constructing such spaces of "wildernesses" as being in need of civility (Razack, 2002). The dangers contained in these anarchic wildernesses can be found in these "uncivil" neighbourhoods. The Priority Neighbourhoods express a contradiction within the liberal capitalist state wherein uncivil, degenerate spaces are constructed as racially and culturally separate from the body politic. However, such spaces have a complex, material role in the urban space as providers of low-wage labour and consumers of low-cost import commodities. The Priority Neighbourhood initiative attempts to address this contradiction by providing these neighbourhoods' the means to materially enter civil society through access to services, infrastructure, and the "rule of law". In reality, the Priority Neighbourhood initiative is one piece of a policy packet designed to incorporate racialized youth and other marginalized groups into civil society. This policy ensemble has several moving parts, emerging from different municipal and provincial bodies. The provincial Ontario Youth Strategy (OYS), as an umbrella of youth programming, can be understood as another component of this policy ensemble. This umbrella includes the YOW program, but also other youth-oriented programming aimed to incorporate youth into the prevailing logic of the state. For example, the Youth in Policing Initiative, which brings youth from Priority Neighbourhoods into an apprentice-type program with the Toronto Police Service. Taken together, these sorts of programs may be seen as attempts to incorporate (civilize) communities imagined to be on the periphery of civilization.

The discourse of neighbourhood is really a discourse of culture by location, in which racially profiled communities are marked for exclusion from "universal" public bodies resulting in space itself becoming racialized vis-a-vis the practices of the state, for example, through over policing and police brutality (Da Silva, 2010).

The OYS programs, discussed above, contain an a priori racial logic that positions the cause of degeneracy (poverty and/or violence) at the level of culture. Further, the YOW program is not simply a neighbourhood improvement project; its aim is to specifically intervene in the lives of young people through a rigorous, evidence-based approach to youth development. This is perhaps the most racially significant component of the YOW program. When the program was launched, it was without any discussion of the cultural, ethnic, or racial makeup of its target groups. In the founding documentation of the YOW program, there is no meaningful discussion of race as a social force in the lives of young people. In its initial stage, the program discussed violence within Priority Neighbourhoods as somehow embodied in the youth of these communities. In other words, violence was something manifested in the behaviour of at-risk youth rather than embodied in a social context. To be clear, this discursive practice, which positions racialized communities as inherently dangerous and imprints this violence on to youths' bodies, is a racialized logic. Rather than having the YOW program acknowledge race as a concretized social practice and a reality in young people's lives, the provincial government intervenes in Priority Neighbourhoods through the YOW program to resolve the contradiction of lawless spaces existing within the boundaries of the state (Blomley, 2003). Violence embedded in poverty, racialization, and a lack of access to social mobility is replaced with a historical spatial-racial rubric.

However, a significant paradox emerges in ministerial documentation of the YOW program. While the spatial logic of Priority Neighbourhoods is used to organize the activities of the YOW program, the neighbourhoods themselves are not the sites of intervention. The targets of intervention remain the youth living in these communities, who are described as embodying the very attributes of riskiness so often documented in the literature on at-risk youth. In order to coordinate the deployment of interventions with young people, the YOW program uses a second, developmental logic to construct young people as being in need of acute behavioural change.

Individualizing pathologies and the Stages of Change model. The preliminary evaluation of the YOW program noted that, "the parameters established for the program [are] for outreach, rather than service with "clients" (Pepler et al., 2008, p. 8) and highlighted the efficacy of this form of outreach. The authors further observed that the success of the program depended on a recognition of the inadequacy of risk-avoidance and the promotion of skill development and strong systems of support as youth development strategies. However, the program evaluation also argued that the outcomes of the program were nearly impossible to quantify or predict, and that the methodology of the traditional outreach model could not be standardized. Based on these recommendations, MCYS began the process of shifting its theoretical and intervention model away from a traditional street outreach approach. Following the program evaluation in 2008, the MCYS contracted a team of researchers from the psychology department at York University to develop, implement, and subsequently evaluate a new outreach model for the YOW program. This research resulted in

the development of a Stages of Change model for youth development, which was introduced in a limited capacity in 2011 in order to assess its effectiveness in supporting at-risk youth, and was subsequently adopted as the program model (Knoll, 2012).

The Stages of Change model for Youth Outreach is an adaptation of Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change model of addictions treatment (Knoll, 2012). Prochaska and DiClemente's (1986) original research examined alcoholism and other forms of addiction. The original model categorized human behavioural change processes into six stages: pre-contemplation, also referred to as denial, in which an individual does not recognize the nature of the addiction; contemplation, in which the individual recognizes they are experiencing challenges associated to substance use; preparation, the phase in which the individual conducts research or small actions to address their challenges; action, where the individual takes significant steps to either cease or reduce substance abuse; maintenance, in which the individual maintains behaviours that support sobriety; and termination or relapse, in which the individual re-engages in substance abuse. A key aspect of the model is that it was not conceptualized as a linear, progressive path to change, rather, individuals could move between or across stages. The process was understood to take three to five years. The purpose of the model was to develop, assess, and motivate behavioural change for people struggling with addictions (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986). The YOW program employs all of these stages with the exception of the termination or relapse phase. The near wholesale adoption of an addictions treatment model as an intervention for social inequities faced by youth such as poverty, homelessness, access to education, and sexual health among others is troubling. The 2012 proposal provides smoking cessation studies as the evidence base for the use of the Stages of Change in the YOW context (Knoll, 2012).

The proposal then goes on to match the Stages of Change with multiple psycho-emotional developmental theories shifting away from the social to the individual as both the cause and remedy for the challenges youth face. The Stages of Change YOW program model is premised on the argument that early intervention with at-risk youth focused on behavioural change is an effective response to ongoing social crises involving youth. This is necessary because volatile behaviour left unchecked could lead to antisocial behaviour and ultimately violence. This characterization of predominantly racialized youth is constructed through three psycho-developmental theories (Knoll, 2012). First, the ecological model of development, which describes "youth development as rooted in layers of social environment," is used to evaluate the social location of youth as a set of "risks" and "protective" factors (Knoll, 2012, p. 2). The ecological model serves as the initial assessment tool for the YOW program. Within the program, the ecological model is translated into a set of descriptors of the social and relational environment in which the youth is located, including indicators such as health, life skills, exposure to peer pressure, involvement in justice system, and school engagement. The outreach worker screens the youth, counting the aspects of their environment that pose a risk or serve to

protect the youth. The worker then makes an assessment of the potential precarity and risk of the young person. Secondly, developmental systems theory, which views youth development as mutually influential and bidirectional, is used to provide the rationale for connecting youth with the program's outreach workers and other service providers. Following the assessment of risks, the outreach worker both charts their relationship with the youth and connects them with service provision. In this process, the outreach worker translates the risks of the youth into a set of actionable issues around which the Stages of Change could be applied to assess a "readiness to change" logic. Finally, attachment theory is used to further explain the need for a therapeutic relationship between youth and the YOW program.

These three developmental theories are used to argue that the transition from childhood to adulthood is fraught with risk for all youth, but this transition proves to be particularly dangerous for marginalized youth (Knoll, 2012). Within the Stages of Change report, terms like disadvantaged and marginalized are used instead of descriptors such as race, class, queer, trans, and other social categories. Within the YOW program such social relations of identity, oppression, and power disappear underneath layers of abstraction. For example, YOW program research states that youth between the ages of 15 and 24 have higher rates of mood disorders such as depression and anxiety, and that mental illness is particularly high amongst marginalized youth (Knoll, 2012).

Through the adoption of Stages of Change, the YOW program systematically erases the social challenges racialized and other marginalized youth face, instead offering a psycho-emotional development model to explain the phenomena of at-risk. The use of the Stages of Change model neatly places social precarity, which produces the challenges youth experience in the first place, within their bodies. The YOW program uses these categories to describe behavioural change processes in at-risk and other marginalized youth without attempting to account for social relations. Instead, the rationale the YOW program gives for attempting to change youths' behaviour is that of an inherent volatility with the potential for violence and social precariousness (Knoll, 2012). The YOW program side steps explicit discussions of race while simultaneously re-inscribing racialized tropes of volatility and violence on to youth. The construction of at-risk generally signifies vulnerability to conditions of social insecurity or violence on the part of young adults at the same time as it creates society as at-risk from the impacts of antisocial behaviours of youth (Kelly, 2001). This traditional critique of at-risk however, does not speak to the ways in which the at-risk discourse is taken up as a racial construct in general. The YOW program does nothing to disrupt this existing hierarchy. In fact, it reproduces this hierarchy by constructing poor youth in racialized communities as psychologically and emotionally defective. The language of early detection and prevention is reminiscent of anti-youth violence policing strategies at the inception of the YOW program. Even though race is not explicitly mentioned the location of the youth the program serves, the Priority Neighbourhoods, and the site of intervention, the youth themselves, makes clear the racial logic embedded within the YOW program.

Youth Work and "Born Again" Racism

> Born again racism is racism without race, racism gone private, racism without the categories to name it as such. It is racism shorn of the charge, a racism that cannot be named because nothing abounds with which to name it. It is a racism purged of historical roots, of its groundedness, a racism whose history is lost. (Goldberg, 2004, p. 226)

The use of an addictions treatment model to provide youth outreach services in poor communities of colour is a way of expelling racialized youth from universal, modern subjectivity. This is not a new strategy: Da Silva (2010) demonstrates the use of scientific reasoning to define who fits within Cartesian subjectivity (the white modern man) and who does not (the racialized body). The authors of the YOW program model tell us repeatedly that youth in poor neighbourhoods are volatile, and if their behaviour is not managed, could result in "severe violence and mental health issues during adulthood" (Knoll, 2012, p. 1). According to Knoll (2012), all youth do not face the same risk; rather youth who "reside in disadvantaged, inner-city neighbourhoods have diverse vulnerabilities and needs that may often go unmet due to a lack of available and accessible services to meet their needs in a culturally appropriate way" (p. 1). The site of degeneracy is moved from the neighbourhoods of racialized youth to an embodied degeneracy, which manifests as a developmental volatility, within (racialized) youth themselves.

In policy documents related to youth and young adults, the province of Ontario increasingly relies on bio-cognitive and developmental explanations for youths' behaviour, evidenced in the Stepping Stones (MCYS, 2015) and Stepping Up (MCYS, 2013) policy frameworks. This evidence base has allowed the province to adopt and implement youth intervention models such as the YOW program's individualistic and medicalized intervention devoid of substantial socio-historical context. By individuating responsibility for violence, the state can remove its culpability and intervene in racialized communities as the "restorer of civility" (Blomley, 2003). The Stages of Change model pathologizes behaviour in such a way as to draw the outline of a racial body without ever naming it as such. This outline is drawn with familiar racialized (coded) language. Knoll's (2012) discussion of fractured families, communities in disrepair, and youth aimlessly wandering the streets constructs a racial body in racialized spaces. Another aspect of the model, the well-meaning youth outreach workers going into these communities, speaks to the missionary tradition of saving racialized bodies from savagery (Mohanram, 1999; Nestel, 2002).

In the YOW program, space becomes race through the use of Priority Neighbourhoods as a way of identifying, and potentially containing, violent youth. The use of addictions treatment as an intervention for social inequity can only make sense in this light. It is important to note that the processes of abstraction embedded within both the Priority Neighbourhood and Stages of Change models are hallmarks of the ideological production of knowledge (Smith, 1990). In this way, whilst one is

reviewing the YOW program documentation, the reader has the sense that something inherently racist is at work within the program, and yet would find it difficult to explicitly name this process when "race" as a category is seemingly absent from the analysis. However, by using a racial-spatial analysis of the provincial policy intervention, it becomes clear that the ways in which race is obfuscated are part and parcel to the ways it is reified. Dr. Knoll's research creates a photonegative figure; the absence of race makes race all the more conspicuous. In this way, the YOW program obscenely embodies the neoliberal strategy of silence that Goldberg (2004) refers to as "born again racism".

To understand the YOW program's Stages of Change model as a racialized spatial project, we need to go beyond an understanding of racism as a system of incorporation. In particular, as Da Silva argues, we must look to "an approach that goes beyond the view of race as a mechanism of exclusion" (2010, p. 422). This critique allows us to understand how the YOW program can seek to include racialized youth within society while simultaneously affirming long standing racial inequities, which expel youth from the modern social body. Within this framework, the province of Ontario can position its intervention as an attempt to restore order, or as Blomley (2003) puts it, "liberalism (the liberal state in this case) tends to locate violence outside law, positioning state regulators as that which contains and prevents an anomic anarchy" (p. 121). In essence, through constructing at-risk, racialized youth as pre-civilized subjects threatening modern society, the state is able to locate violence outside of itself. The erasure of socio-economic histories and contemporary realities both facilitates this process and is its outcome.

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Ahmed Ahmed
York University

Sara Carpenter
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta

ANDRÉ P. GRACE

7. DIFFERENCE IS

*Sexual and Gender Minority Youth and Young Adults and
the Challenges to Be and Belong in Canada*

INTRODUCTION

For generations, sexual and gender minorities have had to confront "those seeking to will us away, persecute us into oblivion, or shame us into permanent despised status" (Brooks, 2015, p. xvii). Moreover, we have had to "willfully bear a stigma that is only now lifting" (Katz, 2015, p. xiv). Our progress, starting with recognizing gay rights as human rights, is a product of a commitment to be and belong that engenders action, which is still needed "from the street up" (Brooks, 2015, p. xviii). To be visible and vocal as a steadfast member of the diverse sexual and gender minority (SGM) community continues to take courage in the face of a persistent hetero-patriarchal populism that fuels retaliation against us, resulting in multiple forms of symbolic and physical violence (Janoff, 2005; Grace, 2015). Historically, this mainstream populism has been shored up by scientific hegemony normalizing heterosexuality and the cisgender male/female binary, and by conservative religion and its convenient alignment with science in order to preserve traditional demarcations of sexuality and gender (Grace, 2008). This has required the courageous in each generation to do their part, a commitment that "must be renewed by young people coming into their own, again and again, generation after generation—for the work is far from finished" (Brooks, 2015, p. xv, italics in original). This work includes continuing to open up spaces in local communities, education, health care, and policing so that recognition and accommodation are real and focused on being and belonging.

In the global picture in contemporary times, there exists a polarization over gay rights that increasingly positions homosexuality "as a marker of deeper anxieties about aspects of western culture, economics and politics that threaten established authority, both religious and political, in many parts of the world" (Altman & Symons, 2016, pp. 23–24). This dangerous cultural logic results in homosexuality being a current scapegoat for nationalism and populism that resent and reject westernization in many African and other non-western nations (Grace, 2016). Here, repression of homosexuals can be understood symbolically as rightist politico-religious homophobia and "an expression of national identity and defiance" (Altman & Symons, 2016, p. 26). Such repression, with cisgender gay males as longstanding, perennial targets of violence globally, involves a populist perspective linking

homosexual acceptance and accommodation to an assault on traditional masculinity (Altman & Symons, 2016; Grace 2013, 2015). Some might argue that western nations like Canada have moved beyond such cultural homophobia to become post-gay in times when they have passed legislation and laws to protect sexual and gender minorities. However, hetero-patriarchal populism persists in Canada, too, with rightist politico-religious factions contesting SGM minority recognition and accommodation in social institutions and communities. As one key consequence, SGM youth (aged 12 to 19 years) and young adults (aged 20 to 29 years) continue to be vulnerable citizens in communities and institutions, including education and health care (Chief Public Health Officer, 2011).

In this chapter, I focus on SGM youth and young adults as a multivariate population whose most marginalized members struggle daily to navigate life and learning in a Canadian culture and society that continue to grapple with their differences. I begin by considering daily realities impinging upon recognition and accommodation of this population, framing their negative experiences within Foucault's (1990) conceptualization of repression and how it functions. As an example of counteraction, I then discuss the Comprehensive Health Education Workers (CHEW) Project as an example of my pedagogical and cultural work designed to meet the needs of SGM youth and young adults as subjects who have the potential to be agents and advocates in their own lives and, when they feel ready, in the lives of their peers. Next, using Butler's (2004) notion that difference is, I consider what educators, including adult educators, can do so that their pedagogical and cultural work has meaning and effect for SGM individuals becoming adults in a world where age as a power relationship influences ways they are recognized and accommodated so they can be and belong. I conclude with a call to all educators to consider a set of critical questions so they can frame their pedagogical and cultural work within a politics of resistance and possibility.

SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITY YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS AS OBJECTS AND TARGETS

These days we tell SGM youth and young adults that it gets better (Savage & Miller, 2012), even though significant adults in their lives cannot guarantee this outcome for far too many of them. Staff at the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) at the University of Alberta in Edmonton work everyday with diverse SGM young people who are variously bullied, sick, hurting, fearful, angry, or ready to end it all (Grace, 2015). Too many of them have to deal with personal and institutional violence in diverse forms as they navigate everyday life and seek recognition and accommodation within families, schools, health care, and social and police services. The difficulty is not with these youth and young adults, but rather the problem is systemic since non-normative genders and sexualities trigger institutional regulation (Ware, 2015). Across the educational, health care, and legal systems, this adjustment is often more pervasive and profound for SGM young people, and it is further complicated when they are street-involved, have low socio-economic status,

or are homeless (Grace, 2015; Ware, 2015). For example, the juvenile justice system, which some critics describe as a prison industrial complex (Stanley & Smith, 2015), has a history of profiling SGM youth and detaining them for survival crimes like theft or engaging in sex work. Ware (2015) concludes:

> [W]ith the juvenile justice system's intent to provide "treatment" to young people, many queer/trans youth inherit the ideology that they are "wrong" or in need of "curing." … As sexual and gender transgressions have been deemed both illegal and pathological, queer and trans youth, who are some of the most vulnerable to "treatments," are not only subjected to incarceration, but also to harassment by staff, conversion therapy, and physical violence. (p. 99)

While in Canada sexual and gender minorities may have better legal and legislative protections and civil rights than in many other countries, SGM persons in many quarters of our culture and society still experience only a modicum of their rights to inclusion and accommodation (Grace, 2014, 2015). Symbolic and physical violence perpetrated against SGM persons, including an increasingly more visible and vocal constituency of SGM youth and young adults, is still common (Grace, 2015). When there is progress in gaining rights of full citizenship, concomitant backlash is also common (Grace, 2014, 2015; Grace & Wells, 2016). Indeed, recognition and accommodation of sexual and gender minorities in our nation's communities and institutions, including education, the justice system, and health care, remain unfinished business in the quest for full citizenship and personhood (Grace, 2015; Saewyc, 2011).

Following Foucault's (1990) analysis of the history of sexuality, these realities that SGM people face are marks of repression. In chronicling this history, Foucault maintains "repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of non-existence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know" (p. 4). Eventually, those repressed, as signs of their humanity and proactivity in their quest for integrity, reject these politics of invisibility and silence and seek freedom. This process involves struggle and backlash. It also involves substantial work for SGM individuals seeking "nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, … and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power" (Foucault, 1990, p. 5). Indeed, SGM persons in Canada are still involved in political and cultural work to overcome repression that has subjugated us through a language of defilement and restricted us through actions that deride queer civility and, indeed, queer humanity (Grace, 2014, 2015; Janoff, 2005). As Foucault asserts, such repression in relation to sexuality is intended to "yield multiple effects of displacement, intensification, reorientation, and modification of desire itself" (1990, p. 23). There are indeed parallels when we consider repression of gender identity in relation to trans health matters and the ongoing trans civil rights movement (Brill & Pepper, 2008; Grace, 2015; Stanley & Smith, 2015; Valentine, 2007). What continues to drive repression of non-normative sexual orientations and gender

identities is an increasingly apparent given: In the end, these human characteristics, as Foucault asserts, cannot be administered or managed. The tendency toward regulation suggests faulty politics caught up in dominant forms of desire and control that police, and thus restrict, minority being and belonging in culture and society. As Foucault would characterize it, minority conduct in relation to perceived non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities becomes a public matter and is "taken both as an object of analysis and as a target of intervention" (1990, p. 26). Moreover, driven by history, minority conduct is caught up in "a whole web of [medical, psychiatric, pedagogical, governmental, and criminal justice] discourses, special knowledges, analyses, and injunctions" (1990, p. 26). Consequently, sexual and gender minorities have been and remain largely objects and targets in institutional contexts and within a contemporary sociality where they remain outsider groups under surveillance. Vulnerable SGM youth and young adults can be among the most disenfranchised within this multivariate population. With regard to the screening of perceived "dangerous and endangered adolescents" (p. 30), Foucault (1990) describes this surveillance as shielding the general public via an "undertaking to protect, separate, and forewarn, signalling perils everywhere, awakening people's attention, calling for diagnoses, piling up reports, organizing therapies" (pp. 30–31). This relentless scrutiny has entrenched these adolescents as objects and targets in judicial, clinical, and other institutional, social, and cultural contexts. With regard to SGM adolescents today, while we may question this surveillance, Foucault reminds us that such questioning is always in the context of repression of sexual and gender differences that are unaccepted as "normal".

THE COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION WORKERS (CHEW) PROJECT AS COUNTERACTION

SGM youth and young adults, especially those considered dangerous (to self and others) and endangered ("at-risk"), are the core focus of my political, pedagogical, and cultural work and my research, which are mutually informative and linked to advocating for young people and mentoring them to be real, active, and at-promise subjects who transgress demarcation as historically repressed objects and targets (Grace, 2015). As an example of this advocacy and engagement, I currently direct the Comprehensive Health Education Workers Project (CHEW). This venture involves health and social education, intervention, and outreach work with SGM youth and young adults aged 12 to 29 years old in the greater Edmonton area.

In providing intervention and outreach programming like the CHEW Project at iSMSS, we work with a spectrum of SGM youth and young adults who compose a demographically complex and multivariate population, as indicated by the LGBTTIQQ2SA[1] acronym used by WorldPride 2014 organizers in Toronto (Armstrong, 2014). The acronym, which stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, questioning, queer, two-spirited and allies," is the current iteration of an ever-elongating list of descriptors naming SGM youth and

young adults (Armstrong, 2014, p. A1). Acronym constituents have minority status due to differences in sexual orientation and/or variations in gender identity and expression that fall outside presumed normative categorizations of sex, sexuality, and gender as well as outside the dichotomies of the cisgender male/female and heterosexual/homosexual binaries (Grace, 2015). At iSMSS, we situate SGM youth and young adults as at-promise subjects, with the potential to be vital and active citizens with characteristics, qualities, abilities, and capacities that constitute their humanity. In our everyday work with them, we engage young people in social and health education as part of intervention and outreach programming designed to help them be happy, healthy, and hopeful. In sum, we focus on their individual development, socialization, comprehensive—physical, mental, sexual, and social— health, safety, and well-being in family, in-care, street, school, community, and institutional contexts. We emphasize the process of growing into resilience, which is helping youth to (1) build assets (significant adult, institutional, and community supports and resources) and (2) show signs of thriving (positive outcomes built around recognition, respect, and accommodation of SGM young people) (Grace, 2015). Our work is informed by an extensive iSMSS research program, which is currently funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Working to link research to advocating for SGM youth and young adults, we aim to help meet the multiple needs of these individuals through groundbreaking research, policy development, educational and community outreach, health care provision, compassionate policing, human-service provision, and adequate resource allocation.

The CHEW Project, like iSMSS's other educational and outreach programming for SGM youth and young adults, is helping to fill a gap in mainstream institutional service provision. The individuals we serve often experience schooling and health care services, as well as government and legal services, as disconnected and deficient when it comes to addressing the stressors and risks associated with living with adversity and trauma induced by homophobia and transphobia (Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black & Burkholder, 2003; Grace, 2015). Both iSMSS research and other Canadian research indicate that SGM youth and young adults are still involved in a paradoxical struggle to be cared about in education, social services, police services, and health care as purportedly caring institutions. This point was made profoundly clear to me when I served as external reviewer and contributor for the Chief Public Health Officer's 2011 annual report on the state of public health in Canada. The report, entitled *Youth and Young Adults – Life in Transition,* focused on persons aged 12 to 29 years old and drew this overall conclusion: Many researchers, policymakers, and caring professionals in education, health care, and other domains are concerned about limited and even declining efforts to intervene in the lives of SGM young people, especially those living with adversity and trauma. The report emphasized that comprehensive health education and outreach are needed in order to (1) address the complexity of SGM identities, behaviours, and attractions, and (2) show the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities and their expressions. The report also indicated that SGM youth and young adults had encountered

problems accessing mental-health and sexual-health services. Importantly, the report concluded that working toward meeting the comprehensive health education needs of SGM young people can help minimize the stereotyping and stigmatization of these individuals. In the face of the stressors and risks they encounter, which include physical and electronic bullying, verbal and sexual harassment, physical violence at home and in schools and communities, and suicide ideation, attempts, and completions, the report noted that SGM youth and young adults also experience more comprehensive health problems. This negative outcome is exacerbated by a lack of adequate and appropriate health care as well as a lack of educational policies and supports, social policies and services, protective measures, and educational and community-based programs.

   With its focus on the holistic health of SGM youth and young adults, the CHEW Project has been a timely and much-needed addition to iSMSS's pedagogical and cultural work. The project is a school- and community-based comprehensive health education initiative that also includes social education, mentoring, crisis intervention, and providing outreach resources and supports. Many of the CHEW Project's clients are street-involved, with histories of homelessness, substance abuse, mental-health issues, and involvement in the criminal justice system. These individuals often engage in survival crimes like theft and sex work due to a lack of appropriate resources and support in the community. They are also disproportionately experiencing crimes and violence committed against them, which often go unreported due to stigma and a lack of trust in the police and the youth justice system. In addition, they are also vulnerable to recruitment by gangs and other criminal groups because they lack a sense of belonging in navigating life in the larger community. With a particular emphasis on gay and other MSM (males who have sex with males) as well as trans-spectrum (gender variant) youth and young adults, the CHEW Project is helping SGM young people to build both the comprehensive health and social knowledge and problem-solving skills needed to be able, capable, and productive citizens. Recognizing and accommodating SGM diversity, the CHEW Project works in the intersection of client differences and is sensitive to the multivariate backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and sexual and gender identities of our participants as they affirm them. Because it is part of iSMSS initiatives intended to work with SGM young people now and into the future, the CHEW Project is constituted as part of iSMSS's on-the-ground intervention and outreach programming that assists individuals to build capacity (a solutions approach), moving away from unconstructive strategies focused on stigmatizing or fixing these individuals as a source of social disorder (a problems approach) (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Marshall & Leadbeater, 2008). Crucially, at iSMSS, we conduct research on resilience that informs the CHEW Project. SGM youth and young adults can learn to develop self-confidence, social competence, and problem-solving abilities as workers help them to build assets that include a strong internal locus of control, access to healthy mentors and social supports and resources, and a sense of recognition and accommodation in community settings (Goldstein & Brooks, 2005; Grace, 2015). The CHEW Project works with SGM

youth and young adults as capable and invested subjects, which means we see them as individuals and social beings who can be supported to become agents of change in their own lives and in the lives of their peers. When they become ready and able, they can take on roles as advocates and activists who make a difference that starts with the self and extends to others (Grace, 2015).

Funding dynamics perennially create a huge hurdle in this work to help repressed SGM young people become real and free subjects who are recognized and accommodated in our culture and society. One of the challenges of operating the CHEW Project has been fixed-term funding that limits both possibilities for programming and the timeframe for achieving positive outcomes. Consequently, sustainability and consistency in serving clients are hindered. In initiating the CHEW Project, the Alberta Community HIV Policy and Funding Consortium provided funding from November 2014 until June 2016. As the consortium conceptualizes a project, it is generally intended to be a short-term, instrumental, and clinical reaction to a particular need of a particular target population. A project is not meant to be long-term, solution-based programming; indeed, real solutions are not possible since the funding period is too short to effect an adequate change process with lasting positive outcomes. The consortium requires that tangible, instrumental, short-term outcomes be regularly measured during the funding period, with this ongoing statistical evaluation being a funder preoccupation. In the end, project funding is subject to the ebb and flow of socio-political tides, with particular politics at play whereby funders like the consortium change their intervention and outreach priorities. For example, in November 2015 the consortium decided to prioritize funding projects that included addressing HIV in northern Alberta's African Caribbean Black (ACB) communities and funding the Alberta Community Council on HIV's Aboriginal Strategy and its Positive Voices Caucus. While focusing on ACB and Aboriginal persons is absolutely crucial and important in work to address HIV/AIDS in Alberta, changing priorities has resulted in a void moving forward: The consortium now has no pronounced or significant emphasis on vulnerable SGM youth and young adults in intersections with race, class, and other power relationships. From Foucault's (1990) perspective, these objects of analysis are sidelined as targets of intervention, with those young people who are homeless, street-involved, and at-risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, being particularly affected. Regarding the cultural millstone of HIV/AIDs in a multivariate SGM community, Velasquez-Potts (2015) poignantly uses the example of trans people to remind us of the realities of stigmatization and exclusion:

> The trans/queer body with HIV/AIDS is used as a site of regulation and management, imbricating sexuality, gender, and race in ways that make legible who, as well as which acts, fall outside the lines of normative citizenry. (p. 123)

And there is another reality, steeped in recent history. Even though the majority of diagnosed HIV cases globally involve infection due to heterosexual sex or shared injecting (Altman & Symons, 2016), HIV/AIDS is still viewed as a "gay" disease. Indeed

HIV/AIDS and homosexuality have been inextricably linked since the AIDS crisis emerged about four decades ago. In an interesting twist since then, an increasing focus on gay rights globally is a positive outcome of the dynamics surrounding this complicated relationship (Altman & Symons, 2016). If the AIDS crisis has added impetus to the gay rights movement, then a legacy for today's SGM youth and young adults should be unequivocal and sustained access, with comprehensive health education through such ventures as the CHEW Project that provide education and supports focused on HIV and other STI awareness, testing, sex positivity, harm reduction, and prevention. Since the need for the CHEW Project remains strong, we must continue to find new ways to continue the delivery of comprehensive health education, intervention, and outreach focused on the SGM youth and young adults we serve.

SINCE DIFFERENCE IS

The CHEW Project takes everyone involved into a busy intersection where work on sexuality and gender, which are power relationships complicated by culture and diverse power relationships including race and class, is messy and tension-ridden. Butler (2004) asserts that gender and sexuality across differences complicating them are concepts in conflict within realities produced by dominant systems and structures and the power of norms. Thus, we need a deeper understanding of what these terms variously and contextually open up or foreclose in our everyday work, which requires us to be open to the "possibility of thinking, of language, of being a body in the world" (p. 176). At iSMSS, this openness is crucial to building wide-ranging knowledge and understanding needed to inform the development and delivery of meaningful and productive programming for SGM youth and young adults as real participants.

For Butler (2004), difference in relation to sexuality and gender poses a question to be taken up and interrogated. However, while accentuating that difference requires inquiry and analysis, Butler is emphatic that we begin by acknowledging that *difference is*. Since sexuality and gender embody difference in multivariate forms, we need to see these terms as conceptually complex. This makes it challenging to recognize and accommodate sexual and gender minorities because where there is difference there is "the permanent difficulty of determining where the biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end" (p. 185). This work exposing complexities requires contributions from educators, including adult educators, who can assist SGM young people to build knowledge and understanding of difficult concepts that open up possibilities for social and cultural transformation.

However, before we take up the matter of transformation, Butler (2004) asks us to start with the basic question of survival itself, which should drive us to ask: "Whose life is counted as a life? Whose prerogative is it to live?" (p. 205). As she links sexuality and gender to the human need to "secure a life as livable" (2004, p. 205), Butler also wants us to ask, "What threat of death is delivered to those who do not live [sexuality and] gender according to … [their] accepted norms?" (2004, p. 205). As Butler describes them, norms have two faces: On the one hand,

"we need norms in order to live, and to live well, and to know in what direction to transform our social world" (2004, p. 206). On the other hand, "we are also constrained by norms in ways that sometimes do violence to us and which, for reasons of social justice, we must oppose" (2004, p. 206). With regard to sexual and gender norms, educators, including adult educators, can help SGM learners to understand norms and how they impact those living outside them and deviating in ways that mainstream culture and society may deem too much. Following Butler's contention that norms have two faces, educators can help SGM individuals to problem solve with regard to living a livable life in terms of desired recognition and accommodation across difference. Here, as Butler points out, SGM learners would have to come to terms with a disconcerting contemporary reality: Even if one is able to live a livable life amid the confusion created by limits placed on sexual and gender differences, it does not dissolve the historical, symbolic, and real impacts of sexist, heterosexist, and gendered systems and structures. Thus, coming back to the question of survival, individual survival has to be coupled with the transformation of systems and structures so there is recognition, affirmation, and accommodation of the reality that difference is. If systems and structures associated with institutions including education, health care, and policing do not change, then, following Butler (2004) who puts it in pragmatic terms, sexual and gender minorities will continue to pay diverse and very significant personal costs for resisting exclusion: "When [sexual and] gender norms operate as violations, they function as an interpellation that one refuses only by agreeing to pay the consequences: losing one's job, home, the prospects for desire, or for life" (p. 214). This engenders nihilism: a sense of hopelessness and a feeling that one is powerless.

In counteraction, educators, framing pedagogy within a politics of resistance and possibility, can engender hope in SGM youth and young adults as learners and real subjects. Again, Butler is helpful here. Drawing on Foucault, she encourages such politics that educators can use to inform the pedagogical task of assisting learners to oppose and transgress sexual and gender norms and binary categories. Asserting that difference is, Butler views such ordering as unintelligible, limited, and unacceptable, leading us to the moment of malleability where these norms "point up their contingency and their transformability" to make space for a greater array of sexual and gender differences (2004, p. 216). Here then the work of educators is to develop and execute engaged pedagogy driven by a politics of resistance and possibility. As Butler sees it, this is complicated work that brings us back to the question of survival: In the end, those threatened by the exclusionary ordering of sexuality and gender have to survive so they can ultimately live a livable life:

> When the norm appears at once to guarantee and threaten social survival (it is what you need to live; it is that which, if you live it, will threaten to efface you), then conforming and resisting become a compounded and paradoxical relation to the norm, a form of suffering and a potential site for politicization. (2004, p. 217)

Survival then, as Butler contends, is a complicated political matter that is about resistance and possibility in humanizing difference so difference is real and intelligible. She considers this quest for the possible to have "a normative aspiration … [that] has to do with the ability to live and breathe and move. … The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity" (2004, p. 219). In the end, if one's sexual and gender differences are considered to be real, making it possible to be human within the complexities of history and culture, then it is also possible for one to live a livable life and be happy, healthy, and hopeful. The goal, as Butler puts it, is for sexual and gender minorities to be "recognizably human" (2004, p. 225), making it possible for us to live full and satisfying lives as we transgress historical and cultural conventions that have disenfranchised us. With regard to SGM youth and young adults as learners wanting to achieve this goal, educators, including adult educators, have a clear, present, and ethical responsibility to help them navigate intersections where age, sexuality, gender, culture, and other differences interact. All educators are called to do this work. No educator can abrogate this responsibility.

CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVE: CALLING ALL EDUCATORS

In Canada, when age as a power relationship signifies who gets to be recognized and accommodated in forms of education, intervention, and outreach work, nebulous, arbitrary, and restrictive divisions in everyday pedagogical and socio-cultural practices can result. These divisions particularly impact those on the cusp of adulthood who are looking for homes across fields of practice, including adult education. For educators and cultural workers whose core work is helping vulnerable populations navigate living and learning in institutional and community contexts, it is particularly problematic when age is used to delimit involvement since it can exacerbate disenfranchisement (Grace, 2013). Thus, development and delivery of educational and other social programming should be framed within a politics of resistance and possibility that questions what constitutes inclusive forms of education, intervention, and outreach, which is integral to enabling full personhood and citizenship (Grace, 2013, 2015).

This reality challenges educators as pedagogues and cultural workers to address three basic questions (Grace, 2013): (1) Are contemporary lifelong-learning practices, especially in community-based contexts, ethical and useful in addressing the real learning needs of vulnerable youth and young adults? (2) Do educators with the potential to be adults of significance who encourage and guide young learner participation include adult educators? (3) At what age does adult learning begin? With regard to the latter question, as theories of development and learning indicate, it is still unclear when individuals become adults (Grace, 2013). Saying this happens at some legislated age of majority, or some other age is arbitrary. Sometimes a young person's development in individual and social contexts has been impeded

by culture and society's systems and structures that fuel adversity and trauma as life's everyday millstones (Grace, 2015). Sometimes a young person can be (or can appear to be) more mature and capable because of life-shaping contexts and critical personal experiences that can have steeling effects engendering growth and development (Grace, 2015). Certainly, vulnerable SGM young people whose lives are commonly marked by hardship and suffering might be considered among those who have to grow up too soon. Matters of context, disposition, and relationship shaping everyday living for this multivariate population might even accelerate the process of becoming an adult, as personal survival is associated with taking on new roles and responsibilities and growing into resilience as agents and advocates seeking better lives for themselves and their peers (Grace, 2013, 2015).

These possible realities for youth and young adults led me to ask two other questions in my book *Lifelong Learning as Critical Action* (Grace, 2013): (1) Under what circumstances would disenfranchised youth and young adults bother to engage in lifelong learning offered as part of intervention and outreach? (2) At what point would adult educators as constituent lifelong educators consider these young people to be their responsibility? Furthermore, my research and work with SGM youth and young adults, as discussed in my book *Growing into Resilience,* prompted me to ask another key question: Do SGM youth and young adults as a multivariate population link learning and its motivations to being able to survive and thrive in the world (Grace, 2015)? When it comes to vulnerable SGM individuals and their learning, there is much adult education has to consider if it is to be an inclusive field of study and practice that makes space and place for those growing into resilience and young adulthood. Fortunately, many adult educators as lifelong educators are not waiting for answers to core questions such as those I have posed here. They are already engaged in wide-ranging, community-based learning projects designed to involve SGM youth and young adults. The Comprehensive Health Education Workers Project discussed in this chapter is one example of an educational and community venture helping young people counteract the impacts of exclusionary systems and structures. I hope such ventures spur every adult educator to consider young adults as a key learner constituency in our field of study and practice.

NOTE

[1]   Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, questioning, queer, two-spirited, and allies.

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André P. Grace
University of Alberta

PART THREE

YOUTH AND THE POLITICS OF LEARNING

TREVOR CORKUM

8. WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Educational Citizenship and Sexual Minority
International Students in Ontario

INTRODUCTION

Sexuality reveals the ways in which power operates at both the discursive level and in its embodied forms; how power is experienced, negotiated, policed, and ultimately inscribed by, and within, the physical body itself. For queer, migrant students, lured by the marketing promises of English-speaking international education destinations such as Canada, and often subject to forms of erasure, punishment, concealment, and trauma due to sexual and gender differences in their home countries, the act of migration offers a chance to redefine scripts of concealment, subterfuge, and shame through the powerful allure of belonging to, and flourishing within, safe and diverse educational communities.

Sadly, many international students find such dreams curtailed upon arrival at universities and colleges in Toronto and southern Ontario, as they find themselves subject to social relations that privilege Canadian-born, white, gender-conforming students. Within post-secondary education spaces in Toronto and Ontario, issues of race, class, gender expression, and other identity markers mediate the experiences of migrating queer bodies, such that some bodies are more able to navigate regimes of power through negotiated acts of "border-crossing" (Cantú, 2009).

This chapter investigates the experiences of nine sexual minority international students in Toronto and southern Ontario, revealing the ways in which power operates across and within educational spaces to hinder belonging for queer international students. I pose the question of how educational citizenship—the various ways in which queer migrants are incorporated or excluded within post-secondary sites of power and their attendant spoken and unspoken rules, norms, values, and modes of belonging—operates to elevate certain subjects while excluding others. I consider how issues of diasporic surveillance, negative racialization, and gender policing contribute to disconnection and disengagement among these students, and how unique intersections of race, class, and gender provide great room to engage in what Cantú (2009) calls border-crossing as a conscious strategy to negotiate prevailing regimes of power.

Queering the Global Century

The twenty-first century has ushered in an age of migration unparalleled in human history. According to the United Nations, 232 million people—or 3.2 % of the world's population—lived abroad in 2013 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013). This era of hyper-migration—embodying globalization's circuitous flow of goods, ideas, and people—sets the stage for Appadurai's (1996) "imaginary landscapes" where the invention of tradition and other identity-markers becomes destabilized as the "search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication" (p. 44). Such imaginary landscapes are peopled by migrants of all sorts, the realization of what Appadurai terms ethnoscapes—the ever-changing landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and persons (1990, p. 7). While many migrants are driven by economic or humanitarian imperatives, one of the fastest growing migration categories of recent years involves the flow of international students. According to UNESCO, over 3.6 million students studied full-time outside their home country at the post-secondary level in 2010, a 50% increase in just six years (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, 2012). By 2020, this number is expected to rise to over seven million, making mobile international students a key demographic in global migration flows.

While in years past, many, if not all, students might return "home" following graduation, increasingly, host nations facing downward demographic trends are involved in a scramble to recruit international students as potential immigrants (Tamburri, 2013). Indeed, Tamburri notes how a traditional immigration-receiving nation like Canada has overhauled its immigration systems in recent years to give preference to young, educated, highly mobile students. While many scholars argue that such a shift represents yet another turn away from Canada's traditional humanitarian focus towards a more robust and explicit neoliberal program, many international student groups welcome the opportunity for a fast-tracked path to citizenship.

For international students who identify as sexual minorities—gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, two-spirited, or otherwise same-sex loving, which I will henceforth refer to more broadly as "queer"—securing an international student visa in a country with relatively robust protections for sexual minorities, like Canada, with or without the intention of settling permanently, may represent for many a chance to live a more "open" life (Ahmed, 2006; Binnie, 2004; Manalansan, 2005), particularly in a large, diverse, and relatively safe city such as Toronto. It is important to note that while my research does not directly include students who identify as "trans" or transgender, I do include gender identity and gender performance as identity markers in my analysis of how educational citizenship is experienced by queer international students in Toronto. Furthermore, I understand gender as a vital (and fluid) intersectional axis of identity for queer international students migrating across and between global

and local cultures where gender roles and norms may be markedly varied. While Luibhéid (2002), Chauncey (1994) and others have noted how sexuality shapes settlement patterns for all migrants, for queer migrants, the search for home and belonging are often frustrated by state regimes and incomplete incorporation into the nation, offering, at best, partial citizenship (Parreñas, 2001).

Despite the rapid increase in student flows, and despite the important questions raised by younger queer migrants navigating a globalized world, little research has been done on the motivations, lived realities, and settlement experiences of queer international students, in Canada or elsewhere. In what ways is Canada currently positioned in the international imaginary as a safe destination for queer international students searching for a place to explore and live out their sexual identities, and how do accounts of actual lived experience complicate that imaginary landscape? How does migration to Canada—in particular, as part of a privileged, mobile global flow in a highly competitive international student "marketplace"—further elevate certain queer subjects, such as able-bodied, gender-conforming, white bodies, or those most able to be "read" as "good gays" within regimes of power?

I focus my chapter on the experiences of nine queer migrants in Toronto, all of whom originally travelled to Toronto or southern Ontario for post-secondary study. The participants are current or former students ranging in age from 22 to 34. They originate from Jamaica, Trinidad, Brazil, the United States, Croatia, India, Nigeria, Singapore, and Bangladesh. In total, seven men and two women were interviewed. Participants were recruited through international education contacts as well as queer and international education social media sites at five post-secondary institutions within greater Toronto and southern Ontario. A pre-interview questionnaire was deployed to interested participants to gather preliminary demographic information related to country of origin, sexuality, ethnic background, language, program of study, and immigration status in Canada. Nine participants representing diverse demographic backgrounds were selected for life history informed interviews which were between 90–120 minutes, with interview questions focusing on experiences of home, belonging, and what Cantú (2009) calls border-crossing within educational and queer spaces in Ontario. Attending to intersections of race, class, gender, and other identity markers, I incorporate Cantú's queer materialist paradigm (2009, p. 9) and Dorothy Smith's relations of ruling as theoretical frameworks to ask how queer international students experience educational citizenship within Toronto and Ontario.

Educational Citizenship in an Age of Global Migration

For Cantú, sexuality, as a dimension of power, "shapes and organizes processes of migration and modes of incorporation. In turn, the contextual and structural transitions which mark the immigration experience impact the ways in which identities are formed" (2009, p. 21). Cantú borrows from Smith's (1987, 1990) conceptualization of how institutional regimes of power shape the actual day-to-day lived realities of

people through "relations of ruling". The identity of the queer migrant, for Cantú, assumes "multiple and shifting meanings" (2009, p. 21) informed by structural variables, institutional policies, cultural influences, and the dynamics of migration. This queer political economy of migration reveals, in trans-cultural settings and through global flows, the always-fluid nature of power operating between and among human sexuality, state institutions, and the global economic process.

In order to account for the material, historical, political, and social conditions of such transitional and ephemeral spaces, these borderlands, Cantú turns to Anzaldúa's (1987) intersectional understanding of the meztiza consciousness. Anzaldúa's work with lesbian Chicana migrants unpacks the structural dimensions of power within the borderlands—how issues such as colonial history, racial and class dynamics, and various cultural dimensions influence experiences of migration. Anzaldúa, like Cantú, is also concerned with how the queer migrant enacts, resists, avoids, or evades certain ruling norms, choosing to "perform" certain acts of citizenship at strategic moments in time, toward a certain concrete, beneficial end. Crossing a national border, for example, might involve performing certain scripts of sexuality and gender, until one is safely across. Citizenship, as Phelan (2001) and others contend, also takes place at the sub-national level, where modes of belonging, incorporation, and border patrol regulate who is permitted access to the rights and claims of group belonging. I extend Phelan's analysis to consider educational communities and student groups themselves as examples, at a micro-level, of such sub-national communities. The queer student migrant, in transition, then, between home and the destination country of institution—in this case, Canada, and the post-secondary institutions of southern Ontario—also finds themselves in the borderlands between their identity as migrant and their incomplete status as educational citizen. Furthermore, the shifting requirements of the Canadian immigration system and the demands and restrictions placed upon international student visa holders studying in Canada place these students in challenging and often precarious states with regards to their migration status. In this case, the precarity and pressures experienced by international students—instability and uncertainty around housing, ability to obtain legal work, ongoing surveillance, and patrol by various forms of bureaucratic administration within educational institutions and state apparatus—are compounded for queer international students who may or may not be "out" or open with regards to their sexual identity, or who may fear that a change in, or revocation of, their visa status will unwittingly out them to state authorities in their home countries.

Cantú points to how citizenship, in its various forms and guises, is always a performance, where certain acts and gestures must be performed as if the migrants were citizens and certain claims must likewise be made: how to dress and how to speak, for example, as a prerequisite to belonging. Such understandings of the performative nature of identity—drawn from queer theorists like Butler (1990)—and the moment-by-moment agency of the subject to perform such acts, in various settings and under differing circumstances, greatly influence my own understanding of how queer international students engage in bids for belonging within Canadian

educational spaces. In particular, the ability to be treated and accorded not only the same legal and bureaucratic rights as domestic students—but to be equally read as citizens within educational spaces—constitutes what I call educational citizenship.

Given this understanding of citizenship within education sites, how is educational citizenship experienced in specific, day-to-day ways by the queer international student migrant in Toronto? How might we unpack or consider these experiences within the context of late-stage global capitalism and rapidly increased migrant flows?

By incorporating queer theory's focus on performativity and border theory's concern with material and structural conditions of migration/negotiation, Cantú's work marks an important intervention in the study of queer migration. His conception of a queer materialist paradigm able to account for the particulars of place, history, and the complexity of social relations broadens our understanding of how migration and immigration are experienced by queer bodies. Such a paradigm, he argues, allows identity to be understood not only as a social construction but also as fluid—constructed and reconstructed depending on social location and political economic context (2009, p. 11). At the same time, the queer borderlands approach complicates binary systems of identity, revealing the fluid and shifting identities within local and trans-local phenomenon that are context-specific and allow for greater agency on behalf of the queer migrant. This focus on agency, which borrows from Anzaldúa's work, interrogates the various ways, for example, globally-mobile queer international students enact, assume, resist, or contend with regimes of power locally, abroad, virtually, and in spaces "in-between".

Such in-between spaces—the gaps and peaks and tears in the tattered fabric of power—are experienced daily by queer newcomers to Toronto. Smith's (1987, 1990) conceptualization of how institutional regimes of power shape the actual day-to-day lived realities of people as the relations of ruling provides a key lens for understanding how educational actors and social spaces in Toronto shape experiences of belonging and citizenship among queer international students. For Smith, the ruling apparatuses are "those institutions of administration, management, and professional authority, and of intellectual and cultural discourses, which organize, regulate, lead and direct, contemporary capitalist societies" (1990, p. 2). Relations of ruling are "the complex of extra-local relations that provide in contemporary societies a specialization of organization, control, and initiative. They are those forms that we know as bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organization, and the media. They include also the complex of discourses, scientific, technical, and cultural, that intersect, interpenetrate, and coordinate the multiple sites of ruling" (1990, p. 6). Understanding how the experiences of queer international students are shaped by "extra-local relations" through the framework of relations of ruling help pinpoint factors that contribute to both the common and divergent experiences of migration to Canada among research participants.

Cantú and others have theorized identity across space, and have incorporated the work of geographers such as Soja (1996), whose conceptualization of Thirdspace as a trans-disciplinary project that examines "the simultaneity and interwoven

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complexity of the social, the historical, and the spatial, their inseparability and interdependence" (p. 3). Massey (2005) asks us to re-think space as "open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming" (p. 59). Her theory of transnational history is a useful frame that considers how flows and movements produce historical processes and identities—essentially, how people come to imagine themselves as global citizens or as part of a global community through space. We might extend her understanding to the queer global citizen, or the global educational citizen, seeking out a queer-friendly space through which to celebrate, access, and perform acts of educational citizenship. The global educational citizen, by Massey's logic, exists in a tension—both real and imagined—between their tenuous status as a queer citizen "at home" and their imagined/real status as a citizen within the utopia of the queer Canadian imaginary. Diffusion theory demands that we attend to the local, and believes fundamentally that "the global is made in the local". In the study at hand, then, we can understand the experiences of the nine students as being constructed by, and within, spaces that are simultaneously "local" and "global". This dialectical tension, we will see, is but one frame of tension shaping the incomplete incorporation of queer international students into the loci of power within education sites in Toronto.

No One Here Looks Like Me: Surveillance, Race, and Belonging

While hopes were high that their arrival to Canada might constitute a new beginning, or at least a reframing of home according to new modes of belonging, the landscape of Canadian citizenship proved complex, frustrating, demoralizing—often excluding and repelling subjects away from the body politic in a myriad of subtle and powerful ways while eliding authentic and meaningful discussion of difference and power. For the students in this study, the struggle to achieve educational citizenship in Canada was not a simple or particularly celebratory process, as had originally been envisioned. Instead, issues of diasporic surveillance and multiple instances of negative racialization contributed to a climate of mistrust and alienation, underscoring the degree to which queer international students face particular barriers to complete inclusion, or full citizenship, within their respective educational communities.

   Phelan (2001) calls citizenship "the central concept that calls for inclusion" with regards to "recognition and participation and desirable goals" (p. 3). While citizenship "does not require the active approval and communion of others…it does require the affirmation of one's space in the political community" (2001, p. 5). Phelan maintains that distance from cultural membership implicitly inherent in forms of citizenship makes one "continually prey to renewed exclusion and scapegoating" (2001, p. 5). Further, she maintains that "citizenship is about participation in the social and political life of a community, and as such, it is not confined to a list of protections and exclusions" (2001, p. 6). Visibility and the achievement of certain legal and bureaucratic rights within the dominant culture itself, then, is no guarantee of citizenship or equality.

As we interrogate how participants experience citizenship within educational spaces in Ontario, it's important to keep Phelan's analysis in mind. If the guarantee of equality and equal rights, and visibility itself, do not guarantee citizenship in its full social and political sense, what relations are at work to mask or occlude difference in such a way as to render certain subjects more worthy of inclusion and incorporation into the social, political, and cultural life of the post-secondary institutions under study?

Luka—a Croatian-born gay man now in his mid-30s—knew almost immediately, upon arriving at university in Toronto to study undergraduate film, that the reality of his experience would be much different than he had imagined:

> Oh…it was just so sad…The buildings were too big, it was overwhelming I think. I really badly didn't want to be here. But there was nowhere else… The first day I had an orientation meeting at the Film Department, myself and several others, and I knew I wouldn't hang out with any of those people. They were all from Richmond Hill, Markham, from very affluent families. Most of them were at least a few years younger from me. And they were all so cool… So, it was horrible, I knew I would not make friends. I was very, very disappointed… [A]nd another weird thing that I noticed right away is that everyone in my class was white. Every person in my class, except one other person, was white.

Upon arrival, Luka feels "weird" and different, positioned as an outsider because of both his sense of class and his worldview. Although, unlike his classmates, Luka has had to work to save for his studies abroad (and would continue to work legally and illegally for the duration of his studies), he has nevertheless, due to having lived in four countries by his arrival in Canada, developed a cosmopolitan view of the world. Studying in what feels like a homogenized, "white" environment is limiting, even stifling.

For David, a gay Caribbean-Canadian, much of the shock of his first few days at his undergraduate university in southern Ontario came in the form of a re-entrenchment of normative gender roles and the unexpected influence of a large diaspora from his home country. Arriving in residence to meet his three Canadian roommates, he realizes that his dreams of exploring his gender and sexuality would have to be put on hold or continue to be explored surreptitiously:

> I think I knew [that it would be difficult] from my first night in residence. So first day I moved in, orientation night. And scared. Nervous. Petrified. I met my three roommates, because I was in a suite with three guys. They were three best friends from Etobicoke. White. Athletic. Jocky types. And within the first five minutes of meeting them, I could tell that this was not going to be okay, to be little flighty flamboyant David in this environment. Yes, it was not an open space in this room. I knew from the minute I got there that this room was going to be traumatic.

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Consequently, although one of David's primary motivations for choosing to study in Canada was to be able to live his sexuality more openly, he makes the early decision to continue to outwardly live as a straight man. This decision is compounded by the large number of Caribbean students at his university:

> Well, it turns out I was on a floor—gratefully, I remain friends with some of them—another [Caribbean] guy, who I didn't know, but [from the Caribbean] nonetheless; there were two people from the Bahamas, and from I can't remember what Caribbean islands. But there were lots of other Caribbean people around on my floor. And immediately I knew. So I can't be out here on this floor.

This unease and sense of surveillance within and among diasporic communities within educational spaces was a common theme among participants, often reinforcing particular scripts of gender, sexual, and cultural performance they had been largely determined to avoid or transcend. Obirin, a bisexual Nigerian woman, now in her early 30s, had been longing for many years to travel to Canada to be able to be "herself". She found herself unwillingly placed with another Nigerian student during an orientation activity by a university staff member who felt they'd have a lot in common since they were from the same country, despite the fact that Obirin had spent little or no time in Nigeria over the course of her life.

> Right off the bat, I didn't really feel like I identified with a lot of them [other Nigerians]. And I remember trying to talk specifically to students from West Africa. There was a difference, the way they spoke was very different…The way they spoke was very—not that they didn't speak proper English—but they spoke the cultural English of the countries, and they used slang that I wasn't accustomed to, and they talked about things that I didn't…I had different experiences from them…I remember somebody called me an Oreo, and I'm kind of like, okay, I guess that's what I am.

Like Luka, her class position, language, and experiences of prior mobility put her at odds with other same-country nationals. Interesting here is the way in which Obirin's presumed identity as an "Oreo" is ascribed to her by members of her diasporic community within her educational space in Canada. Mark, a young African-American gay man studying an MBA in Toronto, describes a similar sense of being pejoratively labeled an "Oreo" by members of the black community in his American hometown who felt he identified more with upward social mobility and what were construed as "white" values.

Adil had a similar experience of feeling under surveillance by members of his own diasporic community during his first year in his MBA program. While Toronto was going to be the place where he'd be free to come out fully, negative experiences with an Indian classmate caused him to be wary of opening up and forming intimate friendships:

So there's this guy now in my program who's Indian, and…he said certain things. He said, "I think he [Adil] is gay". He put percentages on my sexual orientation. He said, I think he's forty percent…or sixty percent gay. And then he said "Have you seen him? He's not married… He comes from a backward cultural background…He comes from a backward religion...Have you seen the kind of clothes he wears. He wears such tight clothes" and things like that, which made me upset.

Adil struggled through his childhood and early adulthood with being taunted and harassed for his appearance and dress, and for intimations around his sexuality, so these insinuations and gossip had a profoundly negative effect on his sense of community by replicating some of the trauma and unease he'd felt in India. Adil's experience suggests the trauma of queer difference and alienation can be re-lived within diasporic settings, even within educational spaces. Sophia, while open about most aspects of her life to her peers in Toronto, is similarly guarded with other Singaporeans. "When I am hanging out with people from my country, I never mention anything about my sexuality, ever…I'm less willing to talk about anything queer with people from my country." What's particularly challenging about these struggles for queer international students within their diasporic communities is the degree to which this surveillance inhibits their ability to live their sexuality fully and openly. This hiding—the inability to fully integrate all parts of their identity and experience—is often more traumatic particularly because the promise of full openness and belonging in Canada was experienced so powerfully prior to arrival.

While experiences within diasporic communities have an effect on bids for belonging and experiences of citizenship within educational spaces, racial differences and being read as racially different had a profound effect on how participants experienced incorporation or exclusion in the classroom, residence, and extracurricular life of their institutions. Brandon, prior to leaving Jamaica for Canada, had been focused on finding community based on his queer sexuality, such that "[t]he Jamaican part, in terms of my racial identity, I guess I hadn't really thought about it too much at the time. Because I assumed that [my] university was going to be a relatively diverse place." The reality, however, was far more complex:

I've had to become conscious of my own skin colour, having been in classes where I'm likely the only person in colour who's there. Or having been in discussions where they're talking about issues of race or Third World countries, and they have a kind of cultural distance from those conversations. I'm like, that's my life. That's been an interesting process for me. It hasn't been super validating in terms of having people that I can surround myself with who understand because it's predominantly white area, and some people don't understand, but yeah…I think race, if anything. And the idea of citizenship too, because I find as an international student, or as black international student, there's this weird distinction where some students at [this university] will automatically assume that you're—that I'm from Toronto, if—because I don't

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sound like I'm from somewhere else. Whereas there are other people who will assume, who will particularly assume that I'm from somewhere else, because I'm black. So that's been like an interesting distinction.

As a black student in a predominantly white campus in a small city in Ontario that draws its student body both from the Greater Toronto Area and small-town Ontario, Brandon has the experience both of being assumed to be a racialized Canadian and also an international student. In both cases, he's considered an outsider.

And I think that's just… [this city's] residents' own understanding of what a Canadian looks like…But I know that [this university] has a lot of students who come from small towns, who come to [this city], and it may be the first time that they see someone who has a different skin colour than they do. So it's kind of like, oh, where do you come from? Oh, oh, okay…

Brandon's experiences of exclusion based on his skin colour are complicated by what he describes as his own "internal racism" that finds him actively seeking out white students for on-campus friendship and social networks:

So, in an attempt to get as far away from the international community, partly because of my own internal racism, I guess, I immersed myself into the college community, which was primarily composed of white, social students. I've worked in the college office. I've done campus tours and stuff. So I guess my social networks are primarily the kids—or the students—who are relatively involved in campus life.

This strategic, racialized, relationship forming is also part of Brandon's vision for long-term connection to Canada, and the development of both a sense of personal belonging, intimate connection, and professional opportunity:

So, I've seen darker skin as kind of a hindrance, in some ways. In high school, there was a point where I tried to bleach my skin…And then coming to Canada, where, like whiteness was seen as the apex of all that was good in the world, I guess it's kind of like okay, this is something that I should aspire to…The other thing is, I think in some ways I aspire to be part of a particular community, whether that's in the queer community or in an economic sense. And I guess the people I envision being in those places are usually white. So in that sense, having white peers or white partners might bring forth more rewards, if you will.

Critically, here, it's Brandon's active turn toward Canada, where whiteness is "seen as the apex of all that was good in the world" that underpins his desire to form networks of white peers and partners, echoing Ahmed's assertion that as we orient ourselves and move through space we come to be that which we are orientated towards. Brandon is clear both that he's internalized the colonial racism of Jamaica and the racism he experiences at his university in Canada. Despite this, he's willing

to at least partially accept these terms of citizenship as a way to "bring forth more rewards".

Elsewhere, he is more critical, however, of how racism, and the erasure of race, contribute to his own marginality within both the classroom and extracurricular life:

> Well, yeah. So…I think, just for me, I don't think we should equate or reduce culture or cultural diversity or ethnicity or racial issues…Because diversity is something that's part of Canadian identity, so I think in terms of a lot of the programming that's provided, it's very much focused on kind of the white, cookie cutter experience. In terms of a classroom setting, we discussed Huckleberry Finn, the book. And we spent the entire seminar without talking about the issue of race…For me, it was like, you can't talk about that book without talking about [race]! So, I think for me it's the erasure that happens with issues of race and marginality that makes it all the more visible for me.

Shameel faced this same sense of erasure during his time as a volunteer for the diversity office at his university in a small city in southern Ontario, where he received training from the Positive Space team which felt like it was "white people talking about their sexuality…it's not related to me at all". Similarly, Obirin attended a few events within her university's queer collective, but felt like an outsider as the lone black woman in the space:

> Oh, it was also a lot of, I would walk into the room, and just, like, I didn't see a lot of queers who looked like me. And they—the people in the room, like even just the way they dressed, it was very, you know, different from the way I dressed…So it just seemed like everything was different. The way they spoke, the way they dressed. I didn't see any black people in the room.

As a black American man, Mark also felt marginalized in educational spaces, both formal and informal. He also became aware of his status as both an outsider (black, American), and partial insider (North American), able to bridge the domestic-international student divide within his MBA program. So even though he initially felt that Canada was "more or less the same thing as the States", nuances in how racial identities are ascribed, read, and mediated in Toronto soon became apparent:

> So Toronto has a large population of people from other—I hate the word immigrants, because immigrants has such a negative connotation where I come from, so I don't want to call it immigrants. But a large international population. And…from what I've seen, I think there's a disdain of that in some capacity, in some respect, and people don't really address it, and if my school is like a microcosm of what's going on in Greater Toronto, then the issues are fucked up [with great emphasis] in a lot of ways.

In particular, Mark finds that racialized and international students, as well as women, are largely absent from positions of power within the student community, despite the fact that purportedly 50% of the population in his program are international:

> Because again, even as we talk about race, and we talk about people, international students, professionals, they're very closely related, right? People are treated differently just because…(pause)…of very arbitrary, superficial difference. And I think what makes it even worse is what I feel is this very passive-aggressive culture that doesn't even address, like won't even be honest about it, and wants to skirt around, pussyfoot around the issue. Like, deal with it. You know? It's the reason why I look at our GBC [student government] … and all the executives are white men. How is that possible, when 50% of the student body is from another country? How is that possible when 30% of the people here are women?

Critically here, Mark links the white patriarchal nature of his school's student government, the erasure of international students from the social and political life of the university community, and the development of the emerging professional business class. As one of the top business schools in Canada and North America, his school is a space and place where ideals of power, commerce, leadership, and management are taught and reproduced. Its graduates in turn go on to occupy extremely influential positions of power within the Canadian business, media, and cultural elite.

Diasporic surveillance and instances of subtle and overt racism are but two examples of the ways in which race and sexuality intersect in the lived experiences of queer international students to pose complex, often hidden barriers to inclusion that may not be experienced by their white, Canadian-born peers. Left unaddressed, such barriers are replicated in the small, seemingly inconsequential moments of the everyday, reproducing hidden forms of power within education communities that restrict the enjoyment and full experience of education citizenship to certain queer bodies.

Aspiring Minds: Professional Networks and Border-Crossing

If the experiences of this group of international students describe ways in which sites and experiences of educational and queer citizenship replicate existing relations of ruling in Toronto, in what ways do these subjects engage in Cantú's (2009) border-crossing as a strategic means of negotiating these webs of power? How are identities consciously masked, altered, reframed and recalibrated in certain moments and spaces, and to what end?

Mark seems aware that as he continues his upwardly-mobile professional ascent, he will more regularly confront differences of race, class, and sexuality, and the struggle to fully integrate and articulate the wholeness of his identity in particular spaces and places. Ruminating on this imagined future, he says:

> Well, the reality is, I don't…(pause)…the reality is, something's going to give, right? Like, I'm not going to have the opportunity to have all of my issues, all facets of my identity met with any one situation, or any one space in which

I live. And by space, I do mean physically and mentally. I think…it depends on where I will be in life. Like, what kind of mental/emotional/spiritual space I'll be in, in life, that will dictate and determine what's important to me…moving forward.

We've already looked at how Brandon consciously forms groups of white peers and networks in order to gain perceived (and future) cultural and economic benefits. Brandon is also aware that developing strong relationships with his professors is important for advancement in his career. In fact, he feels closer to his professors than anyone else in his social group:

I think the most valuable experience for me is the relationship I've built with my professors. We talk a lot about having personal connections with professors, but I don't think other students get that. And I've been able to have really great conversations with all of my professors...they're comfortable enough to share some of the stuff that's going on in their life. So it's like, wow, I'm being treated, like an equal level...And part of it is that I can have conversations with my professors that I can't necessarily have with students, because again, I feel like they wouldn't necessarily get it. But I think the other thing that would be for me this year is getting into grad school. More because of what those opportunities present for my own academic and social life, but it's kind of like everything that I've worked towards and done so far has meant something I guess.

Here, Brandon recognizes that the personal and collegial support he's developed with professors in his personal life also serve him in his aspirations for graduate school. Brandon downplays his Jamaican identity among his university peers, hides his sexuality from his family and within the Caribbean diaspora in Canada, and chooses not to disclose his international student status when applying for off-campus jobs, in case it negatively impacts his experience; however, when applying for graduate school, he chooses to highlight both his racial and sexual identities as a way to improve his chances of admission:

The international student status thing has been really interesting in terms of when I mention this and when I don't. When I was applying to grad school, I made sure to mention that, hey, I'm an international student, who's racialized, and also queer. Because I think in some cases, like marginal identities are seen as valuable for the purposes of, just in terms of student bodies and having different students, or, I don't know, increasing their portfolio in terms of academic departments. So it was useful for grad school applications, in that sense.

Sophia also felt it was important to mask part of her identity in order to achieve an on-campus job. While in general, she dresses in non-gender conforming ways (including wearing a suit and tie to a formal dance), for her interview as a lab assistant she made a specific attempt to dress conservatively:

> The one thing I could think about is when I was interviewing for my current lab position. I didn't know what people there are like. So, I wore a nice shirt. I wore a pink nice shirt. That was all. Just to see…just to be sure, you know. You never want to present yourself as too gay.

Mark, too, notes the pressure to present more conservatively in quasi-professional settings, such as networking events where he may encounter prospective employers. Within these spaces, he feels compelled to enact certain normative sexual and gender scripts—or at least certain forms of homo-normative scripts that incorporate professionalism and "appropriate" behaviour:

> So, for instance…there was a marketing event that I needed to be at, because one of the companies that I'm interested in, American Express, was there. And, I remember speaking to the representative, and literally just having to, like, bring it down three notches, because, you know, I'm trying to mirror your energy…or lack thereof [laughs], and so I do remember…and I do it all the time...like, in professional settings, I actively tone it down just a little bit.

Professional networks, then—whether current or imagined, constructed or experienced on an aspirational level—become a crucible for experimenting with identity. While all students in the study reported negative experiences of racialization along with surveillance and exclusion from both their own diasporic communities and the community at large, most students found ways to leverage their own educational and social capital in strategic, concrete ways that would advance their own personal, professional, and material conditions. Indeed, in the face of ongoing racism and gender policing, these students demonstrated a high degree of creativity, resilience, and capacity to border-cross (Cantú, 2009) within educational spaces in Ontario.

Conclusion: Queer Students in the Borderlands

Cantú and Anzaldúa both understand that for queer migrants, the borderlands between national and cultural boundaries provide moments in which "the incongruities of binary systems are made visible, as are the intersections of multiple marginal positions and relations of power" (Cantú, 2009, p. 29). The marginalized queer subject, negotiating multiple and simultaneous webs of power, consciously and unconsciously re-draws his or her identity in order to comply with or resist prevailing ruling relations, and as an attempt to access the privileges and opportunities afforded by certain forms of citizenship.

Using Smith's (1990) concept of relations of ruling, we see how the construction and policing of what I term educational citizenship seeks to replicate existing systems of power that privilege insiders and reify notions of ideal citizenship based on whiteness, idealized versions of masculinity and femininity, and a sense of corporatized upward-mobility. Whether in the classroom, in the residence hall, or

in student clubs and networks, participants who did not conform to normative ideas of race, gender, and class faced barriers—often subtle and embedded—to inclusion and incorporation.

For many, Canada was initially positioned in the global imaginary as a queer utopia, an imagined egalitarian society where cultural, gender, and sexual differences are respected and celebrated. Over time, within various educational spaces, participants grew to incorporate, and in many ways, internalize, dominant values around whiteness, masculinity/femininity, and class mobility. While some participants—such as Brandon and David—more wholeheartedly engaged in forms of cultural erasure at certain moments as part of a process of adopting particular norms, others—such as Mark—more actively resisted these normative pressures.

What do these lived experiences ultimately tell us about the intersection between queer migration and the global century?

For one, educational citizenship as I have described it—that is, the ability to experience full and complete participation and belonging within post-secondary educational spaces in Toronto and southern Ontario, remains out of reach for some queer international students, a signal that the room to maneuver, "shape-shift" or cross borders is in itself a particular kind of knowing that may benefit from certain existing forms of social or cultural capital most amenable to exchange within the informal global marketplace of bodies, ideas, information, personal "brands", and so on. In an era marked by hyper-migration, in particular among mobile students, what we see is the ways in which some students—even many queer students—are able to navigate complex, foreign, locally-inscribed but globally-embedded systems of power in order to achieve and obtain particular personal and professional benefits. Sexuality, in and of itself, appears not to be a limiting factor in such navigations. However, sexuality is not lived or experienced in a vacuum, but rather as an intersectional aspect of complex and fluid forms of identity. Other identity markers— race, gender, class, language, and body type, among others—play a significant and crucial role in determining how, or the degree to which, the queer migrant may experience inclusion or exile in the small, seemingly innocuous moments of the day-to-day.

It's important to note that for young privileged bodies, motion, movement, and mobility—Ahmed's lifelines as the queer subject re-orients itself in time and space— are not passive subjects, but active agents re-constituting their identities in particular moments and locations. Importantly, this work takes into account a cohort of queer migrants whose relative privilege creates greater access to circular and flexible modes of mobility, signalling how, in a future where surveillance and border policing will only increase, certain forms of identity—such as class, educational attainment, and gender performance—may permit greater latitude for border-crossing than others. What happens to those bodies not able to follow certain lifelines? Further research and conversations with other categories of queer migrants—refugees, family-class migrants, or undocumented migrants—would explore this claim further and continue to illuminate the connection between economic privilege and flexible identity.

The findings here, while limited to an exploration of sub-national power regimes, nevertheless demonstrate with some clarity how homo-normative forces—the unspoken, powerful privileging of white, hyper-masculine, and upwardly mobile bodies—operate within and across Canadian spaces, even in so-called "progressive" educational communities. Such privileging positions an idealized form of the good gay, the ideal homo-citizen, whose path and access to informal types of citizenship in educational worlds, based on the embodied characteristics noted above, is much easier than their racialized, gender nonconforming peers. Such an observation is entirely consistent with the exclusionary practices of citizenship—often covert and hidden, sometimes explicit—identified throughout Canada's history by Dhamoon (2010), Stasiulis and Bakan (2006), and others. This study suggests that even while relatively economically privileged, young, highly educated, mobile bodies—those targeted by Canada's immigration system as "ideal citizens"—may find themselves on a fast-track to Canadian citizenship, significant challenges remain in feeling "at home", finding home, or developing an integrated, authentic sense of belonging within Canadian educational spaces.

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Trevor Corkum
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

TANYA ABERMAN AND PHILIP ACKERMAN
WITH MEMBERS OF THE
FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE'S YOUTH NETWORK

9. "ISN'T THE RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION A HUMAN RIGHT?"

*Experiences of Precarious Immigration Status Youth
Navigating Post-Secondary Education*

INTRODUCTION

It's stupid you know… TECHNICALLY everything you want is within arm's reach, but you CAN'T touch it. And no one tells you YOU CAN'T touch it. It's just annoying and cruel and stupid. Makes you even wonder why you are even trying so hard to be good at one stage of education if you can't even access the other part. It makes you want to give up.
(Member of the FCJ Refugee Centre Youth Network, 2015)

As the result of a hard-won, yet inconsistently applied, "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy at the Toronto District School Board, children and youth in Toronto have access to elementary and secondary education regardless of their immigration status (or that of their parents). In fact, Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), as well as Ontario's provincial Education Act, affirm children and youth under 18 years of age must have access to the Ontario elementary and secondary school system.[1] While these policies are arguably imperfectly applied across school boards, there is a complete lack of guidelines outlining access to any form of post-secondary education for students with precarious immigration status. Therefore, students who have successfully undertaken years of schooling in Ontario are all but barred from joining their peers in pursuing their academic and professional goals. This inequity of access too frequently leads to delayed dreams and stunted futures for the many youth affected, without any permanent solutions being developed. As Gonzales (2011) argues, youth are moved from a space of participation and relative protection to insecurity and exclusion, from "de facto legal to illegal" (p. 602). While this chapter will focus on the Greater Toronto Area, this problem of equity and access is felt across Canada, and in many other countries as well.

We use the term precarious status to refer to the spectrum of less-than-full immigration statuses, or those that depend on other factors to maintain status

(Goldring, Berinstein & Bernhard, 2009). More concretely, for the purposes of this chapter, the envelope of precarious status migrants includes: refugee claimants, refused refugee claimants, sponsored migrants, visitors, temporary resident permit holders, temporary foreign workers, humanitarian and compassionate grounds applicants, and those without any form of immigration status (non-status) – or anyone else shy of permanent residency. Students with precarious status are faced with impossible bureaucratic hurdles when applying for post-secondary education.

As Marmolejo, Manley-Casimir and Vincent-Lancrin (2008) argue, this exclusion is a "potential waste of human capital" as many may eventually be landed and become permanent residents; having lost time and ambition, others may return to their country of origin, using their education and maintaining their contacts (p. 250). Moreover, there is extensive literature that highlights the systemic racism and marginalization that lead to disengagement and dispossession, as newcomer students either get pushed out or lose ownership of their academic trajectories (Anisef, 1994; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Forman, 2001; Richmond, 2001). In this chapter, we will outline and explore the experiences, barriers, and challenges that precarious status youth face in accessing post-secondary education in Ontario. We will also unpack how these experiences are shaped by intersectional identities and oppressions, creating individual, as well as collective, moments of disengagement. We undertake this project as two Canadian-born youth workers who have worked with, and supported, newcomer youth for several years in both community and academic settings. The youth participants are members of the FCJ Refugee Centre's Youth Network, a uniquely diverse group of self-identified newcomer youth (aged roughly 15–25 years old). Access to education has been a primary focus and campaign for this group, who have undertaken several projects to address it, including research, arts-based responses, and awareness raising events. We aim to emphasize the importance of including the accounts of seven precarious status youth from this group, valuing space for their voices and experiences. Their projects have directly influenced the six prevalent themes in this chapter, which include: Unique Stress, Misinformation, Token Student, Schools Aren't Safe, Financial Obstacles, and Derailment. Through the unpacking of our own experiences as youth workers, in discussion with academic literature, we will describe these inter-constituent themes, aiming to offer a more robust picture of the educational inequity faced by precarious status youth. Having been integrally involved in the development of this project, members of the FCJ Youth Network offer insight into each section through poetry, first-person narrative, and community-driven analysis. While all identifying characteristics have been changed to protect the youth involved, their stories are real.

Unique Stress

My Educational Escape
School, a mental rehabilitation center.
Freedom from home, a noble sanctuary.

A place to relieve your stress, forget your regrets.
I want to be there, I long to be there.
To be with friends,
to get my mind off things.
It helped me nurture a skill I never thought I had.
To write a couple of lines,
and what do you know… poetry.
Education is a venue to vent out my anger,
escape from the bullets, of all enemy chatter.
Four years of high school, man it was fun.
Burning up the summer realizing I'm done.
Tired of waiting, need to go on,
before that deadly bullet hits my stonewall.
Education was created to benefit a nation,
one man's journey, stifled by governmental procrastination.
I need education just like all citizens,
after all it's a human right just ask the UN.
The cost is extraordinary,
makes the mind's temperature reach the height of mercury.
Countries like Norway offer it for free,
Why are you making it harder, don't you know apples fall from trees?
Why are you making it harder for immigrants to realize our dreams?
It's clear to us now that weren't welcome
because once we hit the BIG TIME,
you alone will be lamenting.

<div align="right">(Tee-Jay, a member of the FCJ Youth Network)</div>

It could be argued that a myriad of stressors emerges for anyone navigating the transitional divide between secondary and post-secondary education; however, this stress is often amplified for precarious migrant youth populations who are burdened by additional barriers and unending bureaucracy. These youth are overwhelmingly barred admission to post-secondary institutions in Canada, unless they are able to obtain the necessary study permits and pay the associated international fees. Student visas may be impossible for precarious status youth to obtain as a result of several factors: (a) people holding various temporary statuses are ineligible for study permits, and (b) others, who may have lived in Canada for some time without status, having overstayed visas or removal orders, may be unable or unwilling to identify themselves to immigration authorities to apply. Moreover, the extremely high cost of international tuition fees makes post-secondary education impossible for many of these students as they do not have access to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and are ineligible for most scholarships and bursaries.

There are a select few that are able to gain admittance to a college or university, for example those accepted in principle for permanent residence through sponsorship

or on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, two-stage processes that require two levels of acceptance before permanent residence is granted; however, they then need to navigate lengthy and more entangled bureaucratic processes to maintain their post-secondary participation. These hurdles include: securing or renewing a study permit; switching from an international to domestic fee scale (and proving that they are entitled to do so); securing documents from back home; having foreign credentials recognized; taking language assessment tests (such as TOEFL or IELTS) even if they have completed one to three years of high school and graduated in Ontario, just to name a few. It is important to consider that these burdens and barriers are navigated in a discriminatory, violent, and devaluing landscape, which, when combined, detrimentally impact these populations and further their disengagement.

Moreover, this lack of access works in a complex relationship with other settlement and integration processes that further impede any equitable participation in educational arenas, and thus limit academic successes. While pursuing post-secondary possibilities, precarious status youth are often working toward a more permanent immigration status, the process for which is both time and energy consuming. Many youth exist in emerging grey areas of immigration policy, such as refused claimants without removal orders (who therefore cannot be deported); people accepted in principle for permanent residency, but have several additional steps to complete before they become landed (which could take years); precarious status populations involved in lengthy criminal processes (who maintain precarious status until a verdict is rendered), among others. Not only are these processes lengthy and onerous at best, but they are further tangled by continued policy and legislative changes announced by the federal government. Often the onus of any misstep in this changing landscape is placed directly on the youth, who are punished for not checking the right boxes or getting things done earlier.

With further analysis of how these difficulties are aggravated by increased precarity in other arenas (such as limited/non-existent health care, under-housing, underemployment, etc.), the stress experienced by precarious status youth trying to pursue their academic goals is glaringly obvious. This unique host of stressors aggravates already existing feelings of long-term destabilization and disengagement.

Misinformation

Gently, they guide you
Softly, they encourage you
Blindly, you follow

Hopes grow.
Dreams glow.
Oh, how long 'till you stop?

How long 'till you see?
Oh, how I wish you could see

Turn your head to the side
Look how far you've climbed

How will you ever come down?

Whispering winds of a bright future
Long awaited expectations
"Everything is at the palm of your hand
All you have to do is believe…"

Oh! how blindly did you believe
How foolishly did you believe…

Now you're at the top
But there is no door
"Where is the door?"

Please open up
Let me see hope
Let me touch freedom

Let me… Move on

The wind is strong
It is cold

Your light is gone
Your hope destroyed
The road is long
But the fall is short

Oh, will you ever come home?

<div align="right">(Rosa, a member of the FCJ Youth Network)</div>

Precarious status students are faced with an array of misinformation at every level of their application processes. Those students who attended high school and worked hard to graduate in Ontario are often encouraged to apply for post-secondary education with their peers by well-meaning school officials who do not understand immigration-related barriers. Whether it be guidance counsellors, teachers or (vice)principals and other administrators, there is a widespread lack of awareness of the nuanced intersections of immigration status and other social locators that affect precarious status students (FCJ Youth Network, 2016). While these professionals may feel they are helping the students' progress as they would with any other, they are in fact ill-equipped in preparing the students for the new forms of exclusions they will face and the full weight of their precarious status. Students who are naively pushed to apply encounter obstacles immediately as they undertake filling the application forms through the Ontario Universities Application Centre or www.ontariocolleges.ca, centralized application centres that distribute

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information to the relevant institutions. These centres act as the first gatekeepers, requesting that immigration status be acknowledged immediately. Once students identify themselves as having less than permanent residence or protected person status, they face additional anxiety provoking questions, including identifying their current status as well as the exact date they entered Canada. Should they continue past these questions and pay the associated application fees, they are too frequently left deflated and emotionally devastated by the international fees they are then faced with (three to four times the amount of domestic fees); at which point they are "forced to alter earlier plans and reshape their aspirations for the future" (Gonzales, 2011, p. 608). These redefined futures often imply not only a relinquishing of career aspirations, but also the acceptance of precarious and dangerous working conditions, unstable housing and living conditions, and increased social isolation. Therefore, the implications of this misinformation are much greater than is initially recognized.

Moreover, students also often receive significant misinformation from the post-secondary institutions themselves, where administrators are not always aware of the intricacies of immigration policy, or do not hold the power to make the necessary exceptions. There are accounts of students in Ontario who have been admitted as domestic students under unique and individual exceptions. Frequently these circumstances were a result of consistent and high-level advocacy undertaken by faculty and staff at the institutions themselves. In other instances, it came down to locating the appropriately positioned and sympathetic administrator on the right day, who was able to register the student in a particular way, essentially flicking the necessary switch. This ad hoc and case-by-case process contributes to the fog of misinformation, and severely disadvantages students who do not have the social capital available for this type of advocacy.

Token Student

> Each member of our youth group is shaped by multiple identities, and as a result we face multiple challenges. It is important to consider our intersecting identities (formed by age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, social class, immigration status, sexual identity, experiences with authority/violence, etc.) when working under an anti-oppressive framework. This … is what we call "intersectionality". Intersectionality is a very complex term that can be defined in many different ways and means different things for different people. Often, the best way to talk about intersectionality is through examples, or by putting it in context.

> To begin, we have to step back and reflect on our privileges, the multiple identities that shape us, and the different ways we have faced oppression and discrimination. When you look at any one of us, you may see a Latinx[2] woman, a young black guy wearing his pants low, or a loud group of young people. But behind these visible "stereotypes" each of us carries so much more. You

don't know how we came to Canada, what our status is, what health and mental health issues we face, what trauma we've faced, or any other aspects of our hidden self. We have to remember that intersectionality invites us not to assume the identities of the people that we coexist with, but to acknowledge and value each person's uniqueness.[3]

While immigration status underscores all of the challenges discussed in this chapter, this alone does not fully account for students' experiences. These students are located within interlocking systems that are inherently racist, ablest, sexist, and homophobic; as such they are often further isolated or marginalized, yet some maintain the role of an exemplary student at all costs. While a small number of students have had success in skirting the barriers placed in front of them as a result of sustained advocacy, their merit and "extraordinary" ability/ambition/potential is frequently emphasized in order to justify their presence in academic institutions (and by extension, in Canada). These virtues are necessary to both recruit the support needed for this type of access campaign, as well as to propel it. Students who "stand out" during their high school experience because of academic excellence, charisma, school spirit, or the necessary balance of all three, are more likely to have built the social capital needed to identify advocates in different locations. In these situations, students are required to draw on their constructed privilege to achieve their hard won academic and professional goals.

Students with precarious status are made to feel that, unlike their peers, graduating high school is not nearly enough. These students must present themselves as the token "precarious status youth", like any who may have gained access before them. As Nicholls (2014) shows, "[d]emonstrating one's fit in the country [through achievement] transforms immigrants from a foreign and threatening other into an acceptable and sympathetic newcomer" (p. 229). This racist and xenophobic trope often sets the bar unreasonably high, making the merits that are necessary unreachable for most students regardless of their status. Expecting precarious status youth to perform at that level, while ignoring the long list of obstacles and oppressions they face as a result of their diverse social locations (many of which are outlined in other parts of this chapter) creates deep-rooted inequities and second-class students.

Maintaining these case-by-case admissions processes only acts to sustain and even augment ideas of the "worthy" precarious status student, as they contrast with the "unwanted migrant". Thus, those who have "earned it" may be saved from the exclusion and increased insecurity that follows high school graduation, while others are left with their future just beyond their grasp.

Schools Aren't Safe

Monsters in School
I can feel their piercing eyes on me
Examining me, scanning me

Dissecting my persona layer by layer
As if I were some strange creature
That was newly discovered
"Go back home"
I hear whispers echoing around me
"We don't want you here"
It pulsates through my very core
Making me feel alone
Unwanted, unwelcomed
But I keep smiling…
Pretending…
That I'm ok
Because I will never surrender
To the monsters
Hiding in my High School

(Niel, a member of the FCJ Youth Network)

Planet Canada

I just landed on a new planet; Canada
"I come in peace", I shouted
But I felt that I was doubted
I waved to show greetings
But all I got were hollow feelings
Asking me
Why do I talk like that?
I don't know what you're saying; Language
Why do I act like that?
That's so strange; Culture

I just landed on a new planet; Canada
"We welcome you", they screamed
But they were a bit extreme
Constantly collecting data
"Don't ask, don't tell"
Ha! More like
"Answer or else"

I just landed on a new planet; Canada
All I wanted was to learn
To understand
An Education…
But all I got was confusion…,

Prejudice…
And rejection…

<div align="right">(Niel, a member of the FCJ Youth Network)</div>

Newcomer youth are faced with insecure and even violent spaces from the time they enter the school system. From the Eurocentric assessments conducted before they set foot in a classroom, to the narrow expectations of knowledge acquisition and retention, students are all too often streamlined in ways that are difficult to overcome. Native English speakers with particular accents are put in ESL classes, others are obliged to redo entire grades that they have already finished due to the lack of acceptable documentation. Students often face discriminatory comments in the classroom, while their previous education is frequently undervalued despite often being "more rigorous" than the Canadian system, according to the youth themselves. Not only are their knowledges, cultures, and histories challenged, but their very ability to learn and succeed is called into question. There is a substantial amount of research that details the exclusion, racism, and marginalization that newcomer students face in Canadian schools, particularly those that are negatively racialized (Anisef, 1994; Forman, 2001; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012; Shakya et al., 2012; Sun, 2015). This research reveals the extent to which newcomer youth need to navigate hostile and unwelcoming school environments, while continually being othered and excluded in a myriad of ways. Many of the findings are mirrored in the lived experiences of the youth we work with, who have expressed their own ongoing frustrations and disappointments.

Despite further research indicating that racialized immigrant youth aspire to post-secondary education at much higher rates than their Canadian-born peers (Anisef, 1994; Krahn & Taylor, 2005, Shakya et al., 2012), these same students are all too frequently streamlined into the trades, encouraged to give up on their goals. Guidance counsellors, teachers, and other trusted intermediaries frequently encourage negatively racialized newcomer students to pursue non-academic career paths, reflecting systemic devaluation of the youth's aspirations and abilities (FCJ Youth Network, 2016; Shakya, Khanlou, & Gonsalves, 2010). Many students express feelings of being tokenized, excluded or othered, not being able to participate in education the same way as their Canadian born peers (Anisef, 1994; Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Beiser & Hou, 2006; Forman, 2001; FCJ Youth Network, 2016; Shakya, Khanlou, & Gonsalves, 2010). This further reinforces the idea that precarious status youth have to excel in multiple ways to merit the opportunities afforded to their peers.

Should precarious status youth gain access, post-secondary educational spaces are often no safer than high school. With higher expectations, and little to no understanding of their particular situations, these institutions, which are businesses themselves, perpetuate ideas of high knowledge and western-centric cannons. This pedagogy all too frequently renders invisible the histories and experiences of these

students, perpetuating systemic othering, as well as individual feelings of insecurity and exclusion.

> let me ask you
> exactly which […] student's education are you concerned about here?
> …
> not anyone with familial, historical ties
> to set places and races always under siege
>
> living under governments set on killing their people
> who must spend free time at sit ins or rallies
> where emotions and exhaustions run too high
>
> drumbeats and chants ring too loud
> to read a detached article due for class the next day. (Tagore, 2011, p. 38)

Financial Obstacles

> End of grade 12 is nearing, I still haven't got a status
> Time to apply to a college, I need a breathing apparatus
> I'll never have the money to pay the international fee
> I have a better chance of accidentally swallowing the sea
> I also need a status to work, so I can't do it legally
> The only option left is to make money illegally
> Because refugees can't apply for student loans either
> I hope I'm discovered on YouTube like Justin Bieber
> Or maybe I'll win the lottery, the chances are the same
> It takes many years for a case to progress.
> Why is this being treated like a game?
> Just look at all the talent wasted, opportunities lost
> Hopes and dreams crushed, into the garbage bin, tossed
> Even average Canadian students can find it hard to get an education
> So what are refugees supposed to do in this situation?
> It's an important issue, yet no one wants to bring it to light:
> Isn't the right to an education a human right?
>   (László, a member of the FCJ Youth Network)

Paralleled in some ways with the experiences of often more stable Canadian-born peers, precarious migrant youth face several financial barriers that increase feelings of stress and frustration and/or wholly bar them from attending post-secondary institutions. Within the current fog of misguidance and misinformation, many youth find themselves applying to post-secondary institutions and paying the associated application and registration fees, despite being ineligible to attend. In our own experience, we have encountered several frantic phone calls from youth who were trying to piece together the money necessary to pay the initial registration

fees to begin the enrolment process. These youth had been misinformed and were oblivious to the future requirement of paying international fees. Many youth have lost hundreds of dollars in non-refundable initial payments, not understanding that they would not be able to continue through these processes and actually enrol in college or university on a domestic fee scale. Moreover, as previously mentioned, many youth, although entitled to pay domestic fees, are told by misinformed staff that they need to pay international fees, as many staff are unfamiliar with the nuances of different immigration statuses. One member of the youth group was told by her university that she needed to pay a deposit of $10,000 by the end of October, or she would be unable to finish her semester, despite having a status to study legally under a domestic fee scale. While her family frantically tried to scrape together the funds, a concerted community advocacy effort resulted in the school switching her to the domestic fee scale. However, we have encountered other youth whose only option was to pay international fees, causing family members to take on additional (often precarious) jobs and channel all savings and funds into one child's post-secondary education. That child, in turn, may need to shoulder this additional burden of guilt as they navigate college or university, adding undue pressure to an already stressful time.

Those populations that hold more recognized statuses (convention refugees and permanent residents) also face a certain level of disparity in accessing funds. In addition to rigorous admission hurdles, financial assistance is notably scarce for precarious status youth attending post-secondary education. OSAP is only available to convention refugees, permanent residents, and citizens – and even within these statuses the process and criteria for assistance becomes more onerous and difficult. Many unaccompanied newcomer youth need to endure the frustrating process of proving their parents' income (in countries with different systems of taxation), and, if unable to do so, they are required to provide evidence of estrangement through detailed and supported narrative accounts. Besides OSAP, there are few options for bursaries and scholarships aimed at different newcomer populations, and nothing substantial enough to fully fund post-secondary pursuits.

Derailment

Life in the shadows is difficult, that much most people understand.

In some ways it is not… You find strength within yourself to achieve wonderful things and hope in the strangest of places and situations.

"Life in the shadows as a child is the easiest," you would say… You only have to worry about one thing: adapting.

It's fairly easy since you have years of socially integrating yourself into the system within schools that by the end of your educational life you are more or less part of society.

Yet… the more you integrate, the worse your fall becomes in the end.

During middle school you had already been told to choose different career paths. Teachers always encouraged you to follow your dreams, after all you were young and the possibilities were endless for you.

You wanted to follow your dreams as best as you could.

…

You still do.

By the end of high school you knew better than to be hopeful, countless wake up calls taught you it wasn't the most healthy option for your mental and physical sake, yet you still found time to dream and hope for a better tomorrow.

Once you reached the wall that waited for you for four years at the end you were left with nothing but a ragged bag full of broken dreams and time to kill.

It was a heart wrenching moment honestly, gripping onto the acceptance letter like a lifeline – your key to a better future, but realising that it still wasn't enough…

Moving countries just wasn't enough to make your dreams come true.

Now, you sometimes go back to that acceptance letter. It's wrinkled and stained here and there, but the rush of emotions it gives even today is still as strong as the moment you found it in the mail box and the moment you realized it wasn't enough.

You are not sure whether to feel proud of it anymore, but you do know you can't bring yourself to throw it away.

Many of your old friends ask you "what are you waiting for?" Why have you not started school? The easiest lie that came to you is that you're waiting to save money in order to go.

If it were that easy, you would've done it already.

Life becomes tedious to deal with and you decide to lose contact with your old friends, watching from the sidelines as they complain about essays and exams. After all, you can't do anything but be stuck in the endless cycle of watching seasons go by, people succeed, and children grow up.

You find things to do, ways to distract yourself in order to not notice the clock tick.

By the time you look back up at least three years have passed and you're still stuck.

You find yourself encouraging those old friends as best as you can to keep going, after all it's not like they are at fault for having the opportunities you desire.

That's all you can do, encourage them and smile at their achievements.

After all, you can't talk to them about your problems nor can you bring yourself to voice them out. No, instead you keep them inside, harbour the resentment. Slowly (and in a way desperately) trying to extinguish that hope of ever going back.

Each day, the dream seems farther away as you let bitterness consume your thoughts and cloud your judgment, but you never actually give up.

You doubt you'll ever care and as days continue to pass and the clock continues to tick, you'll keep on waiting, on hoping that maybe next year you'll find yourself applying once again. You keep on dreaming of the day you'll be able to hold another acceptance letter, but this time you'll know it's just the beginning of your future.

(Rosa, a member of the FCJ Youth Network)

Emerging through the interrupted and fractured educational processes of precarious status youth is the awareness of future exclusions, which acts to derail many from their professional paths. Captured in the narrative above, the awareness of this imposed derailment leads youth to depreciate their own potential, and abandon current efforts and future aspirations (FCJ Youth Network, 2016; Kamal & Killian, 2015; Shakya, Khanlou, & Gonsalves, 2010; Young, 2013). As dreams shatter for many when they discover that their lack of permanent immigration status will prevent them from continuing on to post-secondary education, these youth describe feelings of utter despair and hopelessness. Some youth have spoken about how this discovery was a notable turning point for them, causing them to essentially give up in high school, as their efforts were now considered fruitless and futureless (FCJ Youth Network, 2016).

Countless others feel caught in a perpetual state of limbo and express immense frustration over lost time, and having to let go of previous aspirations. This significantly impacts their mental health and emotional well-being, as they are constantly analyzing where they should be, and how far behind they feel. For some youth, a post-secondary degree becomes an important marker of future success, and its often amplified importance compels them to take any steps necessary to get on this path. Many youth in this situation have even gone so far as to make hasty, ill-informed decisions about their immigration processes, just so they could attend post-secondary education. We have seen young people prepare applications for permanent residence that had little chance of succeeding

for multiple reasons. These misguided efforts are often encouraged by multiple actors (including school staff, and settlement and community workers), without a sound understanding of the many risks involved, ranging from financial loss to detention and deportation.

The six themes and connected experiences outlined above intersect and overlap to form individual and collective disengagement in the lives of precarious status youth who are attempting to pursue post-secondary education. However, despite the severely limited options available, grassroots and community-based projects are beginning to acknowledge and address these issues.

Community-Driven Strategies and Conclusions

As evidenced by the above discussion and personal accounts of the youth group members, there exists a complicated constellation of factors that contribute to the lived experiences of precarious status youth pursuing post-secondary education. Mounting consensus among service providers highlights the fact that precarious status youth populations are growing, and thus more youth, who are residing in Canada for extended periods, are seeking to access post-secondary education. This phenomena is occurring against the backdrop of a global refugee crisis, as well as increased attention being garnered for a growing Sanctuary City movement in Canada; yet, there remain insurmountable policy and legislative barriers to make appropriate and accessible space in higher education for those that are marked with less than permanent immigration status. A response is not only crucially necessary, but must be informed by an anti-oppressive, feminist praxis – one that strives for equitable participation and barrier-free education.

Neither this phenomena nor the associated community-based responses are unique to the Canadian context. However, the similarities that can be drawn between emerging community and activist efforts internationally have inspired responses undertaken by precarious status youth in Ontario. In the United States (U.S.), for example, where there is a raised visibility of the undocumented migrant existence and populations, a myriad of responses has emerged, inspiring context specific projects elsewhere. Despite widespread negative attitudes towards these populations in the U.S., ongoing and targeted advocacy has succeeded in increasing access to in-state tuition fees for long-term undocumented residents in 15 states (Najafi, 2008). While lessons can be learned from these successes, Canadian efforts will necessarily take a very different shape, as the numbers of precarious status youth in Canada are much lower than in the U.S., constituting a very different population. In the U.S., the precarious migrant populations come largely from the same region of the world, and the Latinx communities (residents, citizens, and precarious migrants) have grown in numbers as well as political importance (Najafi, 2008; Perez, 2010; Seif, 2004). Conversely, the precarious migrant communities in Canada may be more diverse, and due to the smaller size and limited visibility, have accrued less social capital and lobby power. Finally, the American state school system requires

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consistent admissions procedures, whereas universities and colleges in Ontario are responsible for their own admissions policies. Therefore, the advocacy required must be strategically multifaceted and occur in various locations, making broad legislative change more difficult.

Within this more limited Canadian framework, grassroots efforts are building momentum in developing transformative responses. One notable response that manifested through the FCJ Youth Network was the formation of "Uprooted U" – an open education project that offers accessible, flexible, and community-centric learning opportunities for precarious migrant and non-status youth. This project was born in an attempt to counter the deleterious effects of fragmented, interrupted, and dead-ended educational trajectories. The intention of the project was to create an accessible and inclusive educational setting that met students where they were at, valuing their individual academic worth. In its development, we drew from feminist praxis and popular education models to "enable people to see connections between their own lives and wider political structures, helping […] understand problems, take action, reflect on their own practice and become better, more empowered agents of change" (Kane, 2010, p. 284). Classes are consistently taught through a critical pedagogy and feminist lens, which emphasises processes of reflection, deconstruction and criticism to "enact transformation" (Davis, 2008, p. 20). In the words of one of the original students:

> The best thing that happened to me was receiving opportunity for education. You may wonder, what is Uprooted U education? In my own words, Uprooted U education is an educational opportunity for newcomer persons who are unable to access education in Toronto. At Uprooted U we learn from each other, you are able to achieve SMART goals, work with a mentor and gain experience; in comparison to ordinary education, such as high school, college or university, the only major difference would be the fancy building. Therefore, education can be achievable no matter where, when or how.

> My living situation had changed, my mental wellbeing seemed to get better. I was no longer just surviving, but instead I was living. I finally felt like wanting to learn something instead of dying to gain money. I got another opportunity to gain Uprooted U education after several incomplete previous classes. I almost began to think it would all come to an end because of my low attendance, in addition to that of my peers. I realized how much I cried in my heart in the past to be in school. I wouldn't allow another opportunity to pass me by. So I made the decision to grab this opportunity no matter what obstacles that may come my way. Viola Davis said "the only thing that separates women of colour from anyone else is opportunity." We need to see the positive in even a small opportunity.

> You may ask why I am unable to access education in Toronto when I live there? I am an immigrant, undocumented, person of colour. I face barriers to

access education. However, education doesn't always mean getting accepted to a government-funded institution. Uprooted U is also education. 'Don't burn your opportunity for a temporary comfort' because opportunity brings success.

Although the project was unique in its development and implementation, it is reminiscent of other global initiatives that have formed in response to the insurmountable barriers to education. Examples include Freedom University out of Atlanta, Georgia; a shelter-based popular education program in Boston, Massachusetts (Rivera, 2004); several university based responses to the "refugee crisis" in Europe; and two internet-based university programs – Kiron University in Germany and University of the People in the U.S. These innovative education projects are grounded in community-driven responses reflective of current situations and events at municipal, national, and global levels; many of which demonstrate strong links to popular education along with radical and transformative pedagogy.

The Uprooted U program has achieved pocketed acclaim from institutions, academics, and community actors who have begun to recognize the prevalence of this issue, as well as its significant and hard felt effects. The program is further complemented by several periphery projects undertaken by the youth group, including several awareness-raising campaigns and activist/advocacy work. These include a zine called My Books Don't Need to Be Square to address several issues faced by precarious migrant youth in high schools; the Uprooted Youth Education project – a youth-led, provincial report card aimed at amplifying the voice of precarious migrant youth; a youth-developed documentary called No-Ledge; and several events, youth-led workshops and speaking engagements at municipal, provincial, and national levels to continue to build momentum in different arenas. The group continues to be linked with other activist efforts, including the Toronto Precarious Status Youth Network, and remains aligned with the work of the Education Not Deportation Campaign through the activist group No One is Illegal. While the road to accessible and equitable post-secondary education in Ontario is still a long one, this chapter is one more means of raising collective consciousness and gaining allied efforts to ignite positive change.

NOTES

[1] IRPA clearly states that "[e]very minor child in Canada, other than the child of a temporary resident, not authorized to work or study [a visitor/tourist], is authorized to study at the pre-school, primary and secondary level" (SC 2001, c.27), while section 49.1 of the education act outlines "A person who is otherwise entitled to be admitted to a school and who is less than eighteen years of age shall not be refused admission because the person or the person's parent or guardian is unlawfully in Canada" (Education Act, 1996, c. 13, s. 4).

[2] This term is used here to reflect ongoing advocacy around acceptance of non-binary gender identities.

[3] Originally written by Maria Alejandra Ramirez Bolaños for "From Youth to You", a youth engagement toolkit supported by the Laidlaw Foundation.

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Tanya Aberman
York University

Philip Ackerman
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

LANCE T. MCCREADY AND DAVID A. PEREIRA

10. EXPLORING TRANSITIONS OF YOUNG BLACK MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN CANADIAN URBAN CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTION

Research on young black men in general and young black men who are sexual orientation and gender minorities, specifically, holds promise for generating new ideas and practices in adult education on the meaning of inclusion, inclusive politics, and inclusive spaces for radical and transformative learning. In this chapter, we explore the complex power dynamics that young black men who are sexual orientation and gender minorities experience as they transition to adulthood.

The transition between adolescence and adulthood, in essence, the period of transitioning to adulthood, or simply "transitions," has been an enduring and pivotal concept in youth studies (Woodman & Wyn, 2015). Lee (2014) suggests that a rich body of work has developed around the transition period to adulthood consisting of three major perspectives: (a) a developmental perspective focused on the experiences of the individual and establishing this period as a distinct developmental stage termed emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2006, 2007); (b) a structural perspective, focused on documenting altered demographic trends and the structural factors that led to these shifts (Cote & Bynner, 2008; Furstenberg, Settersten, & Rumbaut, 2008); and (c) a focus on the transition to adulthood experiences of marginalized youth (Collins, 2001; Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010; Osgood, Foster, & Flanagan, 2005).

Vulnerable youth populations must confront specific challenges in their transitions over and above those faced by young people generally (Osgood et al., 2010). Torkelson (2012) argues that,

> a more concerted engagement with how certain members of sexual minority groups navigate the way to adulthood [in these areas] is needed, especially as issues of discrimination and structural impediments to attaining things like marriage and family might alter or encumber their path when compared with their heterosexual counterparts. (p. 142)

We can speculate that young Black[1] men who have sex with men (YBMSM[2]) and other vulnerable groups of adults who face multiple issues of discrimination based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and/or nationality, as well as structural impediments, might face significant barriers to their transitions. Additionally,

YBMSM may perceive the notion of transitions differently because they embody multiple stigmatized statuses that give them a particular standpoint (McCready, 2004, 2010). The socio-spatial polarization of urban communities presents considerable barriers to accessing culturally-safe and -relevant programs, which is particularly exacerbated for gender nonconforming YBMSM. Ultimately, from an academic standpoint, we know very little about the experiences and perspectives of YBMSM including how these relate to education and work.

Our chapter extends the literature on the transitions of vulnerable groups of young adults by focusing on the transitions of YBMSM in Canadian urban contexts. In doing so, this paper aims to demonstrate the importance of bringing race, class, sexuality, and gender to the fore in scholarly work on the transition to adulthood of Black men in adult education. Specifically, we the authors, make a case for focusing more adult education scholarship on the experiences of Black men who identify as sexual orientation and gender minorities and the role of AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) and other community-based organizations that serve these populations. Perhaps these targeted programs and services have the potential to offer YBMSM unique spaces to reflect on their identities, social positions, structures, and systems as they navigate away from, towards, and through post-secondary education to employment.

We begin our exploration of these issues by sketching the scholarship on Black men in adult education, then describing crises in Canadian urban contexts that affect YBMSM. The fact that the scholarship on the experiences of Black men in adult education does not seem to take up issues of transitions, much less those of ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, points to the need for more integrative theoretical frameworks that are epistemologically grounded in the complex race-ethnicity-class-gender-sexuality-nativity experiences of YBMSM in Canada. We offer queer of colour analysis as that framework, then turn to the voices of YBMSM during the transition to adulthood period drawn from the *Educational Trajectories of Black Male Youth* research study. Specifically, we report the findings from two focus groups with YBMSM conducted at ASOs in Montreal and Toronto that service Black communities. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of the findings for thinking about the ways crises of Canadian urban contexts affect transitions of YBMSM and why these challenges seem to warrant greater attention in adult education programs that are targeted to YBMSM.

BLACK MEN[3] IN ADULT EDUCATION

The experiences of Black men in adult education have only recently been defined as an area of study in the field of adult and continuing education (Rosser-Mims, Schwartz, Drayton, & Guy, 2014). The editors of the special issue of *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education,* which was dedicated to Black men in adult education, use the term "swimming upstream" to frame the experiences of Black men in American society, broadly, and in adult education, more specifically: "As a metaphor, 'swimming upstream' invokes the feeling of struggle, working harder

than you should, and fighting against resistance or pressure to get where you want to be" (Rosser-Mims et al., 2014, p. 1). The special issue is grounded in the assumption that both the historical and current contexts of learning have a unique impact on the ways in which Black men participate in adult education. The editors also sought to challenge the "Black male narrative" prevalent in the educational, social, and political spheres, which positions Black men as inherently deviant and destined for failure. A major purpose of the volume is to bring awareness to issues specific to Black men in adult education and to offer pedagogical strategies for engagement.

In the article "(End)angered Black Male Swimming Against the Current", Talmadge Guy (2014), who is considered one of the foremost scholars of Black men in adult education, argues that most educational policymakers, legislators, and decision makers blame Black men for the problems they face and therefore only seek to provide compensatory programs rather than comprehensive reforms that address the "serious and profound environmental and structural problems that Black men face" (p. 20) and that emanate from gendered racism. Guy argues that our understanding of gendered racism is limited by the "very few studies [that] give voice to the experiences of Black males in the field" (2014, p. 22), and suggests making curricular and pedagogical space for Black men's voices to be heard, to speak their experiences, and to analyze and interpret their unique positionality within the social system. The *Educational Trajectories* study, described later in this chapter, aimed to accomplish these goals of understanding the experiences of YBMSM in urban contexts through focus groups and in-depth interviews. Before turning to these findings, we discuss the urban contexts of Toronto and Montreal and their importance for interpreting YBMSM experiences of gendered racism.

Crises in Urban Contexts

Canada's largest cities serve as the destination for most African, Caribbean, and Black families, both newcomer (immigrants or refugee) and Canadian-born. Toronto, Montreal, and Calgary boast well-respected universities and are centres of commerce that provide educational and economic opportunities. Canada's multicultural policy promises a society in which immigrants do not need to assimilate their ethnic identities into the dominant White Canadian culture in order to gain access to these opportunities (Fong, 2006). Despite these indicators of opportunity, Canadian urban contexts are home to a number of crises related to capitalist development, anti-Black racism, and gender-based violence. We speculate how these crises might affect Black males in adult education, and then make a case for using a particular theoretical lens, queer of colour analysis, that takes into account the existence of interlocking systems of discrimination and YBMSM's ways of knowing this oppression.

Socio-spatial polarization. Hulchanski (2010) suggests that Toronto is divided into three cities or distinct regions based on income census data. City One represents the wealthy elite and upper-middle-class and is located in the downtown core of

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Toronto. City One has remained relatively fixed geographically with some expansion. This has contributed to densification of City One and the shrinking and relocation of City Two, or middle- and working-class Torontonians, to other parts of the city and to cities neighbouring Toronto. City Three, with few present exceptions, is located on the outer reaches of the city limits, and is home to many new immigrants and working poor families. Poverty can also be traced by postal code, the results of which are very similar to Hulchanski's damning critique (United Way, 2004). A historical analysis of Hulchanski's City One, Two, and Three framework illustrates the ways inner-city communities from the 1970s, typically poor and ethno-racialized, have been pushed to the city margins while wealthy and predominantly White populations now inhabit that inner-city region.

Like Toronto, Montreal also has patterns of socio-spatial polarization, however, the spatial separation between the "cities" of increasing affluence and increasing poverty is much less pronounced than in Toronto. Neighbourhoods that are relatively stable in terms of income levels and where middle-class residents are in the majority are more common in the Montreal Census Metropolitan Area (Twigge-Molecey, 2013). Nevertheless, the expansion of contiguous zones of poverty and affluence raises spatial-equity challenges that could have implications for YBMSM.

Anti-Black racism.   Socio-spatial polarization in Toronto and Montreal is informed by anti-Black racism which manifests through geographic, economic, and educational segregation and annexation of communities of Caribbean and African origin. Grassroots and working-class intellectuals in Toronto's Black community advanced the concept of "anti-Black racism" during the 1990s (Benjamin, 2003). Anti-Black racism "describes the practices and procedures of dominant and hegemonic structures and systems of power over Blacks…and emphasizes the resistance against dominant power and power holders in society" (Benjamin, 2003, p. 62). The experiences of systematic discrimination and oppression of Black Torontonians that inform anti-Black racism also speak to Thobani's framework of the national citizen subject.

The concept of the national citizen subject (Thobani, 2007) helps explain the process of glocal ghettos (Wilson, 2009) and the appropriation of native lands, by rendering certain Others in society illegitimate and inherently inferior. In this framework, immigrants, migrants, and refugees are considered perpetually estranged, or conditionally included as supplicants in the nation state. Given the racial, socio-economic, and geographic transformations of Toronto, Montreal, and other urban contexts in Canada, the corresponding changes to employment opportunities and social services and programs that support educational opportunities and achievement in youth, it is evident that Toronto's centre is reserved for the nation's exalted subjects and the estranged and excluded are relegated to its peripheries.

Anti-Black racism in urban contexts and the exalted subject more generally are perpetuated by the persistence of White supremacy, which relies on Whiteness, a system of historical and current social, economic, political, and cultural policies and practices that secure White ruling and privilege through the oppression of non-White

Others (Razack, 1998; Dei, 1996). Desmond Cole (2015), a Toronto-based reporter of Nigerian ancestry, uses his own experiences to illustrate how neighbourhoods and spaces become unwelcoming and anti-Black through police surveillance and profiling. Cole's is only the most recent of endless accounts of racial discrimination endured by African and Caribbean Canadians, which necessarily informs educational and employment opportunities.

Overall, it seems that while Canada's official policy of multiculturalism celebrates diversity and equality among all Canadians, it fails to account for the economic and social inequalities that characterize Toronto's three cities, and more generally the increasing divide, both social and geographic, between White and non-White, citizen and immigrant, migrant or refugee, rich and poor (Thobani, 2007; Musterd & Ostendorf, 1998).

HIV/AIDS.   HIV is a crisis in Black communities that threatens the health and well-being of Black men and women across the United States. The most recent Centers for Disease Control Fact Sheet on HIV among African Americans indicates that YBMSM face the most severe burden of HIV of any race-gender group and now account for more new infections than any other group in the United States (Gregorio et al., 2012). Published research does not provide definitive answers about why new HIV infections among Black/African American gay, bisexual, and other MSM have increased. However, Black/African American MSM of all ages experience racial disparities in health and are more likely than other gay and bisexual men of other races/ethnicities to encounter broader social and economic barriers. These and other factors place YBMSM in the United States at a higher risk for HIV.

In Canada, there is very little primary research with YBMSM to understand the circumstances of their lives, particularly in relation to HIV. What little is known is based on a handful of large-scale surveys that included an insufficient number of Black MSM and two community-based research studies in Toronto. For example, a survey of approximately 950 MSM conducted at the Toronto Pride celebration in 2005 contained approximately 50 men who identified as "Caribbean". Most of these men reported a middle-income salary of $30,000–$60,000 per year and were 2.88 times more likely to identify as bisexual, more likely to have fewer than five partners and more likely to report having used a condom in anal sex on a regular basis. This pattern of safe sex is consistent with other bisexual men who have fewer long-term relationships with men.

One of the weaknesses of the 2005 Toronto Pride survey, and other large-scale surveys of MSM conducted at mainstream lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) events, is that they contain small samples of Black MSM, which limits both the generalizability and specificity of the findings. Researchers who use these surveys often aggregate men from various racialized communities, which may obscure the situation of Black men and those from other ethno-racial backgrounds. In addition, many of these studies are designed for a general population of gay men and do not focus on issues that may be particularly applicable to racialized

or immigrant communities of Black men, such as access to ethnic-specific social/support networks in the settlement process, and experiences of racial discrimination. Recently conducted community-based research (CBR) in Toronto on vulnerability to HIV/AIDS among Black MSM has begun to address some of the shortcomings of large-scale survey literature. The *Visibly Hidden* report, for example, provides an overview of significant needs, barriers, and service gaps for Black MSM in Toronto based on a consultation process conducted by the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP). Research recommendations from *Visibly Hidden* include a call for Black MSM-related research and evaluation to clarify this group's experiences in Toronto, and that this research should investigate gender role norms, gender inequality, sexism, homophobia, cultural norms and values, and possible links to sexual risk-taking behaviours by Black MSM. An integrated framework is needed to understand the multiple forms of systemic discrimination and oppression facing YBMSM in urban contexts, and the particular possibilities YBMSM perspectives have for deepening our understanding of systemic discrimination and ultimately transforming it.

Queer of Colour Analysis

A burgeoning body of work has attempted to disrupt the abjection of queers of colour by investigating their experiences of multiple forms of oppression and agency in responding to their marginalization across K-12, post-secondary, alternative, and community-based settings (Brockenbrough, 2013). This scholarship uses queer of colour epistemologies as lenses for knowledge production in educational studies, broadly defined. At the same time, it builds upon scholarship situated beyond educational studies which have centred queer of colour epistemologies—or ways of knowing rooted in queer of colour political struggles, cultural traditions, and lived experiences as lenses for knowledge production. This corpus of scholarship is most often referred to as "queer of colour critique".

Queer of colour critique indexes an interdisciplinary corpus of scholarship on the dialectics between hegemony and resistance that shape the lives of queer people of colour across local, national, and transnational contexts. This type of research mirrors the relationship between intellectual work and lived experience in Indigenous studies (L. T. Smith, 2012), Black feminism (B. Smith, 1983), and other academic discourses grounded in the struggles of historically oppressed peoples. Queer of colour critique challenges dominant scholarly and cultural narratives on power, identity, and belonging by bringing queer of colour ontologies and epistemologies from margins to centre, and by making them the source and site of anti-oppressive knowledge production (Brockenbrough, 2013).

Queer of colour analysis in education draws on insights from the literature that informs queer of colour critique. In particular, the ways in which queer studies scholars resist the notion of sexual and gender minorities as being deviant, and attend to multiple and intersecting forms of identity and oppression (McCready, 2013). Queer

of colour analysis aims to name and contextualize the particular marginalization of queer people of colour and the strategies of resistance they use. This dual concern for understanding the particular forms of marginalization experienced by queer people of colour and the strategies of resistance they use grounded in their subjectivities is what distinguishes queer of colour analysis as a compelling heuristic in the *Educational Trajectories* research project described in detail below.

Educational Trajectories Study

Taking into account the limitations of the existing scholarly literature on Black males in adult education within Canadian urban contexts, our focus is on understanding the experiences of YBMSM using queer of colour analysis. The *Educational Trajectories* study used qualitative methods to capture YBMSM narratives of their experiences in the Canadian elementary and secondary school systems, and their perceptions of barriers to opportunity in Toronto and Montreal urban contexts. The approach of the study is best described as phenomenological. According to Creswell (2013), "a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experience for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon" (p. 76). Thus, the goal of a phenomenological study is to identify and describe the subjective experiences of respondents.

Design. A range of methods can be used to collect phenomenological data (Creswell, 2013). In the present study, we used focus groups to gain a better understanding of the K-12 schooling experiences of YBMSM and how these experiences are related to their beliefs about access to opportunity in education and the labour market. Focus groups are considered to be a form of naturalistic inquiry in which the researcher listens not only for the content of focus group discussions, but for emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions (Barbour, 2008). This enables the researcher to learn or confirm not just the facts (as in survey method), but the meaning behind the facts (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Focus groups elicit information that paints a portrait of combined local perspectives of a phenomenon, however, a limitation of this method is that it may not be a reliable technique for determining an individual's authentic point of view, as social norms may skew an individual's viewpoint in a group setting. We conducted two focus groups with six participants in each for a total of 12 participants.

Sampling and recruitment. A research team consisting of the Principal Investigator (PI) and three Research Assistants (RAs), recruited participants and collected phenomenological data. The team members, three males and one female, all identified as Black and from different ethnic backgrounds. The PI identifies as African American, the female graduate researcher identifies as Guyanese, one of the male researchers identifies as mixed of Ghanaian and Grenadian descent, and the other male researcher identifies as mixed of African American and Grenadian descent.

Toronto and Montreal are ideal urban contexts to study the transitions of YBMSM because they are both home to large, ethnically diverse Black populations, as well as to a range of programs and services for youth and families of African descent (Alexander & Glaze, 1996). We recruited participants from ASOs that serve African, Caribbean, and Black communities. Specifically, in Toronto, we recruited from the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, which aims to reduce the spread of HIV in Toronto's Black communities and enhance the quality of life of people living with, or affected by, HIV (see http://www.black-cap.com/). In Montreal, we recruited from Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique which in English translates to "African Rainbow". Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique aims to integrate and empower LGBTQ people of African descent, their family, and friends in Quebec (see http://www.arcencieldafrique.org/).

The recruiting process that was used to select YBMSM participants was to contact key individuals at these agencies by phone and/or email and request permission to post a flyer on their premises, Twitter social network, or Facebook page. If needed, we proceeded to schedule meetings with administrators and program directors to explain the research project and the nature of the focus groups. We aimed to develop a more collaborative relationship with ASOs, recognizing the harm done to many communities through research that treated community members as inferior and lacking important skills and knowledge (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). We conducted focus groups on-site where the student groups, programs, and services that we partnered with were offered. Focus groups were semi-structured, guided by an open-ended set of questions and conducted by at least two members of the research team – one researcher facilitated the conversation, while the other took notes on the content of discussions and the body language of participants.

Data collection and analysis. The research team spent approximately four hours collaboratively developing the focus group protocol. The PI also spent approximately two hours training RAs to coordinate and collect data. The focus group guide consisted of eight open-ended questions in which participants were asked to describe their best and worst years in school, their future educational plans, their views on why YBMSM drop out of school more frequently than other ethno-racial groups, and the individuals, programs, and services they found helpful for gaining access to education and employment opportunities. Focus group discussions lasted approximately 60–90 minutes. The PI assigned research team members to focus groups based on time and availability. Overall, each team member participated in two focus groups either as a facilitator or as a note taker. All focus groups were digitally audiotaped and subsequently transcribed by the three RAs.

Educational Trajectories reported a range of gender, sexuality, and ethnic identities, however, the PI made the decision to focus on the experiences of YBMSM for the purpose of interrupting the heteronormativity of the scholarly literature on Black men in adult education. The experiences and perspectives of

YBMSM related to education, work, and transitions to adulthood remain under-researched and under-theorized. With this goal in mind, the research team analyzed focus group transcripts by reading them multiple times to identify themes related to participants' experiences of opportunity in education and work in the Greater Toronto Area. Themes or "essences" of experience were identified primarily through recognizing the repetition of keywords and phrases, as well as through recognizing patterns of what was left unsaid (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Research team members wrote reflective memos on the experience of facilitating focus groups as part of the process of "bracketing" their own experiences and documenting their insights immediately following the focus groups (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, research team members wrote analytical memos on each of the themes they identified. A theme was considered "valid" or truthful if it triangulated with themes identified by other research team members and if it resonated with team program administrators of the collaborating community-based organizations in the study (Stoecker, 2013).

FINDINGS

Our primary goal for analyzing the focus group transcripts was to identify themes related to the ways YBMSM described navigating the transitions they are facing as young adults and how their transitions are affected by crises in urban contexts, specifically socio-spatial polarization, anti-Black racism and HIV/AIDS. The outcomes of the *Educational Trajectories* study, and the focus group guide developed for the study elicited rich conversations related to navigating socio-spatial polarization and anti-Black racism, so we focus our discussion on the findings of these topics.

Navigating socio-spatial polarization. Sean, a Black, gay-identifying young man of Jamaican and Congolese descent, participated in the Black CAP focus group. He explained that in order to avoid confrontations related to being gender nonconforming or "gay appearing" he lived a "straight life" in which he embodied a more hegemonic or dominant form of masculinity in the low-income, predominantly non-White, Jane and Finch neighborhood in the northwest corner of Toronto (City Three) and lived his gay life downtown, where he was more comfortable and safe being gender nonconforming:

> Living in Jane and Finch, the experience is you kind of have to look straight and act straight. Jane and Finch is still the real charade. I just live my gay life outside of Jane and Finch, and when I am in Jane and Finch play the straight life, and that's only because I feel in Black communities it's the only place where I would be bashed for being gay.

Robert, who also participated in the Black CAP focus group, lived in a lower-income neighborhood near Sean. He leads a double life to cope with the fact that his values differ from those of his predominantly Caribbean neighbours who are more heteronormative than the friends he associates with downtown:

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I was born right here in Toronto. My parents are both Guyanese and immigrated here in the '70s. I live with my parents, and my mom feels comfortable [in the neighborhood] because there's a lot of Caribbean community there. I guess my gay life sort of started in high school, but it was more [downtown] and not up there. I guess I live a double life, but not really [laughs].

Both Sean and Robert's narratives suggest that the northwest Toronto neighborhoods where they live are heteronormative and not supportive of their gay identities. In these neighborhoods, openly gender-nonconforming YBMSM risk being the targets of gender-based violence. YBMSM like Robert may have difficulty relating to or seeking support from, members of their ethno-racial communities, even though these communities and its institutions, like the church, have historically served as a place of refuge. What are the implications of YBMSM leading a double life? How does this strategy broadly affect participation in adult education, and in particular, transformative learning experiences that promote access to, and engagement in, health care, education, the labour market, and social justice?

Navigating franco-anglo polarization.   Socio-spatial polarization is less intense in Montreal, where there are more middle-class majority neighbourhoods. This may partially explain why YBMSM in Montreal told different stories of polarization. Theirs related more to tensions between Anglophones and Francophones or English-speaking versus French-speaking residents, generally and within Black communities. For example, one participant in the Arc-en-ciel focus group explained:

There's also the divide between English Blacks and French Blacks. So, I identify Anglo Black, sorry guys (laughter). So, the Anglo community, the Anglo Black community they had some strong organizations, like the Quebec Board of Black Educators. I worked for them. They organize in some schools. They are very good. They mainly take care of the Anglo Black community in the west part of the island. They are trying to set up branches in the east part of the island… But we are very divided, you know, and we often end up acting against each other. And I'm sorry to say it, you know. I often see it, you know.

Another participant, frustrated with the conversation that reinforced the divide stated:

I want to state here that the system has made us hate each other and don't look at each other. And most of the time we do look at each as if you are people who can't unify. And that's not true.

We appreciate how this focus group participant identifies "the system" as the force dividing English-speaking and French-speaking Black communities, rather than cultural differences between, for example, Jamaican residents whose mother tongue is English and Haitian residents whose mother tongue is French. What is "the system"? Later on in the conversation, this participant describes how the Quebec government

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privileges organizations that subscribe to an intercultural perspective that views the primary goal of any program or service immigrants access is to integrate them into Quebec society, which plays up French language and culture and downplays race:

It's an intercultural system, meaning if you do a project for Black people it will right away be pulled apart. If you do a project that is to integrate different cultures or ethno cultures, now it's Black, Asian, everybody's inside. Then maybe they will start considering it because they are creating dialogue and the conclusion, which is really sad conclusion, when you White and you want to start an organization to help immigrants, you get all funds. When you Black, or you were an immigrant, and you want to create an organization and you are asking the system to help you, you'll not get anything.

Interculturalism encourages the acceptance of, communication, and interaction between culturally diverse groups (cultural communities) without, however, implying any intrinsic equality between them. Diversity is tolerated and encouraged, but only within a framework that establishes the unquestioned supremacy of French in the language and culture of Quebec. This is a different strategy than most of Canada, which subscribes to multiculturalism, a policy recommended by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism's report in 1971 that aims to assist cultural groups to retain and foster their identity while gaining full participation in Canadian society. The policy also calls for immigrants to acquire at least one of the official languages: English or French (Banting & Soroka, 2012).

We did not get a clear sense of how YBMSM in Montreal navigate Franco-Anglo polarization based on the focus group conversation, but we speculate it depends on whether or not one's mother tongue is English or French, which wave of immigration they were a part of, and whether one supports the idea of interculturalism or disidentifies with the Francophone-Anglophone split towards a social/linguistic flexibility that is more multilingual. Being socialized as an English-speaker versus French-speaker may also affect where YBMSM in Montreal go to school, seek employment, and socialize. We only scratched the surface of how YBMSM in Montreal navigate the linguistic polarization, but we want to know more. In some instances, it may be related to the ways they navigate anti-Black racism, which we discuss in the next section of this chapter.

Navigating anti-Black racism. When we asked YBMSM to describe their best and worst moments in school they often recounted experiences of anti-Black racism when their own sense of educational opportunities in school was diminished by teachers' low expectations and racist attitudes towards them. A participant in the Black CAP focus group in Toronto offered this description:

Like, the structure of the school is not designed for Black people to operate 'cause the way we naturally operate is not conducive to the way the western world operates.

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Another participant in the Black CAP focus group expanded on the idea that the school system is not "set up" for Black students because it is too structured and teachers do not focus on building relationships with Black students:

> The way the system is set up, it's not really fit for everybody 'cause their kinda structure, like at 8:30am you have to be at this class… You gotta do this class in order to pass this class. You need this much credit to do this. Like, I think that it's too structured. I think that you need to have teachers that can hear you as a person rather than you as just a statistic, meaning that…say if I came into school one day and I am not really feeling to do this or I am not understanding, it takes that one teacher to say you know what, forget what we are doing right now. How are you feeling? What is it you need to be able to finish this work? What do you want to do? A lot of teachers don't listen to you as a person.

The Roots of Youth Violence report also found that (mostly White) teachers in the Ontario secondary education system hold low expectations for their racialized students and, in particular, Black students (McMurtry & Curling, 2008). The report also raised the issue of the absence of teachers who have the training to understand the particular nuances and struggles experienced by racialized children, and of the lack of role models for these children. Tenuous teacher-student relationships may lead to expulsions and suspensions that put young people on the streets for extended periods and lead to more interactions with the police, increasing the potential for criminalization.

YBMSM who migrate to Toronto from predominantly Black and/or non-White societies in Africa and the Caribbean may have a particular awareness of anti-Black racism because they are comparing their experiences in the Canadian formal school system to their schooling experiences "back home" where they were members of the racial majority. One participant in the Black CAP focus group observed that not only did he find it frustrating to be acknowledged as different but he also felt he had to adjust his academic orientation to the norms of the Canadian school system that assumed lower expectations for Black students. Coming from the Caribbean, he explained,

> …everybody is a little bit more advanced in the learning, so when I come back here it is like ok, I have done it already or I have seen things so similar I can just catch on and finish it up. You know, it is not a problem, it is not a task, you know? So I have a habit of always to restrain and always to wait for other people to finish which made it kind of difficult.

Overall, YBMSM in this study seemed to understand the benefits of education less for the specific skills and knowledge they derive from it, but for the status it provides and its potential for countering racial stigma from their bodies (Razack, 1998). A student from the Arc-en-ciel focus group put it nicely when he said:

> I believe that the Black man needs to get an education not because of what the school is teaching that can help you out to a certain extent. I just feel that

the diploma would help ease the negative stereotypes on a Black man. It's not because I feel what I am learning can help me out in the future, it's just that I am dark skinned with an African name so if I want a chance I need something to vouch for me when it's time to get a job.

Even though YBMSM in our study recognized the importance of "getting the piece of paper", they expressed indifference about dedicating too much energy to pursuing post-secondary education because they felt few adults in the school system expressed genuine concern for their success. Many participants felt that teachers ignored them in class and neglected to provide them with the academic and career support they required to translate school success into an employment opportunity. As one participant in the Black CAP focus group explained:

Teachers don't show interest to those guys because they are saying those guys are not turning out to be nothing, so they show less interest in them, and more interest in like other people like the Asian, the White…Canadian and less in the Caribbean right…so doing all that now is just like, they don't care so why should we care?

Another participant in the same focus group remarked,

Like teachers in school, high school, have fear for the Black kids so they won't really sit them down aside and really expose them to career goals you know like dreams in life or let them really know the importance of education so again you know they run free.

A participant in the Arc-en-ciel focus group explained,

I know it is not the teacher's job to encourage students to stay in school but my personal experience shows that teachers are not putting enough attention on the Black youths… so when you got the Black kids in school just basically dropping out because in the back of their heads like who cares really? Nobody really cares if you stay in school, if you learn, if you drop out, there is nobody there coaching you in the right direction so you tend to just like fall in the back of the pack.

Overall, it seems YBMSM in our study felt disproportionately neglected as compared to other non-Black students. In the first of the quotes above, for example, it was not that the teacher was ignoring students in general, rather, it was that the teacher was specifically not paying attention to the *Black* students.

We had an interesting conversation in the Arc-en-ciel group about anti-Black racism in Montreal compared to other cities in Canada and the United States. One YBMSM participant argued there is more racism in Montreal compared to other cities:

Yes, there's more racism in Montreal compared to other cities in Canada… That's why I decided that I would move to Toronto, because I'm pretty sure

that in another province where there is actually more, more populated by Black folks, it would be different than Montreal, because here it's still that kind of racism with those strange people and that pissed me off.

Another Arc-en-ciel focus group participant added:

I do hear a lot of … now actually, I agree that the opportunity of Black young people in Montreal are very fewer than in some other Canadian or North American city, one hundred percent. Some reasons, clear reasons or some proof, I do know a lot of people who left Montreal, who went to Toronto, who went to New York, who are now in Toronto and who have much better positions, who have much better jobs and who got those jobs in the less time. In less than two weeks, in less than a month, in less than three months, they get everything. Yet, when they are here mostly they spent one year, two years, three years in — without having anything, but I never met someone with the reverse, the opposite, who came from Toronto, who came from New York, who is Black and who has success in Montreal. I don't know any. So meaning that's proof enough that people, Black people, do succeed better in those English areas than they do here in Montreal.

Why do YBMSM believe anti-Black racism in Francophone Montreal is worse compared to other cities? A participant in Arc-en-ciel focus group explained:

So two responses: One from the community, from the Black community itself. Again, Black people in Montreal are the first generation. They came from those countries, they have maybe left the war, they have left some tough situations in their countries. When they come they're individuals. They come, they want to succeed. They want to do their best. They are ready to really to succeed. And because of that there is not a big unity as you were saying area. They are new, new in the system, they want to integrate so there's not very much exchange and that's why Black organizations here are very weak, because people are more individual… No one can stand and say, "I represent the Black community of Montreal, and I say this and that and this and that have to change." We don't have that kind of relation. And the system maintains it that way, which is the opposite of Toronto or New York or some other cities where Black people, most of them are not the first generation. They have built a certain culture, a certain helping culture and there are some strong organizations.

This participant makes some extremely insightful connections between the experiences of first generation Black people in Montreal and how their generational status, linked to a strong desire to integrate and model inclusiveness, may work against the creation of organizations in Montreal that represent and advocate for the civic interests of Black people as racialized minorities who are targets of anti-Black racism.

CONCLUSION

We began this chapter by situating our discussion of YBMSM's transitions to adulthood in the scholarly literature on youth studies that focus on transitions, Black males in adult education, and specifically, their experiences of gendered racism. We identified several crises in urban contexts that potentially impact transitions, and described a queer of colour analysis framework that focuses on the ways non-White sexuality and gender minorities experience transitions in light of crises in urban contexts. We drew on narrative data from focus groups with YBMSM who participated in the *Educational Trajectories* study to illustrate this idea. We focused our analysis of the transcripts on YBMSM's agency, specifically, their experiences of navigating anti-Black racism and socio-spatial polarization in the urban contexts of Toronto and Montreal. Below we summarize our findings and discuss implications for thinking about the transitions of YBMSM in Canadian urban contexts.

Implications related to navigating anti-Black racism. In the focus groups we conducted, the crises YBMSM spoke about most frequently were related to racism and racial discrimination. YBMSM in both Toronto and Montreal felt the educational system was not created with them in mind, or more broadly, as a space where Black people could flourish. They discussed feeling stigmatized in elementary and secondary school, as evidenced by their teachers holding low expectations of them. Several participants considered the education system "back home" more favourably than the one in Toronto because they were held back academically when they immigrated to Canada. Interestingly, participants spoke less often about the gendered dimensions of the anti-Black racism they experienced. We would like to probe more deeply into the gendered dimensions of the anti-Black racism YBMSM in future research and activism projects.

One of the implications of YBMSM experiences of racism and racial discrimination is to move away from a focus on diversity and inclusion towards policies and practices that aim to eliminate anti-Black racism. While multiculturalism strives to preserve systems of power and dominance based on a false perception of White superiority, an anti-racist approach employs methods and strategies to actively break down and devalue these systems (James, 1996). Multiculturalism is premised on the equal recognition and acceptance of the cultural identities of citizens without any real change to the racially stratified structures in which these cultures coexist. In the next phase of our research and activism related to the lives of YBMSM, we want to explore education and employment policies that acknowledge and work to eliminate anti-Black racism as a way to improve YBMSM's access to opportunity. Drawing from the African Canadian Legal Clinic (2012)'s report on anti-Black racism, some of these policies and practices might include:

• Designing and implementing training for educators and employers on the nature of anti-Black hate;

- Taking steps to ensure that the programs and interventions to improve educational attainment and labour market participation under the *Ontario Education Act* provide full and equal access to education for YBMSM;
- Adopting measures, including targeted programs, increased diversity among teaching staff, and diversity training, to increase the academic engagement, reduce the dropout rate, and decrease the disproportionate suspension and expulsion of YBMSM.

Implications related to navigating socio-spatial polarization. How are the ways YBMSM navigate socio-spatial and socio-linguistic polarization affecting their transition to adulthood? Gender performance, specifically, performing heteronormative masculinity norms that correspond to particular ethno-racial communities, emerged as an important skill for navigating the race-class divides of particular neighbourhoods. Some YBMSM in Toronto described living a double life, one in the predominantly Black northwest Toronto neighbourhoods where they live, the other in downtown "gay" neighbourhoods. The city of Montreal, with a larger majority of residents claiming middle-class status, is polarized around issues of language (French-speaking versus English-speaking). YBMSM in Montreal discussed how the system of interculturalism (as opposed to multiculturalism) created a divide between English-speaking and French-speaking Blacks. We speculate that socio-spatial and language polarization dynamics could affect how and where YBMSM participate in programs, services, and transformative learning experiences that promote access to health care, higher education, and the labour market. The fact that some YBMSM must travel beyond the communities in which they live in order to attend social/support groups for sexual and gender minorities, access culturally-safe health care, or participate in quality workforce development and/or post-secondary admissions workshops, is both important and troubling. We advocate for establishing more culturally-safe programs and services for YBMSM in the neighbourhoods where they live, and for more of these programs to contain spaces for radical and transformative forms of learning.

Implications for Black males in adult education. Research on the experiences of Black males in adult education focuses on the impact of gendered racism and offers pedagogical strategies for engaging Black males in the workplace, GED Programs, post-secondary education, community-based programs and services. In this chapter, we recommended that the experiences of YBMSM be understood in relation to crises in urban contexts, specifically, socio-spatial polarization, anti-Black racism, and HIV/AIDS. Rather than falling into the trap of echoing conventional explanations, such as the notion that YBMSM are just not working hard enough, researchers must examine the intersecting personal, psychological, cultural, and sociological factors shaping their lives. Furthermore, in order to understand the issue of limited access to educational and employment opportunities, adult educators must be cognizant of the political and economic issues that influence the ways YBMSM engage in

post-secondary education and the labour market. YBMSM tend to have negative experiences in K-12 schools and this informs their decisions about their post-secondary and employment-related pursuits. The perception of covert and subvert forms of racism shape their decisions, which suggests the need for deeper analysis of the ways in which race, ethnicity, and gender shape both the perception and the realities of living in Canadian cities.

Scholars in the field of adult education will benefit from more of these sorts of nuanced analyses exemplified in our study because it pushes researchers to think through race, class, gender, and sexuality norms in ways that move beyond one-dimensional concerns with familiar tropes and stereotypes that permeate the academic literature such as young Black men as criminals, young Black men as absent fathers, young Black men as sexual predators, young Black men as uninterested in learning, etc. Research on young Black men generally and YBMSM specifically, holds promise for generating new ideas and practices in adult education on the meaning of inclusion, inclusive politics, and inclusive spaces for radical and transformative learning.

NOTES

[1] We capitalize and use the term Black inclusively to refer to individuals, groups, and communities who identify racially as Black and feel connected to the African, Caribbean, and Black diasporic communities by descent as a result of the movement of peoples from Africa, predominantly to the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and other areas around the globe.

[2] The term MSM, or men who have sex with men, refers to cisgender or transgender men who engage in sexual activity with other men, regardless of how they identify their sexual orientation. MSM is often used in medical literature and social research to describe such men as a group for research studies without being limited to men who specifically identify as homosexual or bisexual.

[3] We use the term Black "men" rather than Black "males" to connote that we are talking about human beings who identify as Black and male, cisgender, or transgender, rather than primarily a biological sex classification that could be applied across species. We acknowledge that some of the authors we cite prefer the term "Black males".

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Lance T. McCready
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

David Pereira
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

CHLOE SHANTZ-HILKES

11. THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION

The Progressive Potential of Young Adults' Formal Political Engagement

INTRODUCTION

> For almost two-thirds of young Canadian adults, a voting booth is like a Saturday morning. They're aware it exists, but have no recollection of ever seeing one. (Kielburger & Kielburger, 2015, para. 1)

> The majority of Canada's youth still don't bother to vote. (Brown, 2015, para. 1)

The fact that Canadian young adults vote at markedly lower rates than older generations of citizens is often assumed to imply their collective indifference towards politics. This increasingly ubiquitous narrative dictates that youth (regardless of their social locations and ideological persuasions) shun the ballot box because of their laziness or selfish resignation to a status quo that suits them fine. At the same time, their apathy is deemed a blight on democracy's good name, signifying that their commitment to electoral engagement must be restored—and urgently. In recent years, mounting public anxiety around the perceived apathy of youth in Canada and elsewhere has led to a proliferation of research concerned with how best to educate for engagement in electoral democracy. Such is the expansion of this fixation that in their recent *Handbook on Civic Engagement in Youth*, Lonnie Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta and Constance Flanagan (2010) write, "the field of youth civic engagement has come of age" (p. 1). Indeed, studies proclaiming the benefits of particular pedagogies for the purposes of increasing formal political participation now abound.

Somewhat problematically, however, the bulk of these existing investigations of the relationship between the pedagogical experiences of young adult learners and their political participation do not embark on a fulsome critique of the *nature* of that participation. With some notable exceptions (Carpenter, 2011; Kennelly, 2011; Pachi & Barrett, 2012; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), normative engagement with the traditional mechanisms of liberal democracy is assumed to be an inherently desirable outcome of pedagogical intervention, whereas less traditional, more subversive forms of political engagement are often taken up as an afterthought, if at all. For example, in their study of the effectiveness of various pedagogical practices in boosting civic engagement, Jason Gainous and Allison Martens (2012a) write that "political engagement can take many valuable forms, such as lobbying, campaign

activity, or protest, but voting functions as the bedrock of democratic participation" (p. 236). Similarly, David Campbell (2008) argues, "[w]e should expect the discussion of contested political issues in the classroom to facilitate the development of a civic identity which incorporates being a regular participant in *normative* political activity" (p. 441, emphasis added). By and large, scant attention is paid to the well-documented tendency of normative, state-sanctioned forms of political engagement to uphold corporate and elite interests (Gilens & Page, 2014). A Marxist analysis of the reproductive capacities of liberal democratic citizenship – altogether familiar in the field of adult education, and examined in further detail momentarily – is largely absent from the literature on young adults' political participation. While this critique does not by any means negate the significant empirical value of existing research on youth political engagement, the insights derived from such scholarship are arguably limited by virtue of their failure to answer the question so persuasively posed by Elizabeth Ellsworth in her seminal 1989 critique of critical pedagogy: "empowerment for what?" (p. 307)—or in this case, "*engagement* for what?"

From the perspective of adult education – which has long preoccupied itself (atleast ostensibly) with the dismantlement of the status quo – any unselfconscious endorsement of compliant and state-sanctioned forms of political participation is, of course, problematic. Articulations of normative political engagement as valuable merely for its own sake also ignore another important reality: that young adults' persistent disengagement from formal politics makes it all too easy for government to be apathetic *towards* youth, and towards progressive youth above all. The nature of this relationship is encapsulated succinctly by Jane Eisner in her book, *Taking Back the Vote*, where she cites a Republican political advisor's proclamation that the mayoral candidate he was working for need not "spend a lot of time talking about things that matter to people who don't vote" (2004, p. 46). And while the popular mantra, "If you don't vote, you can't complain" remains a fundamentally undemocratic maxim, it is certainly true that – to the degree that they are dictated by the public at all – policy priorities are disproportionately dictated by the *voting members* of a given liberal democratic society. Thus, young adults' withdrawal from electoral politics has very real consequences for social justice, and facilitates the proliferation of neoliberal policies which are demonstrably more likely to garner the support of older, less socioeconomically diverse generations of voters. It is with these contradictory concepts firmly in mind that this chapter embarks on an analysis of what it means to promote young adults' formal political participation for the sake of progressive, justice-oriented social change, and without precluding their *informal* political engagement. Beginning with an examination of the empirical evidence on the existing nature of young adults' political participation, I will first trouble the conception of youth as apathetic. From here, I will consider the strategic value of young adults' participation in formal politics. Finally, I will examine the relationship between pedagogy and the kind of social change that might be achieved through the increased engagement of progressive youth with electoral democracy.

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APATHETIC OR ALIENATED?

> Just as disengagement from traditional religious practice did not mean that Canadians were abandoning the quest for spiritual meaning, the decline of voting does not mean Canadians are entirely politically indifferent. (Adams & Flumian, 2015, para. 8)

The notion that young adults are straightforwardly apathetic is, by and large, refuted by an ever-growing body of evidence which suggests that young people are – more accurately – actively seeking out alternative forms of political participation. In fact, according to many metrics, today's youth are *more* politically active than previous generations. Collectively, these figures suggest that many youth are in fact conscientiously discarding conventional forms of political participation in favour of strategies that they perceive to be more of a challenge to the status quo. This proposition is supported by data from a survey of over 2,000 Canadians, which revealed that across a number of metrics apart from voting, 18–34-year-old respondents actually participated more actively in politics than older research participants. In fact, they surpassed the 35+ crowd in terms of their engagement in political discussions, protest activity, other activist work, and more—every category, that is, except formal political engagement. Here, older respondents were more likely to contact elected officials, attend political meetings, volunteer in election campaigns, donate money to political parties, and maintain political party membership (Anderson, Hilderman, & Loat, 2013). More recently, research conducted by the Toronto-based Environics Institute also found that although Canadians may not be voting or joining political parties as much as they once did, there has been no corresponding decline in their likelihood of signing petitions, discussing political issues, and other political activities. Moreover, this research reveals that such informal displays of political engagement are now disproportionately common among young and left-leaning Canadians (Adams & Flumian, 2015).

Meanwhile in the European context, a survey of recent research on the nature of young people's political participation found that youths' "perceived 'apathy' seems to be… limited to electoral politics" (Kyranakis & Nurvala, 2013, p. 264). Similarly, in their analysis of data from the 2012 European Social Survey (ESS), Maria Lima and Antonio Artiles (2013) refer to the proliferation of youth-led protest in post-austerity Europe as a generational "expression of meta-political motivation" (p. 347) due to young people's broad dissatisfaction with liberal democracy. What's more, the ESS data revealed that in southern European countries especially, survey respondents who chose to forgo voting were 45% *more* likely to be involved in some kind of non-electoral political action—again suggesting disenchantment with liberal democracy and its affiliated mechanisms, rather than some kind of all-encompassing apathy. As well, another analysis of this same ESS data determined that while voter turnout has been on a steady decline internationally since the 1960s, "the joining of boycotts has more than doubled, participation in demonstrations has grown by over 40%, and the signing of petitions has increased by more than a quarter" (Sloam, 2013, p. 5).

Jessica Taft and Hava Gordon (2013) provide us with a useful theoretical lens to help understand these shifts. In their ethnographic work on youth advisory councils throughout North America, they argue that these "once celebrated sites of political agency for youth who do not yet have access to the vote" (p. 88) have become crucibles for normative and elitist forms of political participation. Thus, youths' declining participation in such enterprises is less an indication of their lack of interest in politics, and more emblematic of their purposeful departures from these spaces, having found them inadequately representative and lamentably tokenistic. Similarly, Eileen Saunders (2009) argues that conceptions of youth as simply being disengaged from politics are inaccurate and unfair, and that "solving the 'civic crisis' may be a matter of adapting the system to a new informational environment rather than bringing youth back into the fold of a structure that in some senses is no longer relevant" (p. 273).

Clearly, there is ample evidence to suggest that while young adults are indeed turning away from formal/electoral political engagement in ever growing numbers, they are far from indifferent to politics. One possible explanation for young adults' mounting disengagement from formal politics may be derived from Marxist scholars' assertions that liberal democracy is dialectically linked to the structural violence and systemic exploitation of capitalism. In her celebrated introductory text on Marx, for instance, critical adult educator Paula Allman (2007) writes that liberal democracy is "the form of government most conducive to capitalism… [wherein] citizens alienate their political power and capacities by handing them over to elected representatives, over whom they have little or no day-to-day influence or control" (p. 35). Allman's argument is that liberal democracy and capitalism are not merely related, but actively constitute each other. Thus, young people might be perceived as far from apathetic. Indeed, one might even describe this cohort of citizens as involved in a process of actively resisting corrosive, capitalist forces that would see them surrender their collective decision-making power.

For her part, Marxist theorist Ellen Meiksins Wood (1995) conceives of the relationship between liberal democracy and capitalism by recounting their inextricably entwined origins in history. In particular, Wood highlights the fact that modern democracy works to obscure persistent – indeed worsening – material inequalities by emphasizing citizens' legal equality. This position is neatly summarized by the following passage from Wood's book, *Democracy against Capitalism*:

> In capitalist democracy, the separation between civic status and class position operates in both directions: socio-economic position does not determine the right to citizenship – and that is what is democratic in capitalist democracy – but, since the power of the capitalist to appropriate the surplus labour of workers is not dependent on a privileged juridical or civic status, civic equality does not directly affect or significantly modify class inequality – and that is what limits democracy in capitalism. (1995, p. 213)

Understanding liberal democracy's dialectical relationship to capitalism – expressed so cogently by Allman and historicized so helpfully by Wood – makes apparent the degree to which this system of government is constructed to reproduce capitalist social relations. Thus, liberal democracy is not merely co-opted by elite interests, but is inherently premised upon their primacy. A recent review of nearly 2,000 American policy cases by Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page (2014) effectively confirms as much, concluding that "[w]hen a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organized interests, they [the citizens] generally lose" (p. 576). Although unsurprising, this contemporary finding affirms what Marx himself long ago observed in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*: that the "executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx, 1977/1848, p. 35). Needless to say, such an indictment is deeply disruptive of conventional efforts to encourage young adults' formal political participation in liberal democratic contexts. In particular, the notion that young adults' normative electoral engagement might be unselfconsciously endorsed by any remotely justice-oriented educator is belied by even this brief overview of the dialectical relationship between modern liberal democracy and capitalism—familiar to most adult educators, but rarely applied to the question of whether, and how, to engage young adult learners in formal politics.

THE VALUE OF PARTICIPATION

[T]he political debate would have been more hopeful and would have revolved around a broader range of issues if young people had been more engaged in the process… Just the mere act of engaging them could reshape the tone of the dialogue. (Bryden, 2014, para. 8–11)

Even with this vital reminder of the dialectical relationship between liberal democratic citizenship and the destructive capacities of capitalism firmly in mind, it remains clear that young adults' tendencies to forgo formal political engagement have a troubling propensity to facilitate the enactment of conservative ideology. The past 20 years of formal political history in Canada provide a fitting example of this phenomenon. Within this context, declines in young adults' formal political participation coincided neatly with the so-called "Harper Decade"—nearly 10 years with Conservative party leader Stephen Harper as the country's prime minister. During this time, the Harper government implemented an array of environmentally destructive, austerity-driven, and often covertly racist legislative reforms. Bills passed under the Conservatives' purview between 2006 and 2015 include: legislation requiring immigrants to have resided in Canada for four years before qualifying for citizenship (Bill C-24); an omnibus crime bill (Bill C-10) which imposed mandatory minimum sentences for drug-related offences, effectively negating judicial discretion and disproportionately incarcerating racialized Canadians; a now infamous budget implementation bill (Bill C-38) which repealed the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act, the Kyoto

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Protocol Implementation Act, among several others; and a so-called "Anti-terrorism Act" (Bill C-51) which critics have warned dramatically curtails civil liberties and criminalizes peaceful protest—to name just a few.

Meanwhile, available data reveals that Harper's three successive federal election victories (in 2006, 2008, and 2011) are arguably related in a fairly causal manner to the collective withdrawal of young Canadians from electoral politics. In particular, a review of 2010 data from the EKOS polling firm reveals that if 18–24 year olds alone had voted in 2011, Canada would almost certainly have elected a Liberal government, and popular support for the Conservative party would have been dramatically reduced (Grenier, 2010). Likewise, data collected by high-profile Canadian pollster Nik Nanos during the country's 2011 election campaign indicates that if 18–24 year olds had managed even the same turnout as the general population, the Conservatives would have been highly unlikely to win a majority government, and the overall tone of the electoral debate would have shifted considerably—towards a much broader swath of issues including environmentalism and education (Bryden, 2014). Of course, demographic shifts in electoral engagement are but one of many interrelated explanations for the successes of the Harper regime. Nevertheless, such findings are significant in the face of widespread sentiment about the futility (and even the misguidedness) of voting. They reveal that, in fact, if a more demographically representative sample of Canadians were to vote, engage with political parties, and correspond with elected officials routinely, the country's ideological landscape would be very different.

Regrettably, scholarly research examining the relationship between age and political ideology – and theorizing the potential effects of increased formal political participation on the part of young adults – remains somewhat limited. Most academic studies of how demographic changes influence policy tend to concentrate on trends in migration rather than on age. According to Kaufmann, Goujon, and Skirbekk (2012), however, "[t]here is a clear tendency for shifts in political allegiance and attitudes to be largest among young adults and then sharply decline at older ages" (p. 57). Although it does not speak to the overall or shared ideological persuasions of younger voters, this assertion provides a potential explanation for the degree to which young people's formal participation appears likely to *broaden* political debate. According to this analysis, young voters' values and policy preoccupations are generally more fluid and less entrenched than those of their parents and grandparents. To the degree that there is consistency across different cohorts of young voters, however, it seems they are indeed more left-leaning than their elders. Research produced by a number of non-governmental organizations confirms this. A report published by the New America Foundation following the 2008 general election in the United States (U.S.), for instance, argues that "[t]oday's young people… have a more progressive identity than did previous generations at their age and are likely to move the country leftward on economic and social issues for decades to come" (Levine, Flanagan, & Gallay, 2008, p. 3). Interestingly, its authors also assert that this is a new phenomenon—rather than the continuation of what one might assume to be a long-standing

trend towards politics becoming more progressive with the coming of age of each subsequent generation of voters. In fact, their data indicate that in a vast majority of U.S. presidential elections before 2004, young voters tended to support the same candidates as older members of the electorate, meaning that the ideological gap between generations may be an emerging and growing one.

Another study by researchers at the Center for American Progress culled from the National Election Survey and the General Social Survey in the U.S. to determine the political views of so-called "millennials" (i.e. young adults born between the early 1980s and early 2000s). Again, this research found that on a number of issues ranging from health care to education, young voters were more progressive: supporting greater government spending, even in the event that it was accompanied by higher taxation (Madland & Logan, 2008). What is more, young respondents again proved to be more left-leaning on these issues even relative to older generations of voters *when they were the same age*. This further supports the suggestion that the progressive persuasions of today's young adults are newly so, and a generational phenomenon rather than a temporary reflection of life stage. Meanwhile, in Canada, recent research by David McGrane (2015) asserts that "young Canadians aged 35 and under across all walks of life are more likely to be to the left of older Canadians aged 36 or over" (p. 3).

Overall, the available evidence on young people's policy preferences therefore points to the potential for their increased participation in formal politics to substantially influence public debate and dialogue. This potential is further underscored by U.S. data, which reminds us that, in 2015, millennials "surpassed baby boomers as the largest share of the... voting-age population" (Kessler, 2015). Together, these varied research findings serve to reinforce a justice-oriented argument for the proliferation of pedagogies that appear suited to fostering young adults' formal political participation, *provided* these do not obscure the fundamentally and irrevocably flawed nature of the electoral system Canadian youth are currently obliged to participate within, nor the importance of engaging in other ways as well.

PEDAGOGICAL PATHWAYS TO PARTICIPATION

> You know, we'd constantly be debating current events in class and stuff and I think that classes like that really brought out the opportunity for me to... have discussions about political things and like what I really believed... I think that's hugely responsible for why I am politically active today. (Chantal, research participant, 2014)

From 2013 to 2015, I researched pedagogical approaches to increasing progressive young adults' formal political participation—a research journey that in many ways culminates with this chapter. During this time, my own convictions about the value of electoral engagement – and thus, of pedagogies shown to foment such engagement – were routinely and rightly challenged. As evidenced by the two preceding sections,

I continue to believe the increased electoral engagement of young progressives to be a worthy pedagogical goal. The nature of this belief, however, evolved significantly over the course of my studies, and I will try to convey something of that evolution here, alongside a final articulation of some of the contradictory concepts which adult educators must confront when we take up the question of electoral engagement.

As part of my thesis research, I spoke with a diverse assortment of progressive 18–34-year-old Canadians at length about their past pedagogical experiences, striving to determine what kinds of teaching and learning practices had contributed to their decisions to become formally engaged in politics. By and large, my findings tended to align with those of previous research (much of it comparatively positivistic) looking at the merits of particular pedagogies intended to foster young adults' political engagement. Central to a vast majority of such studies is a preoccupation with so-called "active" teaching and learning practices, often involving dialogue, group work, and other forms of collaborative learning. Aforementioned research by David Campbell, for instance, determined that of 14 year olds in some 28 participating countries, those who reported exposure to open classroom climates (where discussion of political issues was encouraged) were subsequently less conflict-averse, more civically knowledgeable, and more likely to indicate their intention to vote as adults (2008)—all findings that are echoed elsewhere (Almond & Verba, 1963; Gainous & Martens, 2012b; Gallego, 2008; Hess & Avery, 2008; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013; Vetter, 2008). Other studies, meanwhile, emphasize the value of learner participation in simulation-based learning, service learning, and other similarly experiential pedagogical initiatives (Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005; Rocha, 2000). Similarly, my own research determined that by establishing classroom climates where dialogue is integral to learning, by understanding learning as something that happens in conjunction with lived experience, and by foregrounding student well-being in assessment processes, various educators had helped instill politically participatory tendencies (formal and informal alike) in my research participants.

Chief among the many pedagogical experiences cited by my participants as central to their subsequent decisions to become active in formal politics was having the opportunity to play an active role in determining course content, a practice very much in keeping with the current literature on "open" classroom climates. One such account came from Ali, the 18-year-old son of a Filipino mother and Pakistani father who operate a convenience store in Toronto. Ali has been actively engaged in formal politics since middle school, most notably as a repeat volunteer for Canada's New Democratic Party, during and between election campaigns. Here, he enthusiastically describes how exciting it was for him to be able to give feedback on the curricular design of a particular high school course:

> In one of my classes we were able to give feedback on what we'd like to see in the class at the beginning of the year… It was a newish teacher who had only been there for a couple of years so she said, 'If you have any suggestions, it's the first time I'm teaching this class, so let me know if there's anything you're

interested in specifically…' [She] didn't come in with no classroom plan like 'Okay, choose whatever you want to do!' Instead [she] had a plan, but [she] also asked for options and let us give our opinions, and I think that was really important and really interesting.

By disrupting the authoritarian conventions of the classroom, Ali's teacher was, in his view, displaying confidence in him and his fellow students. For other participants, it was not so much the confidence-building character of such pedagogical encounters that made them significant, but the degree to which they allowed students to focus their inquiry on topics *they* deemed relevant. Civic engagement promoter Lucas, for example, expressed fond memories of a grade 11 teacher who endeavoured to choose course content based on its relevance to students: "He'd just like finesse every single piece of it so that it was grounded in experience… and relevant to our lives," he recalled. Similarly, Jenn – a 20-something feminist activist who promotes electoral engagement at the municipal level in her city – spoke about her appreciation for teachers who were willing to listen to students in a meaningful way:

The best teachers that I had who I learned the most from were always teachers who delivered the subject matter with passion and ingenuity, right? And who were *excited to hear what we had to say* about it, which is unfortunately fairly uncommon… And who used our interests as the jumping off point to explore those issues.

Overall – and perhaps unsurprisingly – participants' accounts of classroom climate as significant to their formal politicization tended to be deeply intertwined with their sense that curricular content was meaningfully related to their lived experiences. This finding is, to some extent, coherent with celebrated adult educator Paulo Freire's concept of "problem-posing" education, "which breaks with the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education" (Freire, 1970, p. 80). Nevertheless, my discussions with research participants also forced me to concede that encouraging discussion and inviting students to bring forward materials and topics they deem relevant for classroom discussion is not itself a politically disruptive pedagogical practice. Hierarchical classroom conventions are certainly disrupted, potentially precipitating learner engagement that would not otherwise have occurred. However, the ostensibly democratic classroom can conceivably remain a relatively apolitical place. Unless the subject matter forwarded by students is subjected to some kind of explicitly critical inquiry – as in Freire's culture circles – the novelty of its selection by seemingly democratic means arguably fails to challenge material inequality or injustice in any meaningful way. It is perhaps for this reason that I remained largely unconvinced, at the culmination of this research project, that the pedagogical encounters described by participants ultimately informed the *character* of their formal political participation—or its intended outcomes. Almost without exception, research participants did assuredly become more active in politics – formally and otherwise – because of particular pedagogical encounters in formal schooling

contexts. However, similar accounts of politically empowering pedagogical experiences could conceivably have been relayed to me by a group of ten 18–34-year-old conservatives, steadfastly committed to the preservation of the status quo. Thus, my research participants' leftist commitments to racial justice, class justice, marriage equality, Indigenous sovereignty, gender equality, and environmental protection, among others, tended to stem from their encounters with family members, friends, and others in their communities. Their pedagogical experiences in formal schooling contexts, meanwhile, seemed instead to contribute to their ability to act upon these convictions.

CONFRONTING CONTRADICTIONS

> Since these movements and developments, in all likelihood, pertain to some accommodation or other, some temporary resolution or other, of capital's contradictions, the praxis of these 'progressives' actually supports and facilitates the necessary developments and as a consequence the reproduction of capitalist social relations as well as the given conditions of humanity's existence. (Allman, 2007, p. 34)

As evidenced by my conversations with research participants, pedagogical interventions intended to foment political participation may be deemed to have significant progressive potential, while also retaining an impressive capacity to remain *apolitical*. Importantly, this tension was one of many I encountered on my research journey. The following quote from one of my research participants, Emma – who works for a charity that promotes voting and other forms of formal electoral engagement – succinctly embodies the nature of many of these myriad contradictions:

> To engage in formal politics is not necessarily to disrupt the status quo. But I recognize that you need to work within those channels as well. Because those are the channels that are available to us. When I think about it, I'm like, Okay; if we have another four years of Harper, that's going to have disastrous implications for a lot of Indigenous people and for people who rely on social welfare. It's going to be terrible for immigrants. It's going to get worse for refugees. They're going to keep building prisons and not deal with mental health as a public health issue, but as something to be criminalized. So I guess in that sense I'm a proponent of using formal political channels – even while buying into like Marxist or maybe more like Gramscian ideology.

Here, Emma is acknowledging the very real consequences of progressive voters' decisions to disengage from electoral politics, while also acknowledging the limitations of electoral participation. At the same time, however, the apparent pragmatism of Emma's words masks a certain resignation to the status quo—one that might arguably preclude a comprehensive exploration of alternative forms of

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political participation, more disruptive to capitalist social relations. No matter their flaws, these are "the channels that are available to us," Emma says. Needless to say, any fatalistic acceptance of such limited mechanisms for change as our only options must be resisted. However, this resistance cannot be permitted to obscure the verifiable truth of Emma's central claim: that particular neoliberal regimes are less egregiously unjust than others, and that there is an urgent need to defeat the worst of these.

In Canada, that "need" translated into some intriguing results in the country's 2015 federal election when the aforementioned experiment of the Harper decade came firmly – screeching, even – to a halt. From coast to coast, Canadian voters gave a resounding mandate to Justin Trudeau's Liberals, awarding 184 of Canada's 338 House of Commons seats to the former opposition party. Headlines the next day variously referred to a "red wave," a "red tide" and a "red sweep" – each more decisive and resounding than the last. Voter turnout, meanwhile, revealed a fairly dramatic increase in engagement: with participation surging by 7%—a shift which arguably affirms that with more complete and representative electoral engagement, more progressive candidates are indeed elected to government. Thus, the results of Canada's 2015 federal election were significant, not just in terms of voter turnout, but also in terms of the political persuasions of participating voters and – ultimately – elected members of parliament. Although a decidedly "establishment" party, the Liberals, once elected, promptly enacted a number of policy changes that would have seemed unthinkably progressive and justice-oriented under Harper's tenure. For instance, in his first few weeks in office, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau announced an inquiry into the disturbing prevalence of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, introduced gender parity in cabinet, committed to the immediate resettling of 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada, and effectively unmuzzled climate scientists whom the Harper government had long prevented from speaking publicly.

At the same time, however, the Liberal party's purportedly progressive changes to tax policy have been criticized for chiefly benefiting wealthy Canadians (Geddes, 2015), and the party has been shown to have its share of corporate ties (McMahon, 2011). In many ways, it could certainly be argued that Canadians voted for what Alan Sears derides as a neoliberal "B Team" in an essay published immediately following the Liberal party's victory. As Sears puts it: "Canada has elected a government oriented toward neoliberal consolidation that will soften the edges of the Harper agenda but not depart from it in significant ways" (Sears, "Anti-Austerity vs Risk Aversion", 2015, para. 4). In fact, Sears' argument suggests that by softening the neoliberal agenda, Trudeau's Liberals – and other similarly mainstream "progressive" regimes – effectively make neoliberalism more palatable, "normalizing" an unjust status quo that might otherwise generate more intense opposition.

It is certainly unlikely that a Trudeau government will dismantle – or even diminish – the reckless expansion of capitalism. It is unlikely that an establishment party elected through a mechanism Paula Allman (2007) calls alienating will even significantly increase the state's capacity to care for those that a "free" market would

consider expendable. So too is it unlikely that pedagogical efforts to encourage normative citizen participation in liberal democratic contexts will precipitate such a revolution. As Sara Carpenter (2011) writes, "political education that relies on the notion of "citizen" separated from the material and social base of the concept…" ensures that "[t]he outcomes of political struggle will remain within the social relations of capitalist production" (p. 50). *Nevertheless*, Emma's reminder that a moderate neoliberal government (operating in what Sears refers to as "consolidation mode"; 2015) will still lead to more just outcomes than would a ruthlessly austerity-driven regime (operating in "destruction mode"; Sears, 2015) cannot simply go ignored. It is precisely this kind of tension that my own research continually unearthed, and which this chapter seeks to address. Electoral engagement in liberal democratic contexts is inherently reproductive, yes. Taking into account the proven capacity of young adults' increased engagement to shift electoral outcomes, however, suggests that adult educators would be wise not to disregard the progressive potential of "big P" politics.

CONCLUSION

The injustice that illiteracy in itself implies involves more serious implications, such as the castration of illiterates in their inability to make decisions for themselves, to vote, and to participate in the political process. This seemed absurd to me. (Freire, 1985, p. 176)

Bearing in mind the tensions and contradictions explored herein, this chapter conceives of young progressives' burgeoning disengagement from formal/electoral politics as at once (1) a potentially transformative shift away from a liberal democratic politics of alienation and capitalism, and (2) a major boon for those committed to the unfettered proliferation of neoliberal reforms and governance. Otherwise put, Canadian young adults' disengagement from formal politics – however warranted, principled, and even potentially revolutionary – serves, in the immediate term, to benefit those political parties most averse to progressive social change, and relegates to the proverbial backburner those policy concerns most relevant to this emerging cohort of citizens: the environment, poverty-reduction, education, justice for Indigenous communities, and racial justice.

Returning, momentarily, to Freire, we can find confirmation that even this most revered of critical adult educators—and an avowed Marxist besides—actively encouraged voting, despite its inextricable relationship to liberal democracy. By all accounts, Freire was in fact motivated to do literacy work with Brazilian peasants, in part because of a requirement at the time that citizens be literate in order to vote. As evidenced by the above excerpt from *The Politics of Education*, this struck Freire as hugely unjust, implying that he believed voting to be a worthwhile pursuit no matter its profound limitations. Likewise, rather than allow his disdain for capitalism to preclude him from participating in the political system that upholds it, he ostensibly sought to

achieve revolution incrementally and from within. This is evidenced, in part, by the fact that Freire was instrumental in the creation of Brazil's Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) in the 1980s and, as John Dale and Emery Hyslop-Margison (2010) write, "developed close relationships with popular-class Brazilian politicians [which] allowed him to create many education programs that were aligned with his own vision of equal access to education" (p. 63). Further, when the Worker's Party first won an assortment of municipal elections in 1988, Freire was involved in its efforts to institute a participatory budget process in Porto Alegre, through which the municipal budget "constituted itself into a new public space that is connected to the state but controlled by the community" (De Azevedo & Schugurensky, 2005, p. 44).

It is in this spirit of participating *critically* in formal politics that I advocate the propagation of pedagogies that promote a form of liberal democratic engagement that might lead to – or at the very least, does nothing to preclude – the eventual dismantlement of capitalism (and thus liberal democracy itself). Brian Martin (2012) provides a helpful framework for understanding the value of such a paradigm from an anarchistic perspective. Drawing on the work of New Left theorist André Gorz, Martin suggests that the same types of pedagogical interventions that have been deemed likely to promote youths' formal political participation – thus precipitating relatively immediate, if minor, social change through *reform* – may also plant the seed of more revolutionary change to come:

> Some types of reform reinforce authority structures and conventional thinking; others challenge them… Those who challenge the system and pursue radical alternatives sometimes make a simple distinction between reform and revolution… This picture denigrates nearly all efforts to make the world a better place. (pp. 59, 68)

Of course, it behooves those of us working in the field of adult education to continue critiquing purportedly "apolitical" efforts to promote formal political participation seemingly for its own sake. At the same time, however, the accounts of my research participants, combined with the polling data examined herein, also highlight the progressive value of pedagogical efforts to promote the electoral engagement of young adults. The interviews I conducted confirmed, time and time again, that pedagogical experiences play a crucial role in building the capacity required to run for office, canvass in elections, lobby for particular policies, occupy positions of leadership within political parties, and work in civic engagement promotion—*as well as* playing a role in fostering social movement participation and other forms of informal political engagement. My research also suggests, however, that formal education cannot by itself bring into being forms of political participation that are critically conscious or even justice-oriented. Deeply significant opportunities for capacity-building undoubtedly reside in the pedagogical spaces briefly described herein. Capacity alone is not enough, however. *Direction* is also needed. Returning once more to Paula Allman, we are reminded that praxis constitutes a unity of thought and action—so that the political actions our capacities enable us to take are constantly

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formed by our theories of social relations and social change, just as these theories are formed by our experiences of acting politically. Formal political participation, then, is but a small piece of the puzzle, just as pedagogical experiences in formal schooling contexts are but a small part of fomenting such participation. Given the potentially noteworthy impact of young adults' increased electoral engagement, however, neither of these components can be sensibly ignored by justice-oriented adult educators.

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Chloe Shantz-Hilkes
University of Toronto

SCOTT ZOLTOK

12. YOUTH, CRISIS, AND LEARNING

The Experiences of Ontarian Young Adults in a Leadership Development Program

INTRODUCTION

In jurisdictions across the globe, young adults are emerging as a policy concern and a central focus of state intervention. In a certain sense, this focus is not new; governments and organizations have articulated a specific set of goals for populations labeled "youth at-risk" for some time. Historically, the term youth at-risk largely existed as code for poor youth of colour in urban areas (Kupchik, 2010; Nolan, 2011; Riele, 2006; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Tilton, 2010), but more recent policy concerns have broadened their focus on "youth" to include young people from all demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. I argue that this shift in focus occurs in relation to other emerging global trends, namely stagnant rates of youth unemployment across the globe and increasing visibility of youth participation in social upheaval. These forces have ossified in the minds of policymakers, who have produced a proliferation of policy meant to respond to the crisis of youth.

As a scholar of critical adult education and critical youth studies, I am interested in what young people are learning from these state interventions. In this chapter, I explore the learning and consciousness of youth participants in a state-funded leadership development program, housed in an entrepreneurship and start-up incubator. In this program, participants aged 18 to 30 were given eight months of co-working space along with funding and professional support to work full-time on their projects and initiatives. The goal of this program was for participants to have eight months to focus on the development of their professional, social, and emotional skills and attitudes. I argue that there was a constant pedagogical impression that these participants were elite young leaders with their futures secured, despite ongoing uncertainty in the present about their employment prospects and material constraints during and after the program.

I begin this chapter by first outlining the context of youth and crisis in Ontario, a provincial jurisdiction within Canada. I then explore how the provincial government is responding to this crisis through a series of public policy documents. I focus on the discourse about youth and crisis embedded in these documents. This discourse is characterized by the notion that youth are inherently promising, emerging leaders,

who only need to be given the right blend of supports and protections in order to meaningfully participate in society. However, this assumption is incongruent with the experiences of Ontario's young people. I argue that participants in a leadership development program funded through Ontario youth policy find these assumptions of promise and expectations of exceptionalism to be insufficient in responding to the concerns of their precarious economic and social reality.

YOUTH AND CRISIS

By "crisis" I refer to the coalescence of social experience that cuts across multiple aspects of being young. I call this crisis a generalized social experience in that it is not particular to any one domain of daily life, but rather runs through cultural, economic, psychological, legal, and social spheres. These social experiences range from state violence, to war and migration, to political engagement, and are too numerous to define and conceptualize in detail here. For the purposes of this research, there are two interrelated crises of youth that I outline below. They are the crisis of youth unemployment and delayed transitions to the labour market, and the crisis of youth in revolt. Below, I outline the internal relations between these crises. I conclude with some thoughts on how the province of Ontario is responding to this crisis.

Theorists and policymakers across disciplines have come to a broad consensus that the transition to adulthood no longer looks the same as it did 30 years ago (Berzin, 2010; Clark, 2007; Lee, 2014). Specifically, youth transitions are more prolonged than before. Young adults up to age 30, particularly in advanced capitalist countries such as Canada, are delaying many traditional markers of adulthood. These include finishing school, obtaining full-time employment, leaving home, getting married, and having children (Beaujot & Kerr, 2007; Clark, 2007). Researchers ask whether these widespread delayed transitions are good for society and young people (Arnett, 2007). Some argue that these delayed transitions are a symptom of how economic instability falls disproportionately on young people (Côté & Bynner, 2008).

Of these markers of adulthood, youth employment is receiving a large amount of statistical and scholarly attention, due to the pervasive challenges young people have faced in securing full-time employment in advanced capitalist countries since the 2008 financial crisis (Geobey, 2013; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2013; Kolm, 2013). Globally, youth unemployment remains persistently high; 2012 youth unemployment rates remained consistent at peak crisis levels (12.7%) with no sign of going down until 2016 (ILO, 2013). At the time of writing, in Canada, the youth unemployment rate was double the overall national unemployment rate; and further, one in four employed youth are in a job that does not require their level of education (Kolm, 2013). Statistics from the province of Ontario, and specifically the city of Toronto, which is a city within Ontario and the largest city in Canada, paint a bleaker picture: Ontario has the highest youth unemployment rate of any province in Canada, while Toronto has the lowest youth employment rate in the province, at 43% (Geobey, 2013).[1]

While these numbers are disheartening on their own, they also point to increased concerns about "idle youth", and associations with antisocial tendencies, delinquency, and crime (Atluri, 2013). The recent popularity of the policy term "NEET" (defined as "not in education, employment, or training", Maguire et al., 2013) is meant to capture and respond to these concerns. NEET youth have been a policy concern since the collapse of the United Kingdom labour market in the 1980s, but have recently been incorporated into policy planning by nation-states across the globe (Maguire et al., 2013). Typical policy responses to the "problem" of NEET youth have focused on providing a relevant education to prepare youth for a challenging job market (Yates, Harris, Sabates & Staff, 2011). The concept of NEET is not without its critics, who say that the term NEET stigmatizes unemployment as an individual deficiency, and ignores the heterogeneity within the NEET subgroup (MacDonald, 2011; Woodman & Wyn, 2013). These criticisms mirror similar arguments against past categories of idle youth (Atluri, 2013) or youth at-risk (Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007).

Notwithstanding such criticisms, states and governments are justifiably concerned about persistent youth unemployment and the increase of youth with NEET status, which has long-term effects on economic and social stability. Not only is there a direct loss of income, but persistent spells of unemployment have been shown to have a "wage scar" on the lifetime earning abilities of individual youth (Gregg & Tominey, 2005). Persistent youth unemployment has been linked to decreased quality of jobs and inflated value of educational credentials, as more and more educated youth settle for jobs that do not require their level of education (Kahn, 2010; Mroz & Savage, 2006; Oreopoulos, Wachter, & Heisz, 2012). These trends threaten the long-term economic stability of advanced capitalist countries, as decreased lifetime wages and working conditions are normalized for the next generation.

An increasingly popular proposal for addressing the effects of persistent youth unemployment is youth entrepreneurship (Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2014; Jobs and Prosperity Council, 2012; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012). In lieu of the expectation that there will be stable employment in the near future, the logic behind youth entrepreneurship is that youth can demonstrate the skills necessary to begin their own revenue-generating venture regardless of employment prospects. Boot camps and mentorship programs are proliferating under this line of thinking (CivicAction Alliance, 2014; Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs, 2013). Proponents of youth entrepreneurship argue that the development of entrepreneurship skills will grow the economy and reduce youth unemployment rates (Jobs and Prosperity Council, 2012). Yet in addition to the early accumulation of debt from starting an enterprise at a young age, there exists statistical evidence indicating a lower likelihood of economic viability for young entrepreneurs (Carrington, 2006), and discursive argumentation that a focus on entrepreneurship places the burden of employment on the individual (Kelly, 2006).

It almost goes without saying that widespread youth unemployment and underemployment spills over into other aspects of the experience of being young. While the implications of persistent unemployment on delayed life transitions form

a contentious debate (Arnett, 2007; Beaujot & Kerr, 2007; Côté & Bynner, 2008), there is a distinct question of the political implications of these patterns. Specifically, the question of whether youth are able to retain faith in existing social institutions, arguably the greatest implication of the youth unemployment crisis (ILO, 2013). States have good reason to be concerned, as demographic research on the population makeup of nations suggests that large portions of unemployed young men in the populace precipitates social upheaval and revolution (Bloom, 2012; Weber, 2013).

There is rationale behind these concerns. This rationale can be found in what many theorists consider to be the purpose of youth studies:

> It is important to study youth, because the points where young people engage with the institutions that either promote social justice or entrench social division are significant points of reference for every society. Hence, the study of youth is important as an indicator of the real 'costs' and 'benefits' of the political and economic systems of each society. (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 6)

Youth unemployment trends might represent a canary in a coal mine of economic changes for the broader population. If youth also function as a window into trends in non-formal political actions, which challenge the legitimacy of traditional civic engagement, then states risk being delegitimized as these trends expand to the adult populace.

State and government response to these social movements is contradictory. On the one hand, states are transparent in their desire to increase levels of formalized civic participation by youth (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2013), and the democratically engaged youth is idealized as the model citizen (Kennelly, 2011). On the other hand, states invoke brutal repression and police response to these same political actions, ranging from the implementation of zero-tolerance approaches in school discipline, through the early involvement of youth in the criminal justice system, to the surveillance of young people in the name of preventing the expansion of extremist worldviews. Ample research demonstrates that these types of state initiatives have an unequal effect across lines of race and class (Giroux, 2003; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Hoffman, 2014; Thomas, 2011).

High rates of youth unemployment, and increasingly visible participation in social movements, characterize the global crisis of youth today. This crisis demands that we ask: What is the state's relationship to youth? In the next section, I explore the theoretical assumptions about youth made by the province of Ontario, and the effects of these assumptions on the creation of public policy and programming for young people.

YOUTH AND LEARNING IN A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: THE DISCOURSE

In this section, I examine the current assumptions and dominant narratives about youth and adulthood that are driving youth public policy in Ontario. I then review the policy approaches taken by the Ontario government to integrate young people into adult

social norms. I introduce these narratives and policies in order to argue in the following section that these policy approaches are inadequate for understanding the real concerns of daily life faced by Ontario's young people. Public policy draws from a theoretical framework and evidence base to justify its claims; I begin with an examination of this theory and evidence, called "positive youth development" (PYD). I then review how public policy brings PYD into the lives of young people by creating a singular approach for how the state and civil society ought to interact with young people.

The theorization of young people has a long and contentious history in the literature. When faced with the notion of youth, the two most common sets of assumptions are that youth are either as-risk: youth are destructive, irrational, easily brought to revolt or violence, and in need of policing until they mature; or at-risk: youth are unprepared, endangered, and constantly on the brink of falling into risk-taking behaviour, and thus in need of protection until they mature. Against these ideas of youth causing danger and youth at risk of danger (Tilton, 2010), a third mode of thinking about youth emerged: youth at-promise and PYD.

Youth theorists developed PYD in response to dissatisfaction with negative media portrayals that cast youth as agents of chaos (Damon, 2004), without acknowledging the strengths youth can bring to their environments. The goal of PYD is to emphasize the strengths, interests, and talents that youth bring to their social context, and to build on these strengths through programming and community engagement (Damon, 2004; Shek, Sun, & Merrick, 2012). Theorists use a framework of assets, either internal (e.g. academic motivation) or external (e.g. religious community) and consider the stockpiling of these assets integral to youth integration into society (Scales, 1999). PYD is thus fundamentally additive (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2010), and proponents of PYD claim that it is a relevant theory regardless of contexts of race, class, or gender (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011).

Theorists of PYD, who construct youth at-promise, do not forget that youth encounter barriers to success, and advocate the heightening of resiliency alongside PYD. Resiliency is "the process of encountering and coping with the aftermath of negative experiences, resulting in positive developmental outcomes or avoidance of negative outcomes" (Brownlee et al., 2013). For a youth to be resilient, they must be able to face adversity in a way that aligns with prescribed positive developmental outcomes. Resiliency is thus an act of learning, and it is through the challenge to be resilient that youth develop the character traits that states and organizations are trying to foster.

While lauded by governments and policymakers, youth at-promise and PYD is not without its critics. Many are skeptical that PYD is applicable across social locations, and argue that the youth referred to in PYD is only grounded in white, middle-class reality (Gardner & Toope, 2011; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). In addition, the youth of PYD is valorized and romanticized in this portrayal, while questions of how social context relate to individual behaviour are ignored. Some say PYD contains no analysis of power and merely reproduces the status quo (Portelli, Shields, & Vibert, 2007). Finally, PYD fails to account for how different

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"assets" and "deficits" can affect youth differently, and thus ignores "how the presence of even one risk can have real and devastating impacts on youth" (Small & Memmo, 2004, p. 7).

A prevailing criticism of deficit-based approaches to youth development was that they created "a shift of blame from structural defects…to the alleged disregard, faults and carelessness of the parties" (Valencia, 1997, p. x). The exclusive focus on deficits that characterized traditional youth development theory was abandoned not only because it ignored the positive aspects of youth, but also because it ignored the structural conditions of youth behaviour, such as racialization, social determinants of health, and economic prospects. Critics claimed that deficit-based thinking only focused on the symptoms of a social problem as it manifested in youth behaviour, without considering or changing the problem itself. But even as PYD focuses on the positive aspects of youth, it is susceptible to the same critique. PYD does not offer an analysis of the structural conditions that give rise to assets and risks. Whether the focus is on how to prevent youth from failing, or how to build on youth's strengths to succeed, both approaches ignore the question of why opportunities for failure or success are inequitably distributed in the first place.

Alongside these theoretical critiques, the evidence base for PYD and its theoretical tools, such as developmental assets and resiliency, is thin (Khanna, MacCormack, Kutsyuruba, McCart, & Freeman, 2014). Much of the theoretical evidence for PYD is premised on studies that have either been published in academic institutions or journals already favourable to the theory (Stevens & Wilkerson, 2010), have been shown to not apply equally to all types of youth programming (Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan, & Bloom, 2010), or have only validated parts of the PYD theory instead of the entire framework (Van Nuland, Taris, Boekaerts, & Martens, 2012). Few studies (e.g. Duke, Skay, Pettingell & Borowsky, 2009) examine how PYD approaches to youth programming and accruing more developmental assets during youth produces long-term advantages in adulthood. Theorists are forced to "speculate on what the distal outcomes of programs would be based on their proximal outcomes" (Khanna, MacCormack, Kutsyuruba, McCart & Freeman, 2014, p. 100).

These issues around evidence are compounded when considering the social context of a PYD intervention. The vast majority of studies on PYD come from the United States, and those that come from Canada rarely take up the contested cultural and social history of Toronto, which is characterized by diverse patterns of social stratification along lines of class and ethnicity (Hulchanski, 2010; United Way Toronto, 2015). This context poses challenges for PYD programming: "[Toronto's] demographic profile makes it virtually impossible to map evidence-based and promising interventions directly onto the youth who participate…especially as so few studies pay explicit attention to divergences related to gender, ability, socio-economic status, and ethnicity among others" (Khanna, MacCormack, Kutsyuruba, McCart, & Freeman, 2014, p. 101). In the case of youth programming in Toronto, context poses a significant threat to the validity of PYD as a theory for directing youth programming.

These challenges to the theory of, and evidence for, PYD did not stop the government of Ontario from making PYD the foundation of their policy framework. The government's youth policy framework, titled *Stepping Up* and published in 2013, uses PYD to justify its approach to youth programming. While *Stepping Up* may invoke a theory of youth development relevant across contexts and histories, *Stepping Up* is also a policy document that comes out of its own particular context and history.

The above-described social context of youth and crisis has an acute manifestation in Ontario, where a 2005 provincial spike in gun-related crime among Ontario's young people prompted a series of responses by the state. The first was a report commissioned by the Ontario government to investigate the origins of violent behaviour among young people. This report, titled *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence* (McMurtry & Curling, 2008), probes at the underlying social determinants of violent behaviour among young people in Ontario, from homelessness and poverty to racialization and mistrust in police-community interactions. Among *The Review's* various recommendations was a call for a coordinated provincial strategy and policy framework for intervening into the lives of young people.

Five years later, *Stepping Up* emerged to reflect this recommendation. *Stepping Up* is a cornerstone of the government's broader youth strategy to align the efforts of youth-serving organizations around a similar set of goals and principles. *Stepping Up* articulates PYD in an Ontario context as the state's approach to understanding the needs of youth. *Stepping Up* is the policy manifestation of the theory of PYD. For the purposes of leadership development programming, this means that government support is contingent on an organization's ability to reflect the theoretical principles of PYD in their programming. In other words, the state sets the theoretical assumptions for youth organizations to follow. This will become clearer in the following section, where I explore how a youth leadership development program created expectations of promise and success for its youth participants, and how these expectations did not translate into the reality of these young people.

YOUTH AND LEARNING IN A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: THE EXPERIENCE

A brief overview of this leadership development program is necessary. The program began in 2013 at an urban business incubator[2]. The goal of the program is for a selection of young people with demonstrated leadership experience to focus on their personal and professional development. The program attempted to accomplish this by providing young people with space, time, and opportunities to network, all in order to expand their attitudes and skillsets. Each cohort consists of 25 people who participate full-time for eight months; participants received a living wage in compensation.

If the program sounds somewhat abstract, that's because it is. Direction to participants was extremely open-ended and high-level; participants were told to

focus on what they felt they needed to do in order to grow as individuals. In some cases, this took the form of attempting to start an enterprise; in other cases, it took the form of focusing more on artistic pursuits. For others, the program was more about connecting with family. As long as participants could justify their activities according to the logic that they were focusing on what they felt they needed in order to support personal development, they were permitted to stay in the program – even if this meant they never came into "work" in the traditional sense. One participant described the program as "incubating people."

There is a discourse of the inherent promise and flourishing of youth found in these pedagogical assumptions. If youth just need freedom to experiment in order to develop, then placing them into a space where they are relieved from the pressures of daily life should be all they need to emerge as young leaders and find their passions. Yet as the excerpts from my interviews show, this assumption fell short of capturing the needs and hopes of these young people, insofar as it does not engage with the social relations of crisis that characterizes more and more young people today.

Participants reported feeling as though the program had set high standards and high expectations from the start. One participant remarked on how he got the impression that participating in this program was a guarantee to long-term success:

> Going into it I was like, oh I'm into this super cool program, the rest of my life is kind of set, I'm in the ecosystem, shit's just gonna work itself out.

While other participants were excited for the chance to "incubate" and grow as advertised by the program:

> It was great, because it was space and time and freedom, and if you're motivated and if you're driven...it's amazing to not have to worry financially and to be able to do the things you've always dreamed of, and people take you seriously.

> The aspects of the program that were really valuable were the fact that it was giving me a space to work out of, and the financial leniency to be able to take risks.

Participants felt an initial appeal to many of the assumptions of PYD in a leadership development program; that young people are ready to succeed, that protection from deficits (unemployment) and the accumulation of assets (community, networks, time) would give them the chance to grow as individuals and secure a long-term future.

Yet many participants quickly found out that these impressions of the program from afar did not match up with their daily reality. One participant remarked on the adverse effects that these high expectations had on participants' experience of the program:

> I mean the implicit message was you guys are awesome, you can do anything, which is a great message, but I think we felt like it wasn't the case, I think people suffered a lot from a gap between the expectation and the actual possibility of

them doing these things, which were undefined, and so that gulf between what we were being told about ourselves, implicitly and explicitly, and our actual capacity to create change, I think people felt that as a real incongruity.

The discourse of youth at-promise that pervaded the program created expectations, which were ultimately unattainable. Participants were promised the world; that by being temporarily insulated from the concerns of daily life, they could "incubate" and direct themselves towards projects that would create self-growth and flourishing. Participants were promised that if they spent eight months incubating, focusing only on their own personal and professional development without having to worry about financial constraints, then they would emerge from the program ready to enter the workforce as promising young adults.

Yet this focus on individual development for employability is inappropriately one-sided in the context of Ontario. No matter how skilled Ontario youth become, the crisis of youth unemployment in Ontario is characterized by labour force restructuring that has reduced the total number of good jobs for young people (Ontario Common Front, 2015). Without an accompanying analysis of labour force restructuring in Ontario, participants experienced the pedagogical assumptions of the program as woefully inadequate to their circumstances:

> So all of us were screwed...maybe three were at school, and five had jobs, so like we were given money, but in terms of jobs, we were hung out to dry, like coming into the program, it seemed like we're gonna help you, you're gonna get all these sick jobs, everyone's gonna be banging down the doors to hire you because we're gonna give you 21st century skills that all the employers want, and you're gonna be so hireable, yeah ok.

The program only focused on giving youth new skills to go out and get good jobs. Yet young people know that the problem is not lack of skills, the problem is that skills are no longer enough in a social context of crisis. Given this context, the program did little more than turn a blind eye to some of the most pressing issues facing Ontario youth.

One of the ways in which the program tried to remedy this exclusive focus on the self was with an accompanying focus on youth entrepreneurship. In theory, young people could circumvent the bleak economic prospects faced by younger generations in Ontario by starting their own revenue-generating enterprises. This theory fits with the notion that youth are inherently promising and full of good ideas. By this logic, youth are ideal entrepreneurs since they are the most natural sources of new ideas. Yet participants felt this theory of mitigating youth employment by encouraging youth entrepreneurship to be out of touch with the challenges involved:

> Youth entrepreneurship is bullshit...ok, we're gonna strap you down with a ton of debt...most companies aren't revenue generating for three to five years so how do you even convince people to give you money, and youth entrepreneurship, add in being a visible minority, or add in being a woman,

> or add in both, and good luck...beggars can't be choosers but we have to be
> because we just got strapped with debt out the wazoo.

The reality of youth entrepreneurship is different than the purported positive aspects of the theory. Rather than an opportunity to bring fresh ideas to the market, participants saw entrepreneurship as a source of continued debt beyond graduation while at the same time a relatively unlikely means of achieving a secure and stable livelihood. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial lifestyle creates an intense pressure to compete in order to survive, and so, unsurprisingly, almost all of the ventures that were begun during the program were abandoned by the program's conclusion.

Participants often felt inhibited in their ability to direct their energies towards projects that focused on external social forces because they were too busy dealing with the program's pedagogical focus on the self:

> As much as, the program will say, there wasn't a lot of structure, you're free to be where you wanted, there were a lot of expectations of where you had to be when you had to be there, and the documents you had to fill out, the explanations of why you were doing things, and there was just a huge amount of focus on the self, like every single thing was about taking care of yourself, and assessing yourself, and it was like there's a real lack of conversation and dialogue about reaching out and doing meaningful things. It seemed really self-indulgent.

The program claimed that it offered participants unlimited freedom to try to change the world in ways that participants believed in. Yet when participants would get beyond this rhetoric and begin to devote their time to their initiatives, they were blocked by the need to continually focus on the self. Ironically, the very same rhetoric that promoted freedom from constraint for self-development managed to turn self-development into a constraint, limiting participants' time and energy to focus on the issues that mattered to them.

Yet at the same time this focus on self-development constituted the program's approach to social change. Participants commented on the way in which they were taught that if they focus on becoming the best versions of themselves, social change would ensue:

> There is this tension, like create a better self, create a better world, like that's the process that [the program] is supposed to embrace, but interestingly, it's not that simple, right, like you don't just, you don't say, ok I'm going to have a better laptop and know how to keep track of my goals, and then I'll create a better world…that's not really how we live our lives…maybe one of the shortcomings of [the program] was that it started with the subject too much, and um, put us on pedestals too high.

By focusing exclusively on the self, the program not only created unrealistic expectations, it also gave participants the impression that individual change was the precursor to social change, and that in order to change the world, participants needed to change themselves. Yet here we see that one of my research participants felt this

was a one-sided focus, and by "starting with the subject" too much, the program failed to encourage participants to focus on anything else.

The result of this singular focus on self-development, in line with the discourse of PYD, is that participants felt an extreme amount of pressure throughout the program. Multiple participants recounted the sense of pressure to "produce" throughout the program:

> I felt like my experience at [the program] was a long discovery phase, and like, 'holy fuck it's time for me to build something! I've gotta do something! This is the most, like, amazing, risk free environment that I've ever been given, I have to take a crazy risk and do something!'

> But there's also this difficulty, I managed to navigate it fairly well but others didn't, but the responsibilities to [the program] and the responsibility to doing things, like change-making things, and like the sense that we all had, or that many of us had, that we're supposed to be working on [the program], in some ways was a barrier to some people doing things in the world.

> Some of us took the fact that we were, you know, living off of taxpayers' money more seriously than others, and so there was this frantic-ness about trying to, you know trying to accomplish stuff, whatever that meant, and so you were perpetually busy.

At this point, the program's disjuncture with reality comes full circle. Participants were exposed to a discourse of PYD and came to expect the theoretical principles of PYD (that young people just need to be incubated and given supports to grow and flourish) to be actualized in the program. This quickly proved false, as the program failed to account for the social context of crisis at play in the minds of Ontario's young people. The result was an exclusive pedagogical focus on the self that acted both as a barrier to producing social change, as well as a source of pressure that participants were somehow obligated to produce social change. By theorizing individual change as the driver of social change, the program created barriers and pressure, and did not live up to its theoretical expectations. As one participant put it:

> I think part of it was how big our goals were, how overwhelming the systemic problems are, how the rhetoric of [the program] was very much about systems change, and although the language of systems change does acknowledge leverage points and pressure points, systems are big things, and when you're acknowledging that there's a systemic problem, but then claiming that you're the one to solve it, it's hard to live up to that.

Therein lies the heart of PYD's theoretical inadequacy as a pedagogical approach to leadership development. Participants were made aware of the social change needed only to the extent that they were considered the ones to make this change; in the face of such overwhelming pressure, it is no wonder the program did not meet participants' expectations. The inability of any one participant to "live up to"

the notion that social change flows from individual change reflects the conceptual inadequacy of PYD in theorizing the social context of young people today. The results of this conceptual inadequacy are a leadership development program that produces only pressure and anxiety for Ontario's young people.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I've argued that young people can be helpfully conceptualized through a lens of crisis. In Ontario, and around the globe, young people are emerging as a policy concern, as state anxieties over persistent youth unemployment and unrest continue to grow. I've also argued that Ontario is a particularly fertile site for analysis; patterns of labour force restructuring, austerity in public spending, and widening inequality (Ontario Common Front, 2015) have produced a landscape of employment prospects that is bleak for Ontario's young people.

But this is not the only reason Ontario is an ideal site for analysis; the province is also characterized by the relatively rapid development of numerous public policies meant to address the crisis of youth. Framed in the language of psycho-social development, these public policies draw from theories of PYD, which posit the inherent potential of young people to exhibit promise, innovation, and to flourish if they are given the right blend of assets and protected from deficits. I argued that these theories and policies do not sufficiently account for the social context of crisis and that they are instead a theory of youth development that focuses only on the individual.

In my interviews with alumni participants in a leadership development program funded through these public policies, I found that young Ontarians are eminently aware of the shortcomings of PYD as an adequate framework for understanding their needs. Despite being propped up on a language of exceptionalism, my research participants quickly discovered that these expectations did not match reality. Specifically, they consistently felt constrained by the exclusive focus on the self amidst ongoing uncertainty about their social and economic future. In other words, they knew that the problem was not developing themselves as individuals, but rather transforming their social context as a collective.

I conclude now with a final excerpt from one of my interviews, where a research participant spoke to the challenges involved in building community when the program only focused on the individual. She expressed the importance of resisting these individualizing tendencies, and how the participants in this program were able to establish solidarity through these acts of resistance:

> It turned into a structural environment where everything was said or expressed as a deliverable or a requirement, and rules and such, but then we were kind of like, we challenged that, and we said if this is something that's meant for us, to make the most out of, then why don't we ask each other what we need…I think that sense of community definitely developed when people were standing up for themselves, people were standing up for other people...and once you find two people talking

about what's wrong with the program, you're kind of like, you jump in and like, now that two people have already said it, I feel confident enough to say it.

I suggest that this focus on collectively articulating the needs of young people as a group is an instructive starting point for designing youth-centred policy and programming. Rather than a constant focus on integrating individual young people into a precarious labour market, in this quote we see that the most impact was made at the moment when young people instead found the solidarity to articulate their concerns together. These moments of forming solidarity are key to future directions in youth policy-making, as they present an opportunity for the state to work with youth in articulating and transforming the social context of crisis.

NOTES

[1] Competing definitions of what constitutes youth in the data make generalizations about youth unemployment difficult. While the ILO defines youth up to age 29, Statistics Canada only goes to age 24. While global concern around youth unemployment is visible from various sources, as researchers, we do not know as much about the statistical trends of youth unemployment as we should.

[2] I do not reference the name of the program in this article in order to keep focused on how the broader government policy shapes individual experience, and to recognize the program's ongoing efforts at evolving to better meet the needs of young participants. While the program has changed substantially since writing, the government's broader youth agenda has not, and is thus the focus of this chapter.

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Scott Zoltok
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tanya Aberman is a PhD Candidate in Gender Feminist and Women's Studies at York University. She is also the Research and Project Coordinator at the FCJ Refugee Centre where she focuses on intensive case management, access to education and community-based program development.

Philip Ackerman is currently undertaking an M.Ed. in Adult Education and Community Development. He is also the Resource Development and Youth Coordinator at the FCJ Refugee Centre, where he has the privilege of working with a uniquely dynamic group of newcomer youth, offering support in a variety of areas.

Ahmed Ahmed is an urban educator, an emerging academic, and a community organizer whose focus is access to post-secondary education for Black and other traditionally under-represented communities.

Meaghan Brugha is an experienced researcher with a particular emphasis on broadening access to education for marginalised learners. Research includes self-directed and lifelong learning, learning networks, and education technology.

Sara Carpenter is an Assistant Professor who has worked as an adult educator in both community organizations and higher education. Her research interests are informed by her work with refugee and migrant populations as well as feminist, anti-poverty, and immigrant rights campaigns, particularly with young adults. Currently, Sara's research focuses on state intervention in community organizations via funding and policy instruments. She is co-author, with Shahrzad Mojab, of *Revolutionary Learning: Marxism, Feminism and Knowledge*.

Trevor Corkum is a Toronto-based writer, researcher, scholar, and consultant. He has an MA in Adult Education and Community Development from OISE, where his research explores the migration experiences of queer international students to southern Ontario.

Paula V. Elias is an activist educator working in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) for academic upgrading, and an MA candidate in the Adult Education and Community Development Program at OISE/University of Toronto.

FCJ Refugee Centre Youth Network Participants: The FCJ Youth Network is an incredibly diverse group of newcomer youth that has welcomed over 80 members in the past year. The group meets on a weekly basis and shapes a space to share

experiences, support one another, and mobilize their knowledge to overcome the challenges that they face. The FCJ Youth Network not only offers opportunities for volunteering and skill development, but the group plans a lot of social activities together, including: going to movies, camping, sports activities and exploring the city. The group is open for newcomer youth between the ages of 14 and 24 (and allies).

André P. Grace, PhD is Canada Research Chair in Sexual and Gender Minority Studies (Tier 1) at the University of Alberta, and 2014 recipient of the AAACE Houle Award for his book *Lifelong Learning as Critical Action*.

Stephanie MacKinnon is a community organizer and educator in her home province of Nova Scotia. She holds an MA in Adult Education and Community Development from the University of Toronto.

Lance T. McCready is Associate Professor in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, where he is affiliated with the Adult Education and Community Development Program. Dr. McCready is an interdisciplinary scholar-activist whose research and writing focuses on the education, health and well-being of men, boys, and queer youth of colour in cities.

Kiran Mirchandani is a Professor in the Adult Education and Community Development Program at the University of Toronto. Her research and teaching focuses on gendered and racialized processes in the workplace; critical perspectives on organizational development and learning; criminalization and welfare policy; and globalization and economic restructuring. She is the author of *Phone Clones: Transnational Service Work in the Global Economy* (2012), co-author of *Criminalizing Race, Criminalizing Poverty: Welfare Fraud Enforcement in Canada* (2007), and co-editor of *Borders in Service: Enactments of Nationhood in Transnational Call Centers* (2016), *The Future of Lifelong Learning and Work: Critical Perspectives* (2008), and *Crimes of Colour: Race and the Criminal Justice System in Canada* (2002).

Shahrzad Mojab is internationally known for her work on the impact of war and violence on women's learning. Her recent publications are *Marxism and Feminism* (Ed) and *Educating from Marx: Race, Gender and Learning* (co-editor with Sara Carpenter).

David A. Pereira is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Social Justice Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on the schooling experiences of ethno-racialized, language minority, and queer youth and underachievement in urban contexts.

Genevieve Ritchie has worked as a community educator and campaign organizer. Her research investigates the relations that inform and constitute migration, race, gender, the politics of youth, and education for activism.

Chloe Shantz-Hilkes is a researcher and associate producer at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto. She completed a SSHRC funded study on progressive young adults' formal political participation in 2015.

Scott Zoltok is a policy professional with an interest in youth liberation, learning from crisis, and the interplay between political economy, state and governance, and collective learning and mobilization.

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