

**The Transformative Potential of Community and Collective Arts
Pedagogies in Thunder Bay, Canada**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents the transformative potential of community art collectives and outlines the pedagogical practices and decisions that contribute to their impact in the community. The research took place in Thunder Bay, a small urban community of roughly 110 000 people in Northwestern Ontario. Building on existing literature and research on critical civic praxis I explored the relevance of this concept in collective community arts settings. My research found artists engaged in praxis (the interplay of critical reflection and practice), their actions informed by an understanding of systemic oppression affecting their lives as they engaged in re-creating the world in order to transform it.

This is an arts-informed qualitative research study. Research data includes interviews with 17 members of the artist community, enriched by my own experiences with the arts and artist community in Thunder Bay. At the intersection of collective space, public space, and art I developed an understanding of the relationship between arts and collective organizing in supporting critical civic praxis as everyday politics. The transformation discussed by participants is connected to their worldviews and their social, political, and geographic location. In order to understand this transformative work I have described the *space* these artists inhabit, the *forms of oppression* they encounter, and the practices that *transformed* their community. The pedagogical roots that feed participants' work are *authenticity, trust, humility, relationship (love), and critical reflection*.

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Chapter 1: Widening Political Participation

I entered this research from multiple positions that I have developed into an area for research inquiry. The first position was witnessing the success of youth focused art collectives in Thunder Bay. The second was seeing consistently negative popular discourse about youth engagement, and political engagement specifically, despite the positive contributions of youth I witnessed in art-collectives, and while I was a social worker. The third flowed from the first two positions culminating in a desire to change the discourse on youth by bringing what I saw happening in the community into academia. And the fourth was a preliminary review of literature on youth and social justice. During this preliminary search I identified an emerging body of research on the development of critical civic praxis, a concept based on Freire's idea of critical consciousness, in community based social justice organizations.

This dissertation begins with an exploration of youths' participation in everyday politics, through actions that are outside of formal political processes, but nonetheless contribute to shaping society. Engagement in a participatory democracy such as Canada goes beyond "the manner in which the citizen relates to [their] government. . . . Those activities by private citizens intended to influence more or less directly the selection of public officials or the decisions they make" (Mishler, 1979, p. 17). Engagement includes public participation in public spaces, and the exercise of rights through use of voice, in multiple mediums, in public space (Duncum, 2011).

Theorizing about the relationship between youth agency and community organizations with a focus on social justice, Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) asked how social justice-oriented community-based organizations serve to develop critical civic

praxis among youth. Ginwright and Cammarota, defined critical civic praxis as the interplay between critical reflection and action essential for full engagement in democracy. Their work is theoretically rooted in Freire's (1970/2008) concepts of critical consciousness and liberatory practice which Freire defines as "a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 79). Wanting to expand the body of work on critical civic praxis beyond social justice based organizations, I focused on members of community-based art collectives that do not have a specific social justice education focus to ask if, and how community-based art-collectives function as spaces for the development of critical civic praxis in the context of collective community arts.

I interviewed members of community-based art-collectives to inquire as to how youth develop the ability to critically engage in society for positive change. Unlike the social justice organizations that formed the basis for Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) research, and the subsequent body of research based on their work, my research engaged with the unintentional political spaces where artists are involved in collective and community programming for the purpose of creating art first, and not necessarily for engaging in social justice activities even though they often created art that addressed social and political issues. From analysis of 19 interviews with 17 people engaged in collective arts in Thunder Bay, Ontario I developed the principles or *roots* that fed the transformative work and experiences of participants. The roots are *authenticity, trust, humility, relationship (love), and critical reflection*.

For these reasons, I begin with a discussion on the scope of youth participation in democracies, and a look at critical consciousness and the existing research on critical civic praxis.

Critical Youth Studies

The field of critical youth studies focuses on the social and economic conditions that negatively affect young peoples' access to traditional markers of adulthood (Kellner, 2014). For this reason, the definition of "youth" within the field is often not clearly defined, however, it is considered to encompass roughly those "in the age range of fifteen to thirty-something" (Kellner, 2014, p. 4). Critical youth studies scholars go "beyond traditional pathological approaches [of youth studies] to assert that young people have the ability to analyze their social context, to collectively engage in critical research, and resist repressive state and ideological institutions" (Akom, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2008). Youth political participation takes many forms and youth are more likely to address issues that directly affect their lives in spaces where they are welcome, and where they can see an impact. Counter to popular portrayals, youth are not a disengaged, apathetic, uninformed mass (Giroux, 2014). According to Freire (1970/2008), the characterization of the oppressed, in this case youth, as "dangerous" or "out of control" is an intentional mechanism used to discredit legitimate opposition to oppressive conditions. "For the oppressors, however, it is always the oppressed (whom they obviously never call 'the oppressed') who are disaffected, who are 'violent,' 'barbaric,' 'wicked,' or 'ferocious' when they react to the violence of oppressors" (Freire, 1970/2008, p. 56). This, Freire explained, is a method of redirecting blame for oppression onto the oppressed. When the oppressed take action against the violence enacted upon them, they are accused of

violence and of being out of control, and this reframing helps to maintain the popular perception of the oppressed as in need of control—supporting a continued oppressive social order.

For example, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently met with delegates at a youth labour forum where many in attendance took it as an opportunity to show their disapproval of what they saw as a lack of action, and broken election promises by Trudeau. They demonstrated their disapproval by physically turning their backs on the Prime Minister (Pedwell, 2016). Trudeau's response was to ignore their criticism and admonish them for "not listening" (Pedwell, 2016, para. 4). However, in response to the Prime Minister's dismissal of their protest, the group published a statement explaining how their actions were a deliberate statement in response to what they saw as the government turning its back on them.

We saw the reality of precarious work. We saw the prime minister reassert his opposition to a \$15 federal minimum wage. And we saw them approve the LNG pipeline despite huge implications for the environment and Indigenous land rights. . . . The government is long on words but short on action. The prime minister is MIA on the issues that matter to us as young workers, but eager to "dialogue" with us for the sake of a photo op. (Sikora et al., 2016, para. 5)

This criticism and protest followed an election that saw the largest increase in youth voters, those under age 35 (Elections Canada, 2016; see Figure 1). The Liberals, led by Trudeau, gained 4 million votes while the Conservatives stayed the same, and the NDP lost 1 million. This suggests that the majority of the Liberal gain came from new voters

(Schwartz, 2015), believed to be due to Trudeau’s campaign, which appealed to and mobilized the youth vote (Levinson King, 2016).

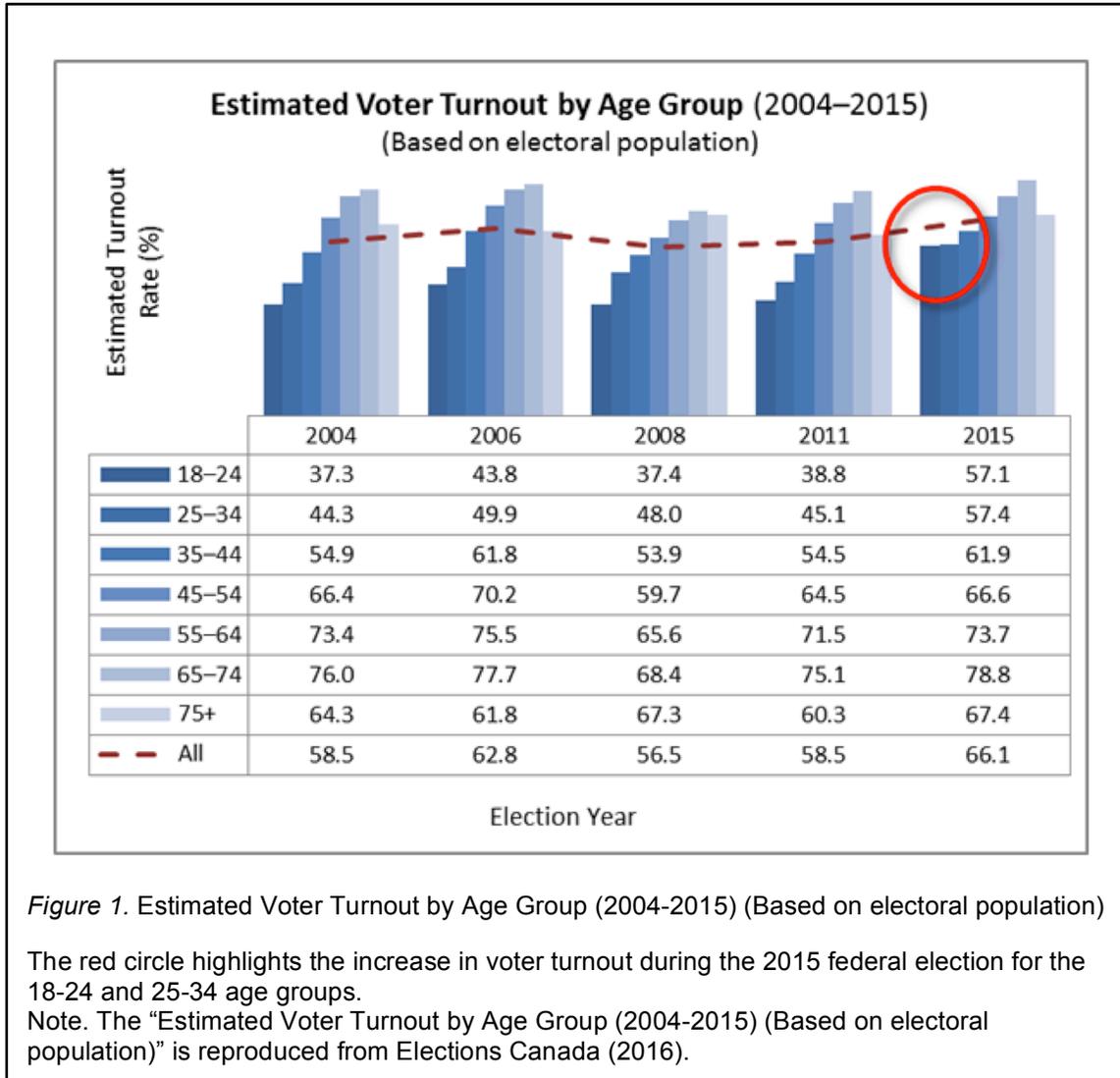


Figure 1. Estimated Voter Turnout by Age Group (2004-2015) (Based on electoral population)

The red circle highlights the increase in voter turnout during the 2015 federal election for the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups.

Note. The “Estimated Voter Turnout by Age Group (2004-2015) (Based on electoral population)” is reproduced from Elections Canada (2016).

Youth, who are defined by Elections Canada as between the ages of 18 and 34, have the lowest turnout rates for federal elections (Elections Canada, 2015). Figure 1 shows a positive correlation between age and participation for those aged 18-74, with a decline in participation in those aged 75 and over (Elections Canada, 2014). For the 2011

federal election, youth between the ages of 18-24 represented the lowest turnout of eligible voters at 38.8%. However, the 2015 federal election saw an 18% increase in eligible voters aged 18- 24 (from 38.8% in 2011 to 57.1% in 2015), and a 12% increase in eligible voters aged 25-34 (from 45.1% in 2011 to 57.4% in 2015) (Elections Canada, 2016). Beyond voting, youth are also less likely to be involved in formal political processes, such as through volunteering for political parties (Milner, 2005). Youths' lower levels of formal political participation have garnered much negative attention and various theories have been advanced to explain this seeming lack of interest in political life (Galston, 2001; Milner, 2005; Pammett & LeDuc, 2003).

A discrete definition of political participation, largely limited to casting ballots and volunteering for political campaigns has fuelled accusations of youth apathy (Galston, 2001; Kennelly, 2011; Milner, 2005; Quijada Cerecer, Cahill, & Brady, 2013; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Taft, 2010). Cries of youth apathy in popular media have previously focused on a steady decline in voter turnout among youth eligible to vote for the first time (Pammett & LeDuc, 2003). Bednar (2014), writing for the *Ottawa Citizen*, stated that there is a “crisis in democratic disengagement,” and heralded voting “as the most potent expression of political preference” (para. 3). The editorial piece penned by Bednar stated that youth apathy is well documented and the act of voting is still considered the pinnacle of democratic participation. In the article, Bednar suggested the problem with low voter turnout of those between the ages of 18 and 34 stems from a lack of understanding of party politics.

The term “political dropouts” has been used to describe “young citizens who are so inattentive to the political world around them that they lack the minimal knowledge

needed to distinguish and thus to choose, among parties or candidates” (Milner, 2005, p. 4). This lack of interest, it is suggested, then spirals into ever decreasing participation as it results in decreasing political knowledge, a “declining sense of civic duty” and citizens who are then increasingly less likely to vote (Milner, 2005, p. 7).

Counter to popular discourses that blame youth apathy for the decline in voter turnout there are other issues with the political process that deter voters. For example, young voters are the most likely to be affected by the recently approved changes to the *Canada Elections Act*. Introduced into Parliament by Harper’s Conservative government in 2014 (Hall, 2014). These changes have the potential to reduce Elections Canada’s ability to inform the public about voting and to exclude eligible voters without government ID from voting. During his campaign Justin Trudeau stated that he would repeal the Fair Elections Act if elected (Wingrove, 2014); since his election he has stated he will “repair” the Act (CBC, 2015). The Council of Canadians launched a Charter challenge in the Ontario Superior Court in 2015 (The Council of Canadians, 2016a). As of November 2016, the Charter challenge was still before the courts (The Council of Canadians, 2016b). The current Liberal government has put forward new legislation that is expected to overturn the restrictions to voter rights introduced by the previous Conservative government in the *Fair Elections Act* (The Council of Canadians, 2016b). The challenge will stay before the courts while the new legislation is being reviewed (The Council of Canadians, 2016b).

Low youth voter turnout may reflect an increased awareness of the hypocrisy involved in party politics (Galston, 2001). The downward spiral of youth political engagement summarized by Galston (2001), affecting multiple ways of engagement in

the realm of formal politics, has been criticized by some youth as being the result of “politics, which they see as corrupt, ineffective, and unrelated to their deeper ideals,” and their lack of “confidence in collective acts, especially those undertaken through public institutions whose operations they regard as remote, opaque, and virtually impossible to control” (p. 220).

Milner (2005) proposed that switching to a system of proportional representation is one avenue to increase youth interest, knowledge, and thus participation in party politics. He stated that proportional representation provides a system that is clearer and “stable across time and space” making it easier for voters to identify with a specific party and understand “complex issues and actors over time” (p. 9). While I do not disagree with Milner – declining rates of voter turnout are troublesome in a democracy, and proportional representation may encourage more people to participate in elections – maintaining and supporting democracy involves critical participation in actions that range far beyond singular acts of voting. The federal election in 2015 saw more than 68% of eligible voters cast ballots, a 7% increase from 2011 (Harris, 2015), with a 71% increase in voter turnout during advanced polls (Harris, 2015), and the highest turnout since 1997 (Elections Canada, 2015). The spike in voter turnout for the 2015 federal election reflects a highly motivated electorate; however limiting our conception of political participation to casting ballots discounts the numerous ways citizens have been engaging in their communities in between elections. Democracy must be understood more broadly; it is a participatory system whereby people are able to control aspects of their lives through various avenues of expression, including voting (Shragge, 2013). It is especially important to investigate youth civic participation in politics outside of formal political

processes and how confidence in this participation develops as this can provide insight into the processes that encourage and discourage participation in both formal and everyday politics.

Political Participation Beyond Voting

Activist political participation.

That engagement in a participatory democracy goes beyond engagement in formal political processes is reflected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), Section 2, which guarantees citizens and non-citizens the right to “(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association.” Popular portrayals of youth engagement in democratic life in Canada suggest a lack of political participation while ignoring increasing constraints on legitimate forms of participation over the last decade. Researching youth activist organizations, Kennelly (2011) witnessed increasing constraints on avenues for critical public dialogue in Canada. She found that critical voices were being “placated, repressed, and commodified” (p. 3).

Marginalized youth in Canada – those living in poverty, with disabilities, or from Indigenous, and visible minority communities – are disproportionately underrepresented in democratic processes (Dunleavy & Milton, 2008). Further, it has been suggested that people become disengaged from political processes because of feelings of alienation, personal inefficacy, and powerlessness (Mishler, 1979). In order to examine why many youth are disengaged from political processes the possibility needs to be considered that either this is not true, and youth are engaged in ways that are not being recognized, or they are disengaged but there are socioeconomic barriers to participation (Bulbeck &

Harris, 2008). It is imperative that we question discourses that ignore these possibilities in favour of overly simplified and discriminatory accusations that focus on scapegoating already marginalized populations. Citizens are being actively discouraged from participating in civic life, by electoral processes that are unnecessarily convoluted (Milner, 2005), by politicians who are overtly hostile to an engaged and democratic public (Barlow, 2015), and by legislation that has the seeming intent of discouraging voter turnout (Hall, 2014).

Youth activists are often depicted as untamed, unschooled, and uninformed (Kennelly, 2011). However, youth in activism are historically minimized for their role in organizing and mobilizing social change (Marri & Walker, 2008), with many involved in what Boyte (2011) called *true* democratic participation as “co-creators of the world” (p. 632). People are able to engage in political processes when they are engaged in their social world, are knowledgeable about their communities, and able to act on this experiential knowledge (Bourdieu, 1991). Various studies of youth activism have found that youth engage within their perceived social sphere, where they feel they have knowledge of their communities, and are able to take up space. Studying youth activists in three large metropolitan areas in Canada, Kennelly (2011) found that middle class youth focused on socially acceptable activism, participating in awareness campaigns that were politically safe, and that did not address underlying systemic oppressions in Canada. In a cross-cultural study, Taft (2010) found that youth took different approaches to activism in Venezuela, Mexico, and Canada. Taft identified that Canadian activism was often based in a belief that Canada is a just and fair multicultural nation.

Youth activism in Canada has taken many forms. For example, youth were active in political demonstrations held in Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa following the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE were a Tamil guerilla organization fighting for Tamil autonomy in Sri Lanka from the 1970's till their defeat in 2009. Tamil youth in Canada continued their political participation through collective organizing long after the demonstrations (O'Neill, 2015). In 2012 university students in Quebec successfully protested tuition increases. Students' organized protests, shared information, and mobilized the student body, effectively uniting over 300,000 students in protest (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014).

When activist spaces are specifically opened up to youth participation they attend en masse (Kelly & Carson, 2012). A Youth Activist Forum held in Ottawa, Ontario, was held to engage youth in disability activism because Canadian disability organizations were noticing a lack of youth participation. The event saw an overwhelming attendance by youth who presented non-traditional forms of activism including storytelling, comic books, and creative uses of space (Kelly & Carson, 2012). Graffiti Art Programming Inc. in Winnipeg provides youth with a space to engage in artistic endeavours, learn from artist mentors, and work collectively for social change (Skinner & Masuda, 2013). This program supported a youth initiative to address crime rates that was able to report a 70% reduction in crime, an overwhelming success within only eight months (Skinner, 2011).

Although not always directly tied to influencing political processes, youth are not the disengaged, apathetic, uninformed mass they are often portrayed as. Youth participation takes many forms and is more likely to address issues they feel affect their

lives, in spaces they are welcome in, and in ways they feel can have an impact (see Stock, 2016).

Questioning Access to Political Processes

As noted, active citizenship involves more than voting and engaging in formal political processes (Mishler, 1979; Shragge, 2013). Campbell (2005) proposed a number of questions to be considered when taking a “critical and reflective look” (p. 689) when discussing who and what constitutes civic engagement. First, we must establish how we conceptualize the links between identity, participation, and transformation and then look at where engagement takes place currently, and who this place is open and accessible to (Campbell, 2005). So, who, what, and where are civic engagement identified, recognized, and allowed (Campbell, 2005; Pell, 2014)? Where civic engagement is permitted brings in a necessary discussion of the role of the public. Pell (2014) suggested it is important to understand how publics are constituted and reconstituted differently to exclude and include various participants around different issues. Defining publics, their role, what constitutes participation, how participation is mediated, who can participate, and how participation is understood shapes perceptions of civic engagement.

When certain forms of participation are either legitimated or discounted, it often speaks to issues of power. For example “discourses of revitalization, because they started from the position of property, centered middle-class people within the politics of urban transformation and marginalized poor people” (Pell, 2014, p. 41). Deliberative democracy and discourse theorists typically frame political participation as limited to those actions that result or aim to result in influencing formal policy (Campbell, 2005). Campbell (2005) suggested that although some discourse theorists have sought to expand

categories of political participation, they have kept them tied to actions intended to affect policy change, and in this they “maintain and replicate or reinforce the formal as a site for authentic engagement” (p. 693).

If political participation is being limited by discrete definitions of legitimate forms and spaces of participation, it begs the question: Who does this benefit and to what end? Campbell (2005) suggested that we need to ask: “If a majority of the literature acknowledges and upholds the transformational potential of participation in civic matters, then why are more people not involved” (p. 692)? This question acknowledges that there are very real known benefits to political participation, but that there are also obstacles to participation. Further, Campbell extended this discrepancy in participation in the literature to question what is considered civic participation and citizens, and how these definitions frame other forms of participation.

Civic Rights

I use the word ‘citizen’ and ‘civic’ generously to refer to all people within the state, regardless of citizenship status in the context of my research. I am using ‘citizen’ for its relationship within Canada’s political state structures as defining individual members of society who are afforded rights to political participation as defined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982). In Canada, the extension of some rights is not limited only to those members of society who are recognized as citizens by the state as such a limitation can result in rights abuses of non-citizens. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms extends a number of freedoms to non-citizens within the state, including in Section 2 “(a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media

communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association”.

Section 15(1) entrenches in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms the extension of protection of the state to non-citizens to participate in civic life outside of the formal political arena. Further, Canada is a signatory to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that places states “under an obligation to guarantee both citizens and non-citizens equal enjoyment of their civil, political, and economic rights as recognized under international law (Basok & Carasco, 2010, p. 346).

The Public

This discursive approach “does not regard language as if it was layered on top of places; rather, it recognizes publics as communicative spaces generated through discursive practices that work to configure and enact the political” (Pell, 2014, p. 30). Savage (2014) distinguished the *political public* from the *popular publics*. The political public is united by a particular public field, such as belonging to the same politically defined geographic area (Savage, 2014); in the context of this research I am broadly referring to *the public* as a function of the nation state when I refer to democratic participation. Popular publics are distinct from political publics as they “are less likely to be spatially referenced, because they *come into being* [emphasis in original] through processes of cultural distribution and consumption” (Savage, 2014, p. 84). This research entwines the popular public with the political public, insisting on a constantly negotiated relationship. The use of public space is a form of democratic participation; the use of community space and the freedom to exercise artistic expression in those spaces without state approval or intervention is dependent on the philosophy of democracy heralded in Canada. What constitutes ‘the public,’ ‘civic participation,’ and ‘democracy’ is

constantly being negotiated and debated, as the public and democracy are “neither stable nor certain” (Pell, 2014, p. 30). Dewey (1927) suggested, “in no two ages or places is there the same public. Conditions make the consequences of associated action and the knowledge of them different” (p. 33).

Public space has been conceptualized as a “place of conversation and contestation in pursuit of social justice issues” (Duncum, 2011, p. 349). In Duncum’s (2011) view, public space is neither merely accidental nor predetermined – it is neither a space that is merely shared yet contains isolated individuals, nor a planned meeting with a set agenda for discussing social arrangements. Duncum found public space in decline, needing to be wrestled from the encroachment of government and corporate control and interests. Where individual attempts to take up space are mediated by regulations and claims to property and investments, public space is contested. Similar to assertions by Anzaldúa (1987/2007) and Freire (1970/2008), Duncum suggested that “cultural products” can be used to “dominate or to contest” in hierarchical societies (p. 351). Understanding art educators who take up public pedagogies for social justice requires a “view that cultural sites inherently involve ideological struggle” (Duncum, 2011, p. 351).

Expanding Notions of Civic Participation

Understanding democratic participation more widely allows citizens to challenge existing structures and boundaries when they fail to meet their needs. As a political structure, democracies provide mechanisms for citizens to influence the state, “the state is not simply *there*. It is constantly evolving, always in formation, as it responds to the demands from social movements” (Apple, 2003, p. 4). Indicative of a crisis of legitimacy of the nation state in an increasingly fluid global context is a downward trend in

participation in formal politics (Allan, 2011). An example of participatory democracy outside of state sanctioned boundaries is the rise of community gardens, where communities reclaim abandoned lots and work collectively to build cohesion through shared meaning and participation (Carlsson, 2008). Community and guerrilla gardening claims public space abandoned by municipalities and turns it into community space directly meeting the needs of the community by providing food and/or visually improving the landscape. These gardens become spaces of contention when municipalities decide they have monetary value and seek to dislocate the community in order to sell them off for profit, creating a direct schism between the interests of the community and the interests of the government (Carlsson, 2008).

Public space and open dialogue are necessary in a healthy democracy, “ideas which are not communicated, shared, and reborn in expression are but soliloquy, and soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought” (Dewey, 1927, p. 218). The arts are powerful for communicating political and social commentary and ideologies, opening them up for discussion (Kong, 1995). Democracy relies on the ability of citizens to thoughtfully, purposefully and actively engage in public life (Freire, 1970/2008).

The arts and politics.

The ability to interpret, dissect, and ultimately utilize cultural forms of communication, including images, words, and sound enhances peoples’ ability to actively and critically participate socially and politically (Duncum, 2004). Supporting youths’ ability to create social change requires nurturing an ability to imagine a future that is yet to exist as imaginative endeavours provide opportunity to “explore both possibilities and impossibilities” (Mullin, 2003, p. 200), an ability necessary for engaging in civic life.

I credit art for maintaining my own interest in, dialogue with, and passion for social justice, politics, and theory and my ongoing engagement in a process of trying to understand the complexities and contradictions of the world I live in. Living in Northwestern Ontario, I was able to critically engage with the social and political commentary in the works of local visual artists such as Christian Chapman (Fort William First Nation) and Shayne Ehman (Thunder Bay); I am able to discuss the ongoing colonization of Turtle Island through films by award winning filmmaker Michelle Derosier (Thunder Bay). On a global scale, I dialogue with graffiti work by Banksy (see Figure 2), feminist installation pieces by Sophia Wallace (March 8, 2014), anti-colonial discourse by *A Tribe Called Red* (2016), fictional post-apocalyptic/social critique by Margaret Atwood (2003), the cultural critiques in *Outlaw Culture* by bell hooks (1994a), and a multitude of work in other mediums and by other artists.

Through the arts I have engaged in human rights discussions with elementary students, debated film as constructive anti-racist, decolonizing dialogue, and discussed the ongoing project of (re)constructing society. The arts are powerful discursive mediums, able to engage diverse audiences on emotional and embodied levels in a way where academic writing often falls short (Dewey, 1927).



One aspect of the matter concerns particularly the side of dissemination. It is often said, and with great appearance of truth, that the freeing and perfecting of inquiry would not have any especial effect. For, it is argued, the mass of the reading public is not interested in learning and assimilating the results of accurate investigation. Unless these are read, they cannot seriously affect the thought and action of members of the public; they remain in secluded library alcoves, and are studied and understood only by a few intellectuals. . . . Presentation is fundamentally important, and presentation is a question of art. (Dewey, 1927, p. 183)

Art as Dialogue

Creating public works of art, whether by individuals or collectives of individuals, is a way for people to voice ideas in a way that is accessible to the public, creating space for people to engage, to consider, to debate, and to contemplate. Public art can become

public points of dialogue, an avenue for democratic engagement where once there was silence. Freire (1970/2008) sought to expand political participation in Brazil recognizing that some voices were being intentionally discounted, excluded, and oppressed.

My premise asserts that public art, as it takes up space, *is* social and political engagement, and may be an avenue where youth learn to engage in critical civic praxis; the interplay between critical thought and action necessary for participation in a democracy (Freire, 1970/2008). Referring to commissioned public art, Gérin and McLean (2009) stated that it “becomes the symbolic ground for unintended public confrontation, debates within debates. . . . Works of art, salvaged reminiscences, are resituated to perform as sites of shared memory where memory has been intentionally expunged” (p. 96). Klein (2000), a Canadian writer and political theorist, argued that the neoliberal ideological invasion into the public sphere is directly linked to individuals’ declining sense of well being, suggesting that it creates a “claustrophobic sense of despair” as public space is increasingly commodified (p. 442). Public space becomes contested when the public attempts to claim and reclaim its right to take up public space, where corporations have also laid claims.

In response to the ‘common sense revolution’ of the provincial Progressive Conservative government in the late 1990’s, Blackwell (2009) created an architectural installation piece in Toronto, “Model for a Public Space,” the design of which was meant to stimulate interaction between participants. The common sense revolution is considered a neoliberal program involving tax cuts, the privatization of public services, and the decentralization of government services (Stern & Hall, 2015). Blackwell stated that by,

‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. . . . Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is with the guarantee of freedom to express and publish their opinions. (p. 225)

Limiting forms of dialogue to the written or spoken word and to certain spaces by regulating what are legitimate and therefore also what are illegitimate forms of dialogue and spaces for expression automatically excludes voices. The arts are discursive: focusing on multiple forms of discursive practices can invite more voices into public discourse, collective action, and democratic processes (Dewey, 1927; Pell, 2014).

Dialogue is an encounter among [people] who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty domination of one person by another. (Freire, 1970/2008, pp. 88-89)

The multiplicity promoted by postmodern theory can provide a framework for understanding the value of the arts as political discourse (Houser, 2012). Houser (2012) proposed that the critique of the grand narrative and its totalizing discourses allow for “the consideration of additional voices in the arts, civic life, and citizenship education” (p. 53). Academia is a terrain riddled with specialized jargon and discipline specific codes of reference that act as gatekeepers preventing wider participation (Green, 2010).

A vibrant, relevant, effective critical pedagogy in the contemporary era must be simultaneously intellectually rigorous and accessible to multiple audiences. . . . Such a populist form of criticality does not in any manner undermine our

intellectual rigor and theoretical sophistication; instead, it challenges our pedagogical ability to express complex ideas in a language that is understandable and germane to wide audiences. (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 148)

I hope that this work will expand accepted expressions of critical thought within academia to include the use of the arts beyond the confines of visual arts and art education departments. Work that transgresses boundaries and “challenges systems of domination” (p. 3) through “educating for critical consciousness in liberatory ways” (p. 7) demands to be done in forms that are accessible to the public, regardless of level of formal education (hooks, 1994a). This also necessitates that work outside of the academy is taken seriously within the academy without being co-opted by the academy (hooks, 1994a).

Dialogue is generative, “if it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. . . . It is an act of creation” (Freire, 1970/2008, pp. 88-89). Dialogue requires humility and love, the ability to engage with other humans openly without arrogance or assumptions, and acceptance of everyone’s ability and right to engage in the process of re-creating the world through dialogue (Freire, 1970/2008). hooks (2010) suggested that many students, because of being educated for regurgitation rather than creative, imaginative, reflective thought, do not believe they have anything worthy to say. “When we are free to let our minds roam it is far more likely that our imaginations will provide the creative energy that will lead us to new thought and more engaging ways of knowing” (hooks, 2010, p. 62).

Art performs a myriad of functions in society at large (Eisner, 1972). Works of art are voices in themselves: speaking beyond the artist(s) that created them they are imbued with agency (Eisner, 1972). The arts can provide critique of the society that they inhabit, drawing our attention through the use of visual metaphors that convey values. “The work praises or condemns, but it comments on the world and makes us feel toward the object it depicts—provided we have learned to ‘read’ its message” (Eisner, 1972, pp. 15-16).

Learning to ‘read’ art is essential to our ability to accept it as legitimate forms of discourse. In the introduction to Deleuze’s book, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2002), Smith explains how Deleuze constructed a text in *response* to Bacon’s paintings rather than speaking *about* the paintings. Smith quotes Deleuze: “‘I have often tried to talk about painting,’ he cautioned, ‘but writing or talking about it is only an approximation, as painting is its own language and is not translatable into words’” (in Deleuze, 2002, p. xi). In this vein, the paintings served as “the starting point for his own conceptual inventions” (Smith, in Deleuze, 2002, p. xi). This text is not a statement or analysis of Bacon’s work, rather Deleuze dialogued with the paintings to create new ideas. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* is an example of the conversations we can have with our surroundings and how we can interact with art as it acts upon us, creating space for new ideas.

The spaces in between.

This research investigated the space that exists in between formal politics, collective organizations, and public works of art – where citizens enact their political rights and freedoms to shape and influence the spaces they inhabit. Anzaldua (1987) wrote about borderlands – the spaces that exist between formal boundaries – and how to

exist in the in between. She described it as “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (Anzaldúa, 1987/2007, p. 25). The arts often exist in these borderlands, and artists provide imaginative ways to navigate the spaces we inhabit in between our formal institutions, identities, and roles. The arts convey imagined futures and challenge the seemingly unchallengeable, to present new possibilities for people to consider, mull, and debate. Anzaldúa suggested that we carry all parts of ourselves with us – our personal, political, cultural, artistic, and familial – and by bringing them together we can carve out new spaces where we do not need to compartmentalize ourselves with borders.

Not everyone is literate in political jargon, has the education or desire to communicate through formal writing, or the desire to construct their world in institutional terms. Anzaldúa (1987/2007) spoke of not fitting, being uncomfortable in the confines of a culture, a language, a foreign space with foreign rules that denigrate selves, identities, and being an outsider: “what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language that they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves” (p. 77). The arts are ‘other’ languages, other modes of communicating, expressing, and dialoguing.

Anzaldúa (1987/2007) wrote that the “tyranny of Western aesthetics” (p. 90) has divorced art from life:

In the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman, my people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life. The religious, social and aesthetic purposes of art were all intertwined. (p. 88)

Anzaldúa spoke of imagining things into being. Engaging in the borderlands can re-connect the artificial splits between people to re-develop an awareness of the societies we inhabit eliciting changes in the individual that come back out to create social change.

These changes must be first imagined and then communicated.

Art as political dialogue.

The intersection of art and politics is a contested space (Faria, 2009).

Representation in art, who gets represented, and who does the representing, has been questioned and challenged within the arts and the broader community as a whole. For example, the subject and location of a statue can become a heated social and political focal point. Prior to 1999 a statue of an unnamed ‘Indian’ kneeling accompanied a statue of Samuel de Champlain in Nepean Point Park, Ottawa (Thomas, 2009). The Indian was removed following protests orchestrated by the Assembly of First Nations who “argued that the Indian man misrepresented the contributions Aboriginal people have made to the development of Canada” (Thomas, 2009, p. 120). The initial inclusion of the statue, the debate it generated, the political protests that ensued, and the resultant relocation of the Indian statue became a site where history and representation were debated and where collective action resulted in change. The statue’s absence and relocation have also become intersections for further discussion about Canada’s relationship with First Nations peoples (Thomas, 2009). The arts can do more than represent politics – public art *is* political. The domination expressed through what qualifies as legitimate art and legitimate spaces for art has been challenged as racist, gendered, and classist (hooks, 1994a; Kester, 2003).

Public art has been a site for expressing political ideologies and critiques of capitalism. In Mexico during the 1920's, Siqueiros, a mural artist and a member of the Syndicate of Technical Workers spoke out against elitism in 'easel painting' (Harrison & Wood, 1992). Siqueiros wrote "we praise monumental art in all its forms, because it is public property. . . . art must no longer be the expression of individual satisfaction. . . . but should aim to become a fighting, educative art for all" (in Harrison & Wood, 1992, p. 388). Rivera, another Mexican muralist and contemporary of Siqueiros, named the concept of "art for art's sake" as bourgeois and elitist (Rivera, in Harrison & Wood, 1992, p. 405). Rivera objected to how this conception of art both serves to keep art out of the realm of "the people," and to "discredit the use of art as a revolutionary weapon" (p. 405). Public art is heralded for its accessibility by the proletariat, in contrast to easel paintings which are held in galleries and in private collections accessible to the elite few (Rivera, in Harrison & Wood, 1992).

The familiar accusation that propaganda ruins art finds its source in bourgeois prejudice. Naturally enough the bourgeoisie does not want art employed for the sake of revolution. It does not want ideals in art because its own ideals cannot any longer serve as artistic inspiration. It does not want feelings because its own feelings cannot any longer serve as artistic inspiration. Art and thought and feeling must be hostile to the bourgeoisie today. Every strong artist has a head and a heart. Every strong artist has been a propagandist. (Rivera, in Harrison & Wood, 1992, p. 407)

The imagination can be "simultaneously artistic and political" (Mullin, 2003, p. 189). Mullin (2003) put forward a functionalist expectation of art, that it requires us to

pause, either because of attraction to the aesthetic qualities, or “because of the connections they lead us to make between emotions they provoke, ideas they suggest, and images they explore,” or a combination of the two (p. 190). Mullin made a distinction between ‘activist’ and ‘political’ art in that the former is socially involved and the latter is socially concerned. Political art does not involve political action, whereas activist art does. Mullin summarized one of the critiques of activist and political art in general as being “motivated jointly by their opposition to the specific politics involved and their inability to see that maintenance of or complicity with the status quo is itself political” (p. 192). Further she identified how Brustein, a critic of political art “attacks the combination of art and politics in the name of artistic freedom” (p. 193), but artistic freedom is dependent on politics that allow for it.

Mullin (2003) saw activist art as an initiator of dialogue and an opportunity to “imaginatively explore political alternatives” (p. 195). She believed that the imagination can be used to “explore both possibilities and impossibilities,” making the impossible a reality; and that art can be used to “explore moral and political ideas, and the emotional responses they engender” (p. 197). Further, Mullin posited that the emotional-cognitive connection that art engenders is conducive to engaging rather than triggering an automatic response to the ideas themselves, allowing for further reflection. The ability to engage on both levels at once, to reject compartmentalization of beauty from politics, needs to be encouraged and nurtured. It has been argued, however, that this reflection runs the risk of remaining “at the level of theory, instead of engendering (and engineering) an authentic state of praxis on the part of those participating” (Barber, 2009, p. 166). According to Barber (2009), Habermas believed that art remains at the

theoretical level in our imaginations, that it is too far from reality, and therefore is not ideal for inspiring dialogical action.

Repressive governments have shown a tendency to disagree with Barber's (2009) and Habermas' assertion that art is too far removed from reality to pose a threat to political order. Ai Weiwei, an artist internationally renowned for his political art aimed at disrupting the Chinese government's oppression of free speech, is a poignant example of the relationship between political freedoms and artistic expression (Hancox, 2011). In 2011, Ai was arrested by the Chinese government "indicating that Ai had become a human barometer for the Chinese state's suppression of political freedoms" (Hancox, 2011, p. 286). Although China's restrictions may be viewed as an extreme example to compare to Canada, the connection between political freedom of expression and the ability to even participate in public art as political critique is clear. Further, Ai has also been credited for criticizing the West's complicity and participation in the continuing "economic oppression of Chinese citizens" through western neoliberal economies (Hancox, 2011, p. 288). Ai infuses his art with political and ideological critique throughout the process of conception, production, installation, and consumption by the west (Hancox, 2011). Art is an opportunity to engage people on a level where verbal dialogue often fails; it is a way to express opinions, thoughts, and feelings outside of the confines of verbal and written communication.

Understanding the Development of Critical Civic Praxis

Critical civic praxis as presented by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) is based on Freire's (1970/2008) concept of praxis and critical consciousness, and is a "a process that develops critical consciousness and builds the capacity for young people to respond and

change oppressive conditions in their environment” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 699). Critical consciousness fosters “new possibilities and capacities to see and act differently, proactively in the world—perceptions and actions geared toward promoting justice” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 699). Critical civic praxis is the interplay between critical thought and action essential for democracy (Freire, 1970/2008; hooks, 2010). *Critical praxis*, in this case, refers to engaging in critical thought as a “way of approaching ideas that aims to understand core, underlying truths, not simply that superficial truth that may be most obviously visible” (hooks, 2010, p. 7) and where reality is perceived as “process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action” (Freire, 1970/2008, p. 92). *Civic* is used to situate the individual in relation to the politic – so that critical civic praxis is the interplay between critical thought and action for citizens in a democracy. “Democracy thrives in an environment where learning is valued, where the ability to think is the mark of responsible citizenship, where free speech and the will to dissent is accepted and encouraged” (hooks, 2010, p. 17). This research addresses whether youth artist collectives are spaces that foster the development of critical civic praxis building on an existing body of research on the theoretical model introduced by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007). Ginwright and Cammarota theorized that community organizations support youth to develop critical civic praxis and therefore “comprehend the full, humanistic potential to *create social change* [emphasis in original]” (p. 699).

This work continues research and concepts developed by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) on the relationship between youth agency and community organizations. They asked: “How is critical civic praxis developed and sustained among

urban youth? How do community-based organizations function as sites for the development of critical consciousness in the contexts of social justice activities” (p. 697)?

I looked to members of community-based art-collectives to ask: *How do community-based art-collectives function as spaces for the development of critical consciousness in the context of collective community art practice?* This intersection of collective space, public space, and art is where I located my research to continue developing our understanding of the role of visual arts and collective organizing in developing critical civic praxis in a participatory democracy.

This research explores youths’ ability to participate in everyday politics, in the unintentional political spaces where artists are involved in collective and community organizing for the purpose of creating art. Political participation encompasses more than just engagement in formal political processes. The limiting of definitions of political participation to discrete acts such as casting ballots and volunteering for political campaigns has led to accusations of youth apathy (Galston, 2001; Kennelly, 2011; Milner, 2005; Quijada Cerecer, Cahill, & Brady, 2013; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Taft, 2010). However, there are multiple factors that contribute to lower voter turnout, such as restrictive voter registration legislation (Hall, 2014), political processes that are alienating and difficult to understand (Milner, 2005), politicians who are actively hostile to an engaged public (Barlow, 2015), lack of trust in politicians and political parties, and socioeconomic barriers to participation (Bulbeck & Harris, 2008).

I begin with a wider conceptualization of political participation, which includes the ability to control aspects of their lives through various avenues of expression, including voting (Shragge, 2013). As was stated by Bourdieu (1991), political

participation is facilitated when people are engaged in their social world, are knowledgeable about their communities, and able to act on this experiential knowledge. Youth are more likely to become involved with issues that directly affect their lives, in spaces where they are welcome, and where they can have an impact (Shiller, 2013). Youth need to be supported and nurtured to develop the ability to imagine a future into existence as imaginative endeavours provide opportunity to “explore both possibilities and impossibilities,” an ability necessary for engaging in civic life (Mullin, 2003, p. 200). Public works of art are an accessible way for people to voice ideas to the public, creating space for people to engage in dialogue.

The use of public space is a form of democratic participation; the use of community space and the freedom to exercise artistic expression in those spaces is dependent on living in a participatory democracy. Public art, as it takes up space, *is* social and political engagement, and is an avenue where youth learn to engage in critical civic praxis. Through this research I address how youth artist collectives are spaces that foster the development of critical civic praxis extending the theoretical model introduced by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007).

Chapter 2: Critical Pedagogies and Critical Civic Praxis

My research demonstrates how community artist collectives can cultivate the capacity for social change and transformative action. Critical consciousness and critical civic praxis denote an awareness of and ability to respond to oppressive social conditions for positive social transformation (Freire, 1970/2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) built their concept of critical civic praxis on Freire's concept of critical consciousness. According to Freire (1970/2008), critical consciousness is necessary to overcome oppression: "one must emerge from it [oppression] and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51).

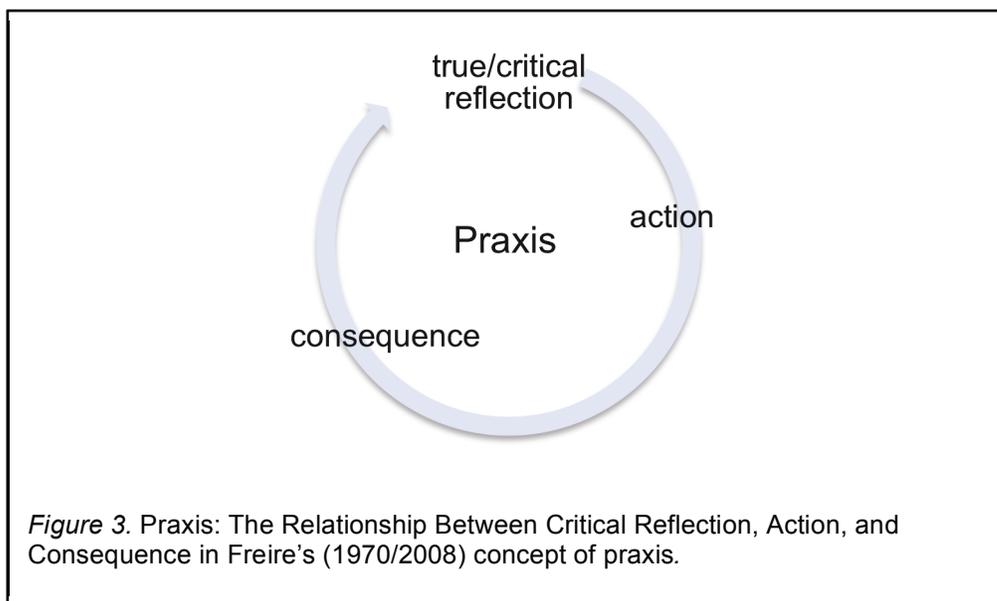
Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is an emergence from an oppressed consciousness; it involves the realization of oppressive conditions, the ability to perceive this objective reality, and then act upon it (Freire, 1970/2008). For Freire (1970/2008), an oppressive society results in the dehumanization of both the oppressed and the oppressor, a liberatory revolution results in the liberation and full humanization of both. Revolution must be through social transformation and dissolution of a class-based society, and not limited to individual liberation.

Freire (1970/2008) spoke about the risk of actions that would result in individual liberation, rather than systemic liberation, because of the oppressed's internalization of the oppressor and the oppressor's values. Those who continue to house the oppressor, and have therefore not fully emerged from an oppressed consciousness, are not acting for freedom; they are acting in the interest of gaining power within the existing oppressive

system. Overcoming internalized oppression and notions of individualized freedom involves critical analysis. Critical analysis involves the realization of the oppressive situation, an emergence from oppression, and the objectification of the oppressive reality so that it can be acted upon for liberatory transformation.

Praxis is the means of transformative change (Freire, 1970/2008). It is a process of critical reflection that leads to actions followed by consequences that become the object of further critical reflection. Praxis is not critical reflection on its own, nor is it action on its own, it is the combination that results in transformation (see Figure 3).



For Freire (1970/2008), oppression is a distortion that results in dehumanization through injustice, exploitation, oppression, and violence. Because it is a distortion it is inevitable that the oppressed will struggle against it. People's true authentic existence is humanization, which is affirmed by yearning for freedom, justice, and the struggle to regain humanity. The task for the oppressed and those who are in solidarity with them is liberation from oppression for all. The fight for liberation is an act of love, which opposes

the lovelessness of the oppressors' violence. Authentic liberation is not the reversal of the oppressed/oppressor roles, nor the creation of a new bureaucracy; it is the commitment to critical consciousness and the humanization of all.

A pedagogy for liberation, a critical pedagogy, must involve co-intentional education practiced by revolutionary leadership. In this situation both teachers and students are subjects and therefore capable of, and committed to involvement. Subjects, for Freire (1970/2008), are in contrast to people who are treated as mere objects by the oppressor. Subjects are agents of liberation capable of achieving humanization and transformative, liberatory action. Their full engagement in their education is required.

Critical pedagogies since Freire encompass a broad range of theories and approaches. Hernández (1997) highlighted some of the overarching aims of critical pedagogy that have emerged since Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* including: expanding notions of political reach and influence, as well as the possibility for actualizing alternative social orders; opening discourses of critique and possibility, emancipation and empowerment; redefining possibilities for teaching and education beyond a technical profession into the realm of transformative action and social change; and examination of the hidden curriculum and institutional structures that reproduce existing power relations in society.

In an analysis of how critical pedagogy has been taken up in the "Anglo-American regions" (p. 126) since the late 1980's, Cho (2006) identified the common misconception that social change will necessarily follow from individual change as a weakness with some contemporary critical pedagogies. Cho discussed the "false consciousness thesis: individuals are more or less caught up in illusions; thus, if they are

exposed to the ‘real truth,’ they will be enlightened” (pp. 133-134). The idea that critical consciousness automatically leads to emancipation, or from illusion to enlightenment is false. Cho drew attention to the ability of people to simultaneously understand the ways they are oppressed in the current system and act to maintain that system with little to no cognitive dissonance. Further, Cho stated, “awareness does not automatically bring the collapse of the system, and resistance does not necessarily bring new social arrangements” (p. 135). Cho suggested that the “real task of critical pedagogy is to create the social structures that will allow individuals to change and to grow, rather than focusing on reforming individuals per se” (p. 135).

In an analysis of oppression and exploitation due to capitalism, McLaren (2006) discussed “critical revolutionary pedagogy” (p. 95) as “generating new ways of thinking about the state and its relationship to the production of and possibilities for human agency” (p. 95). McLaren has accused critical pedagogy of becoming domesticated and called for a revitalizing of its political roots in the present social, political, and economic context of neoliberalism. McLaren suggested a critical revolutionary pedagogy as a step further than critical pedagogy with a focus on dismantling capitalism. Similar to Freire (1970/2008), McLaren drew on Marx to identify liberal notions of selfhood and individualism as common pitfalls in people’s attempts to achieve liberation as they substitute personal social and economic achievement for mass emancipation from an economic system that relies on ongoing exploitation

Public pedagogy is a field of critical pedagogy that generally refers to sites of education outside of formal schooling and has been used by feminist and critical theorists (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011). Sites of public pedagogy include “museums,

zoos, and libraries; in informal educational sites such as popular culture, media, commercial spaces, and the internet; and through figures and sites of activism, including public intellectuals and grassroots social movements” (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 339).

Public pedagogies have been claimed as the domain of feminism as they are “always immersed in the ongoing work of interrupting the material and discursive structures of patriarchy. . . . [Public pedagogy] “is a theoretical frame that describes and illuminates educative work that women and allies have taken up in the public sphere” (Dentith, O’Mally, & Brady, 2014, p. 26). Dentith, et al. (2014) provide a brief overview of the ways that feminism has been engaged in public pedagogy throughout the three waves of feminism, the third of which is current and I will touch on here. Third wave feminism is described as being concerned with “rootedness and the experiences of diverse people relative to their race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender expression” (p. 34). Feminist public pedagogies in the third wave of feminism are particularly marked with artistic expression in the public sphere as means of resistance and education. Examples include performances of *The Vagina Monologues*, a play by Ensler; the Guerilla Girls, a collective of women promoting women in the arts and protesting sexism in various artistic venues including galleries, film, and museums; and *Riot Grrrl*, a feminist zine. A transformative feminist pedagogy according to Hernández (1997) “should be one that addresses difference in all its possibilities within power relations in a constant process of contestation against concrete oppressive practices” (p. 19).

Critical public pedagogies and feminist public pedagogies focus on the possibility of popular culture as a space for contestation and resistance, going beyond how popular

culture reproduces inequality and mirrors dominant hegemonies (Dentith et al., 2014; Sandlin et al., 2011). This area of public pedagogy looks at sites of resistance including zines, music, independent film, and culture jamming (Sandlin et al. 2011). Understanding public space as a site for public pedagogy, Sandlin et al. (2011) describe how public art “provokes public discourse as it seeks to transform the individual, didactic pedagogue of both dominant and critical education into an emergent, performative, tenuous, and co-constructed pedagogical experience” (p. 349). People are refusing alienation by consciously engaging in artistic and collective endeavours and transforming their relationship to the communities they live in. “In order to combat the alienation, oppression, and exploitation inherent in everyday life, created and promoted by power, we must explore the possibilities of self realization (creation), communication (love), and participation (playing)” (Ross & Viason, 2006, p. 153).

Critical pedagogies that are not rooted in, or do not provide concrete interventions and strategies for application to real life settings, have been criticized for being too far removed, and based in abstract ideals such as “hope, love, democracy, utopia, and care” (Cho, 2007, p. 321). Cho (2007) suggested “in order to realize the promises of critical pedagogy, we need to guard against the politics of critical pedagogy succumbing to its speculative and idealistic tendencies” (p. 321).

At the beginning of this dissertation I referenced the book *Outlaw Culture* by hooks (1994a), one of my first introductions to black feminist analysis of popular culture. This work by hooks is a location of public pedagogy; her work problematizes and interrupts harmful masculinities, rape culture, and racism in popular culture. hooks explains in the introduction:

Merging critical thinking in everyday life with knowledge learned in books and through study has been the union of theory and practice that has informed my intellectual cultural work. Passionately concerned with education for critical consciousness, I continually search for ways to think, teach, and write that excite and liberate the mind, that passion to live and act in a way that challenges systems of domination: racism, sexism, class elitism. (p. 3)

Amongst others, I credited this work and hooks' various cultural critiques as helping to maintain my passion for social justice, politics, and theory.

Critical pedagogies need to address popular culture as a realm of ideological indoctrination; it is a "central political venue, a place where ideological consciousness is constructed, a new locale for ideological education" (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 170). Freire (1992/2016) insisted that educators "expose themselves to the popular culture across the board" (p. 98) to be able to construct discourse that doesn't alienate the popular classes. Likewise, Kincheloe (2012) considers intervention in popular culture necessary for maintaining public space and the project of critical consciousness. Further, he charged that critical pedagogues have sometimes been negligent in addressing the extent of influence of popular culture, and its "impact on the shaping of political consciousness and subjectivity" (p. 171).

With a focus on Freire's (1970) theme of alienation, Frymer (2006) proposed a critical social theory of youth alienation. Frymer began with the premise that "large groups of contemporary youth" are being alienated, stunted, and excluded from social participation. He provided the following description for understanding youth alienation:

Contemporary youth alienation must be understood within the context of dramatic new material and cultural conditions that generate social fractures and undermine stable bases of meaning and identity for the self, even as these same conditions create different forms of estrangement by race, class, gender, and sexuality. While the alienation of groups marginalized by these modes of oppression must be connected to earlier modern forms of Freirean oppression, economic exploitation, racial domination, and patriarchy, the near universal cultural and economic transformation of the postindustrial digital age, with its corresponding malaise and fragmentation of identity, transcend class, race, gender, and sexuality. Youth alienation goes beyond the boundaries of subculture, as well as “objectification” in Freire’s sense. It is part of the very logic of postmodernity and late capitalism. (p. 106)

Drawing on Freire, liberatory education necessarily involves active engagement from the student and the teacher, both being subjects capable of praxis. Through the corporatization and increasingly bureaucratization of institutions of education students have been treated as mere spectators and relegated to objectness in the Freirean sense. Frymer names “the market, rationalized accountability schemes, and media culture” (p. 108) as the forces that teachers now struggle against in their role as educators. A contemporary critical pedagogy that would address the alienation of youth “could help interrogate current forms of youth objectification, passivity, and disengagement. By placing the alienations of late capitalism at the center of its core concerns” (p. 108).

Theory on critical consciousness has been utilized to understand the development of “critical social analysis, collective social identity, political self-efficacy, and actions

aimed at advancing social justice” (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 848). The authors identified that action and behavioural processes have been largely ignored and they reiterated the need to keep the connection between critical reflection and action for praxis in the Freirean sense. Identifying three “levels” (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 848) for action, personal, group, and mass social movements, they suggested that sociopolitical actions at each of these levels need to involve praxis, a critical analysis of the issue and the context. Their review of theoretical articles on critical consciousness identified common techniques for promoting critical consciousness development; these are: structures, “shared values, fostering awareness of sociopolitical circumstances, encouraging critical questioning, fostering collective identity, and taking sociopolitical action” (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 851).

Shared values referred primarily to praxis, as well as more generally the establishment of “specific philosophical values and structural components” (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 851). Structural components included: emphasizing the active participation of all participants, often through small group formats, non-hierarchical structures, facilitators who possess critical consciousness and who facilitate rather than act as experts, and encouraging critical dialogue; promoting awareness of oppressive sociopolitical circumstances through dialogue, understanding identity with oppressed groups, and discussing concrete examples of oppression; encouraging critical questioning through critical dialogue about locally relevant issues, and identifying structural inequities that maintain oppression. Activities are used “to create collective identity, one that inspires pride and sociopolitical action to challenge marginalization and internalized oppression” (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 852). Finally, taking sociopolitical

action was found to receive the least attention in the theoretical literature about critical consciousness: “ironically, the sociopolitical action phase received the least attention from theorists. . . . their focus is on CSA [critical social analysis] as a precursor to action” (Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015, p. 853). By focusing on critical consciousness without praxis, and measures of educational and professional achievements, theorists ignore the more politically radical elements of Freire’s (1970/2008) work that insist on a complete systemic upheaval resulting in a radically different economic, social, and political environment free of exploitative structures that rely on hierarchies. My research demonstrates the connection between transformative arts practices based in community art collectives, the development of critical civic praxis, and social transformation (Freire, 1970/2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007).

Pedagogies

Pedagogies “situates the teacher/learner encounter in a wider context of historical and sociopolitical forces in which the ‘act of knowing’ recognizes and takes into account the differentiated politics of ‘reception’ surrounding the object of knowledge by the students” (McLaren, 2000, p. 185). A transformative pedagogy is a way of teaching that embodies transformative principles to challenge systemic oppression (hooks, 1994b).

Pedagogy is simultaneously about the knowledge and practices that teachers, cultural workers, and students might engage in together and the cultural politics such practices support. It is in this sense that to propose a pedagogy is at the same time to construct a political vision. (Giroux, 1992, p. 240)

Freire posited that education and political action must start with the “present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people” (1970/2008, p. 94).

From this present situation comes the content of education and political action, so that they are devised and developed from the people's expressed views and needs; otherwise it runs the risk of "banking' or preaching in the desert" (p. 96). Within an educational context, Freire's (1970/2008) discussion of education and authentic liberation focused on the difference between banking models of education and problem posing, or dialogical education, and their relation to oppression and critical consciousness respectively.

Banking education creates a hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the student, which "anesthetizes and inhibits creative power" (Freire, 1970/2008, p. 81). Problem posing education which dismantles the teacher-student hierarchy through dialogue, on the other hand, leads to people's realization of "their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation [emphasis in original]" (p. 83). Problem posing education creates the "teacher-student" and "student-teacher" who are both "taught in dialogue" (p. 80). They are both engaged in a process of knowledge creation and learning. A "humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed" (p. 68) is the only means to achieving critical consciousness. Freire explained that the world is always in a process of becoming, and that people should not only be aware of the world but they should also act upon their awareness in order to transform it (1998/2001, p. 73). In the following section I present contemporary research on community-based organizations and programs where critical pedagogies are being enacted for critical consciousness.

Critical Civic Praxis in the Research

Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) critical civic praxis is based on Freire's concept of critical consciousness, which is developed through a dialogical approach to education, and for the purpose of emancipation (Freire, 1970/2008). Freire's work, while applicable to many sociopolitical contexts, is rooted in the sociopolitical conditions he experienced and witnessed. Freire's work is largely based on his experiences growing up in Brazil, and on his reflections on teaching adult literacy in Brazil and Chile in the mid-20th Century (Freire, 1992/2016). The current and local context must be the starting point for liberatory education.

Advocates of a critical pedagogy understand that no simple, universally applicable answers can be provided to the questions of justice, power, and praxis that haunt us. Indeed, such questions have to be asked time and again by teachers and other educational professionals operating in different historical times and diverse pedagogical locales. (Kincheloe, 2012, pp. 154-155).

Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) have taken up the dialogue started by Freire in order to work with marginalized youth in North America in the present sociopolitical context. Further, their work focuses on community-based youth-serving social justice organizations largely functioning outside of formal education settings. A review of critical consciousness theory and practice literature by Watts and Hipolito-Delgado (2015) identified a gap in literature on research into critical consciousness and programs or actions, identifying only 14 peer reviewed articles that presented research on programs or actions that develop critical consciousness. They found even fewer on the development of community-based actions and critical consciousness. Watts and Hipolito-Delgado

suggested that community organizing with youth is “a promising strategy for bridging the gap between critical social analysis and sociopolitical action” (p. 847). My research extends and tests the relevance of Ginwright and Cammarota’s theory on the conditions necessary for the development of critical civic praxis to youth serving organizations outside of social justice education.

The following section of the literature review first presents Ginwright and Cammarota’s (2007) work on critical civic praxis and their subsequent work that continued to develop an understanding of contexts that foster critical civic praxis. I then present research by others based on Ginwright and Cammarota’s work on critical civic praxis to provide the reader with an understanding of the body of research that is being developed and how my research adds to this growing body. Finally I present work that addresses how art has been taken up in educational contexts and the state of research on youth, art-collectives, and critical civic praxis in Northwestern Ontario.

Critical civic praxis has been taken up widely in the social sciences, most prominently in the United States. For the literature review I used Google Scholar to identify scholarly articles, book chapters, dissertations and theses that cited Ginwright and Cammarota’s (2007) paper introducing their theory on the development of critical civic praxis. My department’s librarian recommended Google Scholar for its scope and functions. Due to the wide scope of articles that reference Ginwright and Cammarota’s 2007 paper, I have limited my literature review to articles most closely related to my subject of study and that also present original research. This has meant a process of exclusion. There were 82 sources that cited the 2007 paper: of these, 68-referenced “critical civic praxis” specifically.

I have eliminated some articles from the literature review for their lack of relevance to education in community settings. I have eliminated papers that have a specific health focus, including focusing on ‘well-being’. I have eliminated papers that developed arguments for critical literacy praxis, which focuses on literacy education within formal educational settings. I also eliminated papers that had an explicit focus on school programs, policies, and legal cases that did not centre the discussion on arts as sites for developing critical civic praxis. Papers that focused on educational contexts as sites for developing critical civic understanding, but not praxis were excluded.

I eliminated articles that focused on measuring identity and attitudes and not on the development of critical civic praxis, and ones that were developing concepts other than critical civic praxis, including advancing *positive youth development* frameworks, *critical indigenous pedagogy of place*, fostering youth resilience, *interethnic bridging*, understanding how youth read and interpret news media, the importance of *authentic care*, understanding what the concept of *justice* means for a diverse Black community in the US, how immigration to the US affects girls’ definitions of family in a transnational context, and social transformation as a means to promote economic development.

Conceptual papers that rely on previously published research were omitted from this review, and were re-assessed for theoretical relevance once data collection and thematic development began. The remaining articles presenting original research that built on Ginwright and Cammarota’s (2007) theoretical model for developing critical civic praxis are discussed below.

Developing Critical Civic Praxis

Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) situated their understanding of critical civic praxis within Sampson's (2001) definition of social capital theory in low-income urban communities that argued for an understanding of social relationships at the local level. They have promoted this conceptualization of social capital theory as an alternative to traditional social capital theories that present an overly deterministic outlook and dismiss youth agency (Akom, et al., 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Based on research and ongoing work with youth in community organizations, Ginwright and Cammarota illustrated how community organizations can be sites where youth develop critical civic praxis through building social networks, and exposure to ideas and experiences.

Their research was developed based on their ongoing work with youth in social justice organizations in Oakland, California and a need to "understand the shifts in consciousness that are necessary for young people to initiate social change" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 695). Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) were both involved with the youth programs they studied. Cammarota spent a summer at a youth employment program. Ginwright had over 10 years of involvement as the executive director of the youth leadership program he studied and utilized the relationships he had developed to inform and conduct his research. Both researchers were informed by their ongoing work in youth organizations. Ginwright and Cammarota began with two guiding questions: "How is critical civic praxis developed and sustained among urban youth? How do community-based organizations function as sites for the development of critical consciousness in the context of social justice activities" (p. 697)? In order to answer these questions Ginwright and Cammarota systematically collected observational data,

participant observation, and interviews from 1999-2000. Their methods of data collection included “rigorous improvisation” (p. 695), a process of ongoing analysis involving periods of observation and conversations with youth and their families, followed by discussion with each other regarding meaning, and then re-entering research sites until they “developed a melody that we could explain—a theory so to speak” (p. 695). Ginwright and Cammarota used inductive qualitative research methods for creating theory (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). They engaged in coding as a process of identifying, elaborating, and refining “analytic insights from and for the interpretation of data” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 151) remaining open to new ideas not limiting themselves to their initial focus of study, rather keeping with their codes close to the data. As they started to identify themes through the coding process, they began to organize their field notes based on thematic relevance.

Cammarota’s data collection took place over a summer accompanying participants and program leaders on their activities. He interviewed 20 youths, 16-21 years of age regarding their participation in the youth program. Three youth leaders, who had previously been participants, were also interviewed. Ginwright collected data over 2 years, conducting participant observation and interviews with 15 youth involved in a community leadership program that “provides intensive self-awareness, political education, and leadership training to African-American youth” (p. 696). Field notes were created from observations while attending and visiting summer programs, weekend political education meetings, participants’ schools, the community, and in some cases participant homes. Field notes were also created from one-on-one “informal” conversations (p. 696).

Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) identified seven processes and conditions of community organizations that promote the development of critical civic praxis: 1) youth are actively involved in positive change in their communities; 2) community organizations that are sites of knowledge transfer, and sources of institutional knowledge about organizing for social change; 3) youth participation in organizational processes that provide an opportunity to “experience critical civic praxis and thus comprehend the full, humanistic potential to *create social change* [emphasis in original]” (p. 699); 4) there is intergenerational knowledge transfer of political ideas; 5) youth are intentionally encouraged and supported in examining, analyzing, and constructing actions to address issues; 6) participation builds their social networks and community-based knowledge; 7) youth are supported to be active agents in the process for community change from conceptualization, to development, to actions. Ginwright and Cammarota found that urban youth cultivated critical civic praxis through intergenerational relationships with community members and engaging in challenging the negative stereotypes of urban youth present in public policy, and that critical civic praxis is sustained “by building collective interests through critical consciousness among urban youth” (p. 707).

Following their work on critical civic praxis development in marginalized communities of urban youth, Akom, Ginwright, and Cammarota (2008) incorporated critical race theory, youth participatory action research, and critical media literacy to develop what they call *youthtopias*. Youthtopias are educational spaces focusing on creating room for developing critical civic praxis with racialized youth. Ginwright (2010) continued to advocate for programs and processes that begin with youth as active participants in their communities. “Building a pipeline for justice: Understanding youth

organizing and the leadership pipeline” (Ginwright, 2010) is a paper on youth organizing in low-income communities of colour in the US. Ginwright argued that, “youth organizing groups provide the opportunity for low-income youth of color to develop a sociopolitical consciousness and a vehicle to address the issues they face” (p. 6). The paper links youth involvement in community organization to the context of policies, programs, and demographics in the US. A ‘social justice pipeline’ is a process for youth leadership development that highlights the relationship between being a participant, developing skills, and taking leadership in the community.

Building on Ginwright and Cammarota’s (2007) work on critical civic praxis, Shiller (2013) conducted case studies of two community organizations in urban settings in New York. Shiller asked two research questions: 1) “What activities/methods have the adults in community-based organizations used to build civic engagement among urban youth? And 2) How do the young people view their ‘civic identities’ as a result of working with a community-based organization” (p. 72)? Shiller’s methods were based in critical research, which places the research within the broader social context and focus on hierarchical and power relations. Both organizations Shiller studied had mission statements focused on youth developing “their own solutions to problems they see,” (p. 72) and both organizations utilized intergenerational relationships.

Data Shiller (2013) collected involved participant observation over a ten week period, consisting of 3-4 hours twice per week and recorded in field notes, semi-structured interviews with two adults from each organization who worked with the youth, and focus groups with six youth from each organization who were chosen for their longevity with their program. Shiller was not a participant in the organizations she

studied, but she was informed by her previous work as a community organizer. Adult participants were asked about the pedagogies and practices they used as well as the impact on the youth they witnessed. Youth who were interviewed had been with the organizations for long periods of time. They were asked what prompted their engagement, what they have participated in at the organizations, about their relationships, and the impact engaging with these organizations has had on their civic engagement.

Shiller (2013) utilized the interpretive methods described by Emerson et al. (1995), beginning data analysis during research with participants. Themes were identified through open coding of the data. Shiller found that participation in these organizations promoted learning agency and efficacy, and the development of civic identities and civic praxis. Through experience, the youth learned they could develop and implement solutions to the problems they experienced in their communities, learning “concrete skills of civic participation” (p. 80). Shiller’s main finding was that “in order to build their civic identity, and close the civic knowledge gap, it is important for urban youth to participate in civic activities in which they can have an impact and see the concrete results of their work” (p. 88). Shiller found that the adult mentors’ engagement of the youth in discussion about real issues that confronted the youth were essential to learning and meaningful civic engagement. Corroborating the work of Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) Shiller found that organizations with an explicit focus on youth agency, that utilize intergenerational relationships to build networks and share knowledge, and involve youth in meaningful civic activities contribute to youth developing civic identities and capacity for working towards positive community change.

Youth programs that are promoted to “all youth” have been found to miss marginalized youth (Erbstein, 2013). Recognizing this gap in service, Erbstein (2013) documented the planning phase of a program designed for underrepresented youth in the Sacramento area that was focused on the development of youth not engaged in school. Adults recruited to work with youth in this program shared specific qualities that were particularly impactful in maintaining engagement with youth participants, these included “deep respect, care, and high expectations; a critical stance toward systems that affect youth; communication skills; shared culture, language, and experience; and local networks and the capacity to help young people tap them to pursue their interests” (p. 113). Erbstein also observed that youth found it meaningful to engage in activities addressing issues that impacted them directly. Replicating the findings of Ginwright and Cammarota (2007), the key success this program experienced came from privileging and cultivating the youths’ existing social capital through fostering intergenerational relationships (Erbstein, 2013).

Fostering intergenerational relationships and opportunity for youth to act as active agents in their community were identified as key elements in the development of critical civic praxis (Checkoway, 2013; Erbstein, 2013; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Nam, 2012; Shiller, 2013). Nam (2012) conducted a case study of an activist group centered on resisting gentrification in a Puerto Rican community in Chicago. The activist group arose from an existing youth organization. Data consisted of observations and interactions with people, groups and other organizations; the group’s newspaper, facebook page, flyers, video, and artifacts created by the youth. Interviews were also conducted with adults involved in the youth organization and activist group regarding their involvement and

roles. Nam focused on how these youth were constructing citizenship, using Tully's (2008) definition of citizenship in relation to praxis as being involved in community civic practices, rather than a definition in relation to the nation-state. However, he found that the term citizenship was rejected by the youth, as they did not associate the type of work they were doing with civic participation. The youth associated citizenship with a system they saw as oppressive, involving "colonialism, racism, economic injustice, and the individualism associated with US citizenship" (p. 74).

The intergenerational and holistic nature of the activities this group participated in fostered knowledge mobilization about community issues, Puerto Rican history, and culture. This case study identified a need for a broader understanding of citizenship and citizenship education, and reinforces the elements for youth engagement identified by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007).

Marginalized people and 'communities of colour' have been identified in the US as being less 'civically engaged' (Checkoway, 2011, 2013; Erbstein, 2013). However, youth are participating in these communities in ways that are meaningful to them (Checkoway, 2011; Erbstein, 2013; Nam, 2012; Shiller, 2013). As with the case study by Erbstein (2013) that focused on a program targeting marginalized youth, Checkoway (2013) conducted case studies of three of the organizations that participated in a national initiative targeting youth in low-income neighbourhoods to increase civic participation. The programs Checkoway studied were affiliated with a national program in the US called Lifting New Voices. Each organization participating in the national program was independently led, and utilized various youth-led, adult-led, and intergenerational projects to engage youth in civic education. The program evaluations consisted of

participatory research with youth and adults from the programs, and cross-site analyses at the national level. As with the study by Nam (2012) data included artifacts created by participants (Checkoway, 2013). Evaluation methods consisted of “interviews, participant observations, focus groups, surveys, videography, reflection journals, and other methods” (Checkoway, 2013, p. 393).

The organizations participating in the Lifting New Voices program presented culturally sensitive curricular content relevant to their community demographics as school-based civics education in the communities did not (Checkoway, 2011). Programs presented curriculum on participatory democracy, an understanding of politics as “the practice of power in institutions and decisions,” communities as sites for collective organizing, and organizing as a means for mobilizing collective power to push for change (p. 396). Similar to Erbstein (2013), Checkoway (2011) found these programs were filling an educational gap, providing civics education that was culturally sensitive and connected to meaningful community-based participation.

Following the work of Ginwright and Cammarota (2007), case studies utilizing interviews, and participant observation of youth and program facilitators have been conducted in numerous urban centres in the US to examine the conditions that lead to increased youth participation and development of critical civic praxis (Checkoway, 2013; Erbstein, 2013; Nam, 2012; Shiller, 2013). Intergenerational relationships were found to be a key factor in promoting critical civic praxis in youth in the programs studied (Checkoway, 2013; Erbstein, 2013; Nam, 2012; Shiller, 2013). Shared culture between the mentors and the youth along with culturally relevant programming promoted youth participation (Checkoway, 2013; Erbstein, 2013). As with Ginwright and Cammarota,

youth were found to engage when the issues and actions were meaningful to them (Erbstein, 2013; Shiller, 2013).

Critical Civic Praxis and Art

Combining Ginwright and Cammarota's concept of *critical civic praxis* with Sandoval and Latorre's (2008) concept of *artivism*, Rhoades (2012) created a framework to "construct collective, creative projects that challenge socio-cultural inequities" (p. 317). Rhoades defined *artivism* as "a convergence, a hybrid of artistic production and activism that embraces their symbiotic relationship for transformational purposes" (p. 319). This combination of artivism and critical civic praxis is complementary as artivism provides an artistic channel for youth creativity and promotes empowerment (Rhoades, 2012).

Rhoades (2012) researched critical civic praxis as an "artist undertaking" (p. 320) in the context of the *Youth Video OUTreach* project for LGBTQ youth. This project began with 14 participants, eventually dropping down to nine due to participant withdrawal over a three-year span. Similar to the work by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007), Rhoades was integrated in the Youth Video OUTreach project as an "artist, facilitator, secretary, collaborator, assistant, coach, and, often, organizational support" (pp. 320-321). This project engaged youth through film and discussion. Building on Sandoval and Latorre (2008), Rhoades stated "in *artivism*, critical consciousness-raising involves active, in-depth research across multiple artistic media combined with interpersonal interactions and interviews to gain a more thorough understanding of selected issues and their sociocultural contexts" (p. 322). As with other research on critical civic praxis that focused on social justice-oriented programs (Abu El Haj, 2009;

Checkoway, 2013; Erbstein, 2013; Nam, 2012; Shiller, 2013), this work with youth involved a specific focus on teaching about social constructs, specifically ones that perpetuate gender, sexuality, and identity biases that reinforce heteronormativity.

Artistic processes were incorporated with this explicit content to explore and spark discussion. Intergenerational relationship building was incorporated through mentoring and outreach to the community. Rhoades witnessed the development of a “collective capacity for change” amongst the youth (p. 326). The structured program taught youth critical civic praxis as an “alternative social justice framework” and the art provided youth an opportunity to develop their “creative power” (p. 326). Rhoades identified many of the key elements previously identified by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) for programs that support the development of critical consciousness. The program had an explicit focus on social issues relevant to the youth participants and taught through a variety of mediums to spark discussion and critical thought, intentional cross-generational relationships were fostered through artist mentoring and co-creation, and the project focus had real life implications for the youth and the community. Rhoades found that participants were working collaboratively, received and gave regular input and were well supported. This project provided an arts-based venue for youth to learn valuable skills, develop critical civic praxis, and make a meaningful contribution to their communities.

Art and Education

In a transnational multi-site case study including one Canadian site in Toronto, hip-hop was explored as a site for developing critical civic praxis (Porfilio, Roychoudhury, & Gardner, 2014). Art practice is positioned in this research as a tool for

analysis, critique, and generating creative ideas for social change. Hip-hop groups from three large urban centres, Toronto, Houston, and New York were chosen. Participants included program directors and artists who wrote narratives answering the question: “I dance because and for what purpose” (Porfilio et al., 2014, p. 197)? Analysis of the 17 narratives from the three sites revealed four dominant values: “*identity* (development principle), *catharsis* (emotions principle), *thought/reflection* (critical consciousness principle), and *dynamic interplay* (development principle) [emphasis in original]” (Porfilio et al., 2014, p. 203). Student dancers were

building upon tools of critical consciousness through a critical hip-hop dance educational curricula in order to develop their sense of *identity* through *dynamic interplay* [emphasis in original] with relationships forming and developing through the instantiation of hip-hop dance culture and development of a hip-hop dance community. (p. 203)

Similar to Checkoway (2013), Porfilio et al. (2014) found these programs offered humanizing education in contrast to formal education settings, which were found to be dehumanizing, and situating the students as lacking capacity and agency. The authors recommend implementing curriculum in K-12 education that centres youth culture and resistance. Rhoades (2012) and Porfilio et al. advanced evidence of the role community arts can play in providing a context for youth to develop critical consciousness.

School-Based Art

Public art has been used to reclaim public spaces as a form of *social justice pedagogy*; occupying public spaces with art can teach students to critique their social and political environments (Duncum, 2011). Duncum (2011) provided an exploration of

various forms of art for social justice pedagogy that have been taken up by arts educators who “engage in public pedagogy within public spaces” (p. 348). Duncum situated social justice within the United Nations Declaration of Human rights, focusing on the rights to “freedom from interference by the state and persons in the exercise of rights; the right to peaceful assembly and association; and the right to participate in the cultural life of community” (p. 349). Teachers’ use of privatized public space was examined as opportunities for their students to critique misappropriation of culture for corporate profit but were found to stop short of enacting interventions in these spaces that would publicly critique or influence the public.

Duncum (2011) then examined examples where students have been engaged to create public works of art to enhance community cohesiveness and enrich the physical environment. These projects were framed in relation to deteriorating and contested public space as opportunities or examples of expressing imagined futures “such public art offers a prescriptive model for the future, an assertion of how people want to live for others as well as themselves” (p. 353). Duncum cited Kester (1998) to frame activist art as “based on relationships with its audience and political intervention; it is deliberately designed as a forum for public dialogue” (p. 353). Teachers who engage their students with activist art support critique and creative means of facilitating public discussion through art installations that draw attention to social and political issues (Duncum, 2011). The difficulty of teaching art for social justice within the K-12 formal school structure is highlighted due to demands on teachers, administrators, students and parents. Despite these constraints, Duncum put forward three arguments for social justice pedagogies in public spaces: 1) Using public space is visual and students can play at answering back to

power by taking up space; 2) it can provide mentoring and model visual interventions, and “strategies of subversion, and compromise” for students; 3) they allow students to “play with ideas; often in a transgressive way, they entertain possibilities” (p. 360).

“Employing a playful pedagogy is to understand art education as a means for students to take charge of the world they are in the process of inheriting in a way that acknowledges the challenges of working toward social justice within educational institutions” (Duncum, 2011, p. 360). Through investigating examples of teachers bringing their students into the community to engage in public works of art, Duncum reveals the transformative nature of art as it allows students to imagine futures, engage in public dialogue, and take up space in society.

In São Paulo, Brazil, using an ecosocial semiotic perspective, which “proposes that the organisms and the environment in which they live are intertwined to the extent that one shapes the other,” (p. 6) and building on Freire (1970), DaSilva Iddings, McCafferty, and Teixeira da Silva (2011) found that graffiti can provide opportunity for *conscientização*. Graffiti is positioned as a community resource for its ability to engage people in critical thought. An ecosocial perspective positions meaning within “contextual configurations” and arising from interactions with the environment (DaSilva Iddings et al, 2011, p. 9). Graffiti was limited in this study to pieces that have an obvious social or political focus. Graffiti in this sense is “considered a literacy practice (in a broad sense), as it entails different ways of socially organizing communicative events involving written language and semiotic signs that can provide opportunities for access to social and cultural understanding” (DaSilva Iddings et al., 2011, p. 6). Interview participants spoke about their interactions with local graffiti as making them “stop and think” (DaSilva

Iddings et al., 2011, p. 17). They said it expressed local and global issues, and increased awareness of local issues leading to actions for change in the community. The authors conclude that graffiti in the community is an informal avenue to conscientização.

Graffiti can be utilized in classrooms as a familiar and accessible avenue for teaching social literacies (DaSilva Iddings, et al., 2011; Whitehead, 2004). Whitehead (2004) created a curriculum resource for teachers to incorporate graffiti into their classrooms. Whitehead suggested that not only is graffiti an art form, it is an accessible and large part of urban landscapes and therefore familiar to youth making it a resource to engage youth on a wide range of topics ranging from different stylistic art forms, to law, and to community issues.

Al-Bustan is an Arab American community arts organization that works with Arab American children to foster strong positive Arab identities, teach Arabic language and culture, develop youth leaders, and promote civic engagement (Abu El-Haj, 2009). Focusing on a film workshop for youth run by Al-Bustan, Abu El-Haj (2009) analyzed youth narratives on post-national conceptions of citizenship that developed from participating in the workshop. In the workshop, youth learned about the US history of immigration and migration, the construction of race, the American Dream, and citizenship and immigration policies. Youth participated in storytelling, theatre, and writing based on the Theatre of the Oppressed model created by Augusto Boal (1992). Through this curriculum and these activities the youth participants created their own narratives and possibilities for identities.

The youth who participated in Al-Bustan's workshop suggest another path—one that opens up the possibility of building a politics of inclusion that implicitly

recognizes the unstable and illusory nature of all identities. Through narrative and image, the women created a symbolic political argument for postnational citizenship, troubling national belonging as the primary basis for affording inclusion and citizenship rights: All persons, they suggest, are deserving of freedom and justice. (Abu El-Haj, 2009, p. 15)

The film workshop run by Al-Bustan provided a creative avenue for youth to engage in conversation about citizenship and belonging, and created an outlet for youth to engage in critical civic praxis (Abu El-Haj, 2009).

A program analysis by Spickard Prettyman and Gargarella (2013) echoes the value of community arts in engaging youth in social justice (Duncum, 2011; Porfilio et al., 2014; Rhoades, 2012). Spickard Prettyman and Gargarella conducted their research in the US on Arts-UP, a community-based arts education program for high school youth that creates public installation pieces. Their empirical study drew on several years of participant observation, program evaluation surveys, participant interviews, journal responses, participant work, and artifacts generated by the program. The program goals guided analysis of the data (research on specified topics, use of arts, working with artists and community partners, and learning to publicize their work). In Arts-UP high school students work with artists and community organizations to create individual and collective art works. The program's mission is to "foster the individual and collective creativity of young people and their communities through the intergenerational sharing of artistic and cultural knowledge and traditions, while preserving both cultural and environmental spaces and practices present in everyday life" (Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013, p. 3). Spickard Prettyman and Gargarella found that youth engaged in

the Arts-UP program felt engaged in their local community. The program had students engage in research on social, environmental, and cultural topics and emphasized student ownership of projects. It was guided by a curriculum developed based on the specific topic/artist/and community partner for each session.

Students engaged in self-reflection while journaling, engaging in art making, reading texts, and thinking about issues of importance to them. They engaged in critical thinking: “Through inquiry and artmaking related to each project, students were able to practice skills related to critical thinking, such as interpretation and analysis about social, cultural and environmental issues that are prevalent in their local and larger communities” (Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013, p. 7). Students developed themselves as artists and activists, developing “the capacity to challenge and ultimately transform the ways they perceived their roles as artists and activists” (p. 9). The youths’ participation fostered a sense of responsibility towards their community and the people in it and they continued to be involved in their community after completing the program. This program fostered development of critical consciousness through creating opportunities for youth to engage in issues relevant to them, fostered through intergenerational relationships, and engaging in community-based collaborative work.

Research Specific to Northwestern Ontario

The majority of research on youth development of critical civic praxis and critical consciousness is based in the US, with few studies outside the US (see DaSilva Iddings et al., 2011; Porfilio et al., 2014). My dissertation data collection took place in Northwestern Ontario, Canada. A review of community-based research on or by youth in Northwestern Ontario from the period of 1990-2015 uncovered only one research study

on community art-collectives. This review involved an archival search of two local newspapers (*The Chronicle Journal* and *The Source*); one northern Indigenous news source (*Wawatay News*) that reports news from all of northwestern Ontario; a review of Grants awarded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation awarded for this time period; and a process of snowballing from searching local organization websites and reports for reference to community research.

An arts-informed narrative inquiry by Slingerland (2015) presented the experiences of three community-based art organization leaders in Thunder Bay, Ontario. A similar study by O'Connor (2014) in the US presented narratives of 4 participants involved in community-based art. Slingerland focused on the impact community-based art organization leaders have on their participants through mentorship, creating safe spaces, and valuing care in community-based arts education, similar to O'Connor who found that relationships and support systems were essential for program continuation. Slingerland identified four themes connecting the participant narratives; these are: *foundations, community, acceptance, and care*. Foundations referred to the stories that drive the participants' community work. These stories kept them grounded and were mined from their childhoods, from working in the community, and from their art practice. These foundational stories also inspired working in collectives with other likeminded people as further inspiration and motivation. The second theme Slingerland identified was community; each participant defined community differently, with one participant directly connecting the needs of the community to the practice of art. Community arts programs were considered essential to building and defining community.

Two of Slingerland's (2015) participants worked mainly with youth in the community and viewed their role as mentors providing opportunities for youth to discover their potential and value as artists and community members. As with research by Shiller (2013), Slingerland explained mentorship in relation to a deep care for participants and community. The third theme, acceptance, represented an appreciation of the process of art creation and prioritizing participant-driven projects. This process involved getting to know participants, establishing trusting relationships, and accepting participants' stages in their art process. Facilitators' roles were supportive rather than directive, providing space, supplies, and knowledge, making art accessible to the community. The fourth theme, care, was demonstrated by how participants created community art spaces that were welcoming, attentive, and responsive to program participants' needs. Slingerland's narratives suggested the far reach participation in community arts education had in program participants' lives, affecting self-esteem, and their ability to use their voices to become socially and politically involved in the community.

O'Connor (2014) presented community-based arts education programs as a complement to K-12 education through intentional bridging of community artists with teachers and classrooms. Community arts programs were shown to extend the arts education students receive in the classroom (O'Connor, 2014), whereas Slingerland's (2015) work focused on revealing the processes for successful community engagement in the arts, and the positive impacts the arts can have in the lives of people who participate. Although neither O'Connor nor Slingerland focused specifically on developing critical consciousness through the arts, they both highlight conditions that have been found to be

associated with the development of critical consciousness in community-based organizations such as mentorship (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Checkoway, 2013; Erbstein, 2013; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Nam, 2012; Rhoades, 2012; Shiller, 2013; Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013), and valuing respect and care (Shiller, 2013).

The narrative studies on community-based art education by Slingerland (2015) and O'Connor (2014) revealed similar processes for successful engagement as much of the work on critical civic praxis that has followed Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) including intergenerational relationships, mentoring and privileging youth voices. Slingerland's study in Thunder Bay, Ontario, with its similarities across the border demonstrates the possibility that the processes for developing critical civic praxis may be similar in Northwestern Ontario as have been found in urban US cities. The commonalities found between Slingerland's findings and the bodies of research building on Ginwright and Cammarota's work on the development of critical civic praxis demonstrate that conducting research into community art-collectives, as sites for critical civic praxis development in Northwestern Ontario, will add previously underexplored geopolitical and educational contexts to the existing literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

My research is situated in the experiences of people involved in community and collective arts, both those of the participants and of my own. Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) used qualitative research methods outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995). Their methods involved being immersed in the research setting, interviews with youth, their parents, program facilitators, and field notes. Their theoretical development involved coding, memo writing, and discussion. For these reasons I engaged in an arts-informed qualitative research study (de Freitas, 2008; Cole & Knowles, 2008) to honour both my research context, and the context of my research within the field. From the collection of data through to coding and analysis, my methods purposefully engaged artists, facilitators, their work, and myself as researcher, community member, and artist to contribute to our understanding of how youth learn critical civic praxis through participating in art-collectives.

Informed by the Arts

This research is rooted in the collective creative process of generating public art as a possible avenue for developing critical civic praxis. The research process is geared towards understanding informed by participant experience in collective art, and not out of an artistic experience created as part of the research. I conducted an arts-informed qualitative study, which involved regular self-reflection as part of the analysis process (Cole & Knowles, 2008). This research is rooted in my belief in the power of collective creative processes and public arts as possible avenues for developing critical civic praxis. The research process was geared towards understanding the development of critical civic praxis through participants' experience in collective art creation. As such, this research is

informed by the arts (Cole & Knowles, 2008). My research drew on and echoes the underlying beliefs that have fueled the creation of arts-informed methodology, including their innate openness to inquiry, creation of room for the researcher within the text, engaging with audiences beyond the academy, an emphasis on transformation, rejection of objectivity in favour of subjective and bodied responses, and inclusion of symbolic and artistic forms of data (Cole & Knowles, 2008). Further, the dissemination of this research will be in artful forms developed in accordance with the research outcomes and the intent of sharing the research with the community.

Arts-informed research is “influenced by, but not based in, the arts” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59). Arts-informed often utilizes more “traditional qualitative research techniques, such as interviewing, observations, document analysis, and triangulation” (Gosse, 2009, p. 69) as well as artistic forms of expression to inform the research process and/or represent data and results (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Gosse, 2009). Questioning how critical civic praxis is developed through collective, community art practice explores the relationship young and developing artists have with the visual art process in a collective setting, in effect, how engaging in the creation of art informs how they think about society and politics. As the researcher, an artist and a member of the community, I engaged in traditional qualitative methods of data collection: interviewing artist-participants directly, analyzing extant texts, and drawing on my own experiences within the arts and community of Thunder Bay (Cole & Knowles, 2008).

Pushing boundaries in arts-informed research.

Arts-informed research encompasses a broad range of approaches to research that are supported by more traditional qualitative methods and methodologies (Gosse, 2009).

At the same time it has pushed the boundaries of what is considered valid ways of knowing and doing in academia.

Gary: The work needs to be transformative in the sense that it makes a difference, a dramatic influence on the person, or family, or community, or neighbourhood, or for whatever phenomenon is being studied. It must count for something. It must mean something. It must be something that has greater value than merely satisfying the researcher's interests. The potential for arts-informed work to inspire listeners, readers, and observers (that is, the various or singular audiences) is great. Arts-related works allow for hearts and minds and spirits to be engaged, to be moved. (Knowles, in Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 113)

My research is inherently political; as I have argued for a wide definition of political participation, and I have made explicit that I value widespread, grassroots engagement of all members of society with the sociopolitical world. The ideas presented in this dissertation are based on the experiences of participants engaged in political transformation, including physical transformation of their neighbourhoods, creating space for and engaging in critical dialogue, and engaging in grassroots social organization. The collective spaces invited community in to collaborate, share, dialogue, and create. The roots that I will present are fundamental building blocks necessary for supporting creative and transformative social change. This value permeates throughout the research process and subsequent generation and dissemination of ideas. As a process for generating new ideas, the arts encourage re-thinking and re-imagining the taken-for-granted and allow for new ideas to emerge (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Sameshima & Knowles, 2008).

Arts-informed methodologies clearly reject positivist notions of objectivity that seek to separate the intellect from emotion and the participant from the researcher while still valuing many traditional forms of data collection processes to support the arts-informed aspects (Gosse, 2009). Pushing the boundaries of qualitative research, arts-informed research exists in the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987/2007) as “a way of redefining research form and representation and creating new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59). Arts-informed research creates bridges and blurs the boundaries between researcher and researched, academe and public, and intellect and emotion: Through these permeations arts-informed research becomes a radical exercise in dialogue.

The arts are limitless in their potential to inspire new insights and generate new interpretations, “to discover what we didn’t know we knew” (Weber, 2008, p. 44). If the academy is conceptualized as being a site where thoughtful discussion and new ideas are generated, to be disseminated to the larger public, then the use of images that make those discussions and ideas accessible across boundaries and disciplines is significant (Weber, 2008).

The arts elicit emotions.

Qualitative research methodologies seek to elicit information about human experience, and traditional qualitative research values data obtained through observation of actions and words as well as direct verbal/written language solicited from participants. Arts-informed research expands the field of data by including symbolic/artistic representations as data and as process for generating experience that creates data. Images,

and the arts in general, “elicit emotional as well as intellectual responses and have overtones that stay with us” (Weber, 2008, p. 45) that make arts-informed research particularly impactful. Arts-informed research engages with participants and audiences on an emotional level, in stark contrast to the desired objectivism of quantitative research that seeks to present only the subject, and pushes beyond the subjectivism of traditional qualitative research that accepts the relationship between participant and researcher and attempts to compensate for it (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). The emotive and sensory roots of arts-informed research create space for the researcher, the participants, and the audience to enter into the research as whole thinking, feeling, experiential subjects in order to not only engage with what is presented but also to create new understanding by adding themselves.

Arts-related research brings emotion to the forefront of the research experience and celebrates the emotional and sensual in the research process. . . . Life is emotional, and art provides a means for communicating and exploring emotions and emotive things. (Kerry-Moran, 2008, p. 500)

Analysis of art.

One of the barriers to the greater inclusion of the arts in research is a lack of knowledge on how to interpret, evaluate, and situate art in its various forms in a research context (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). In the visual arts, there is debate on the evaluation of aesthetic forms (Pariser, 1988). As Knowles states: “Arts-informed research is not about having the qualifications of an artist before you can begin. It is about having the qualities that enable one to be innovative in an inquiry that rests in the arts” (in Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 110). Beyond a strictly aesthetic evaluation, art in academia, as text,

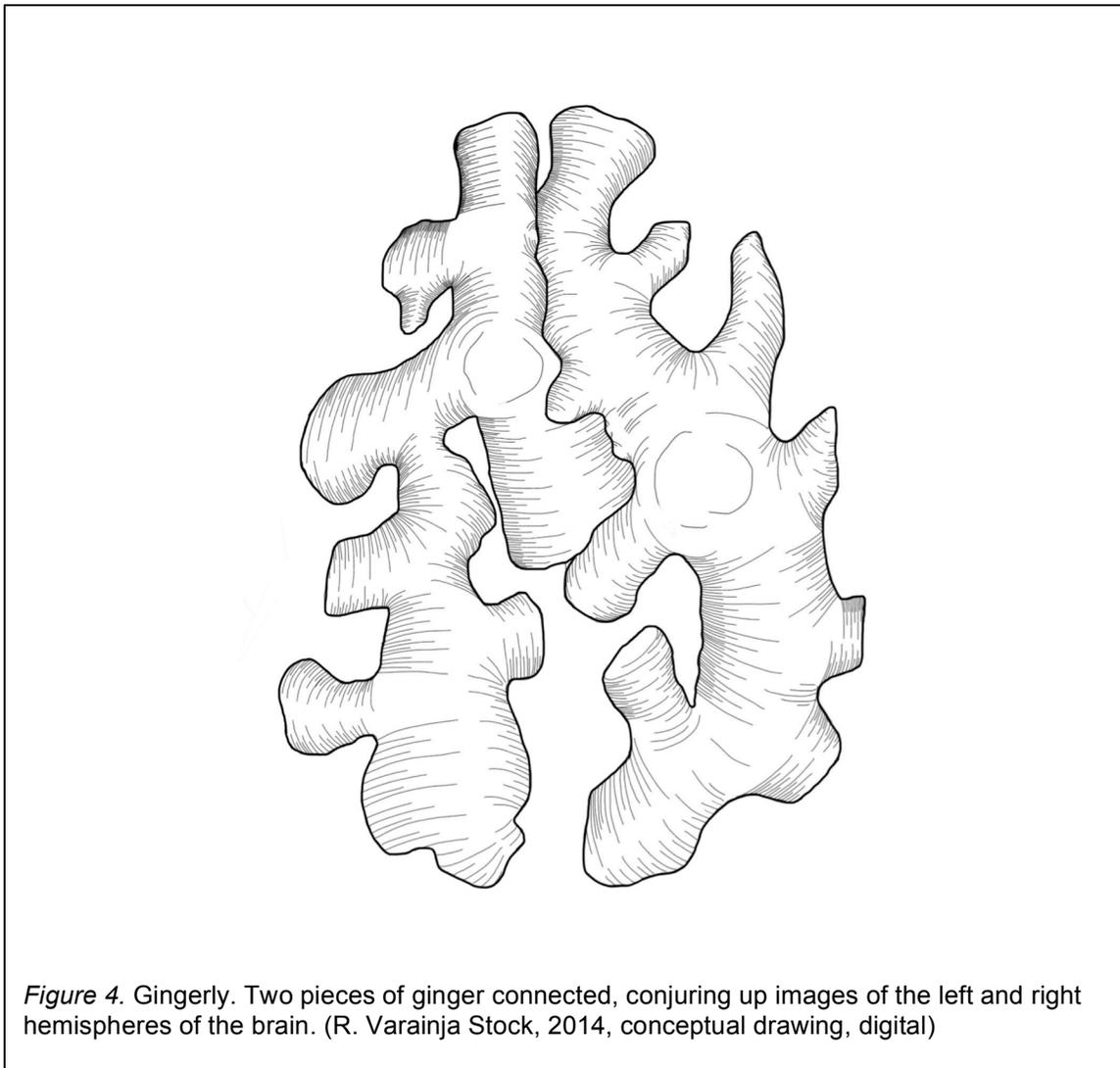
can benefit from analysis. Although analysis of participant artworks was beyond the scope of this research, participants discussed the meaning within their works as well as how they interpreted and responded to works by other artists. Their explanations of their work and analysis of others' work situated them in relation to their social and political realities.

Bridging the abstract and the concrete.

Through metaphor and symbol, artistic images can carry theory elegantly and eloquently. (Weber, 2008, p. 45) Instead of separating theory from practice theory can be “understood as a critical exchange that is reflective, responsive, and relational, which is continuously in a state of reconstruction and becoming something else altogether. As such, theory as practice becomes an embodied, living space of inquiry” (Meskimmon, 2003 as cited in Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 106). In arts research “knowledge production and the functions to which knowledge is put are best seen to be a dynamic structure that integrates theory and practice” (Sullivan, 2005, p. 87).

In arts-informed research emphasis is placed on bringing to light new insights and questions over absolute ends (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). “The term *theory* comes from the Greek and refers to a process of considering, speculating, looking at. The roots of the term suggest a kind of visualization related to speculation and contemplation” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 158). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) are credited with introducing the rhizome metaphor to explain a non-linear, unpredictable, and organic thought process. Much like thought, contemplation, and speculation, rhizomes “have complex networks of root systems. Plants [like thoughts] can grow from any point in this network, and each plant is attached to the other through the network” (Honan, 2009, pp. 93-94).

The rhizome becomes an invitation to further Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) theory on critical civic praxis to collective art processes as it is open, reflexive, and can rupture out at any location. While learning about rhizomes as both a concept for understanding thought processes and as a physical structure in nature, an image of a ginger root superimposed on an overhead view of the human brain began to take form in my mind.



I drew the piece *Gingerly* (see Figure 4) while developing my research proposal as an exercise in bridging the abstract and the concrete; rhizomes, like thoughts, can rupture

out at any location and rhizomes, like neural connections in our brains, continue to be able to grow in new and unexpected directions. The process of creating a visual representation provided space to play with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theory and build connections to my existing knowledge base to anchor new information. Arts-informed research pushes boundaries and creates permeations by expanding our understanding of the way humans interact with the world, learn, see, experience, and create.

Representation and power in research.

As a researcher engaged with theories of democracy, critical thought, and forms of representation and participation, I am obligated (and happily so) to grapple with issues of representation and power. Who gets to be validated, whose voices heard, and how they are positioned and framed in research, is at the discretion of the researcher(s), the person(s) who sets the research agenda, makes the methodological choices, and 'analyzes' the information by acting as a human filter. Since researcher influence and involvement is inevitable, we can never escape our relationship to our research (Atkinson, 2006). The question is, how do we mediate our relationship, what do we decide is important in this relationship, and how do we act in order to bring this to bear?

Although reflexivity effectively counters positivist paradigms that extol the virtue of objective distance in the research process, the desire for presence is never innocent; reflexive researchers, like any others, inscribe silence and absence while simultaneously making themselves visible. (de Freitas, 2008, p. 470)

De Freitas' (2008) statement, however, evokes a negative view of researchers as they "inscribe silence and absence"; the intent is to ensure we do not delude ourselves into

thinking that the relationship between researcher and researched can ever exist outside power relations. “Indeed, the reflexive text often maintains the binary between the essence of experience and its artful traces if it fails to problematize representation in general” (de Freitas, 2008, p. 471).

This tension highlights issues with credibility and transparency. In attempts to conduct objective research, the researcher distances themselves, becomes invisible and denies their influence on the research, which undermines the credibility of objective research as it lacks transparency in the researcher’s influence. The more invisible the hand, the less we know about what it is doing. There can also be a false sense of transparency in subjectivist research; as merely ‘positioning’ oneself, the researcher tries to make clear the relationship they have to their research and their research subjects, allowing the audience to draw conclusions. However, not all research decisions are made through a conscious analysis of the researcher’s position, intentions, desires, and other known and, especially unknown influences. I agree with de Freitas (2008) that in making space or taking up space we silence others who may have inhabited that space; whether this is problematic, however, is up for debate.

Further, researcher claims of bestowing empowerment when considered in this light are suspect as the researcher-cum-narrator/storyteller claims to ‘give voice’ to others while speaking for them and acting as a filter for their voices (see Bogden & Knopp Bilken, 2006, p. 214). As a critical researcher, I acknowledge that I am the author of the stories I choose to tell. I am willing to remove any claim to be able to report the world as it is out ‘there’ no matter how many voices I consult with and accept that every voice I hear and everything I see are filtered through my senses which are only made cogent

through interpretation by my brain which is the product of my life. Kincheloe (2012) contended that understanding interpretation is central to critical theory:

The hermeneutic act of interpretation, in its most elemental articulation, involves making sense of what has been observed in a way that communicates understanding. Not only is all research merely an act of interpretation, but (hermeneutics contends) perception itself is an act of interpretation. Thus the quest for understanding is a fundamental feature of human existence, as encounter with the unfamiliar always demands the attempt to make meaning, to make sense. (p. 163)

Regularly engaging in self-reflection during research and analysis I worked to keep my analysis directly connected to participant data.

As a researcher I am in a position of power, as power dynamics in research are inevitable and take multiple forms (de Freitas, 2008; Priyadharshini, 2003). I have struggled with the notion of creating ‘subjects’ through the research process. As the researcher, I manipulate and define the parameters for participants to participate within, and they are subjectified and turned into subjects through my exercise of control. Foucault’s (1982/2003) essay, “the subject and power,” explores the subject as a product of power relationships. He began with two meanings for ‘subject,’ being subjected to someone else’s control and controlling oneself by adhering to the confines of one’s own identity. Both suggest a “form of power that subjugates and makes subject to” (p. 130). Even though the second is seemingly voluntary, the subject is nonetheless regulated.

Building on a Foucauldian analysis of power, Priyadharshini (2003) suggested that power dynamics are inevitable and therefore rather than taking an adversarial stance

on power relations “researchers can take an inquisitorial stance” (p. 429). An inquisitorial stance accepts that power relations exist and should be a part of the analysis and discussion throughout the research process, allowing power imbalances to be acknowledged and addressed where possible (p. 429).

Researcher/participant power relations.

There has been a tendency for academics to research communities with less access to power, increasing the power divide between participant and researcher (Priyadharshini, 2003). There are many reasons for this representation imbalance in research: Groups with less power are easier to gain access to, researcher attitudes that favour studying the “underdog” are common, typical researcher processes of building rapport, being subjected to perceptions of bias from peers when studying groups closely related to that of the researcher, levels of participant willingness to exercise control over the interview, and the ability to disseminate research findings (Priyadharshini, 2003, pp. 423-426). Engaging in self-reflection on power dynamics as a researcher can “deepen ethnographic analysis and highlight the dilemmas of fieldwork” (Naples, 2000, p. 195).

If I accept Foucault’s (1982/2003) limitations on freedom, we are all always subjects. Acknowledging and examining power relations and making conscious the ways that research can be used to interrupt or to reinforce existing power structures will strengthen the relevance and depth of analysis (Naples, 2000; Priyadharshini, 2003). By engaging in regular self-reflection as the researcher, I will become subject to and of my research. In conducting research I am not creating an objective representation of the research data, I am engaging with the data to create something that is the product of my interaction with it. In this way my position of power is unavoidable. I cannot erase issues

of subjectivity or representation; however, I can open up the boundaries that separate researcher from participant and object from subject, draw attention to them and work within this relationship. I kept my reporting and analysis as close to the words of participants as possible, however, I am still the author of the final story.

Reflexivity in Research

Power imbalances in research with humans are rooted in cultural imperialism and colonization. Researchers have historically engaged in creating the anthropological ‘other’. Turning the ‘gaze’ outward, creating the subject into the object of study was considered largely unproblematic during British and French expansion as this outlook helped justify “imperial acquisition of territories of Africa throughout the nineteenth century” (Said, 1993, xiv). The cultural imperialism that helped justify colonization was embedded in histories and practices of anthropology and sociology during this period (Stoller, 1999). During the height of colonial expansion, Europeans displayed a fascination with looking at the ‘other’ and held the belief that their gaze had no effect, that the ‘other’ was incapable of gazing back (Mitchell, 1988). This is referred to as ‘objectness’ where the subject is the European and the object, the Egyptian (Mitchell, 1988). This can be related to the positivist notion of the existence of objective truths, accessible only to those outside of the experience. This subject/object relationship and the ability to grasp an objective social truth, is false.

Postmodernist objections to the existence of static truths, the assertion of multiple truths, issues of representation and power, and the influence of subjectivity on all knowledge production prompted many social scientists to reconsider how they did research (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Stoller, 1999). This shift in thinking about

research opened the door for researchers to conduct self-studies and autoethnographies (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnography has been linked to:

the turn toward blurred genres of writing, a heightened self-reflexivity in ethnographic research, and increased focus on emotion in the social sciences, and the postmodern skepticism regarding generalization of knowledge claims . . . championed predominantly by interdisciplinary symbolic interactionists with postmodern or poststructuralist sensitivities. (Anderson, 2006, p. 373)

The researcher's own intimate knowledge and experience of a research setting can enrich the study and make it "biographically grounded, experientially rich engagement with the social processes that are observable in the field, and that render those processes comprehensible in particular ways" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 401).

Studying 'others' or 'turning the gaze outward' continues to be the focus of qualitative research (Atkinson, 2006). Who gets to be validated, whose voices heard, and how they are positioned and framed in research, is at the discretion of the researcher(s), the person(s) who sets the research agenda, makes the methodological choices, and 'analyzes' the information by acting as a human filter. Since researcher influence and involvement is inevitable, we can never escape our relationship to our research (Atkinson, 2006), the question is, how do we mediate our relationship, what do we decide is important in this relationship, and how do we act in order to bring this to bear? The task then is to use the personal, as the researcher is always implicated in research anyways, to enhance the analysis and understanding of social processes (Atkinson, 2006).

Scope of Study

My research question was developed based off of Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) work in large urban centres in the US, and subsequent works that have sought to test their theoretical frameworks' applicability to other settings, including those that involve the arts (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Porfilio et al., 2014; Rhoades, 2012; Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013). It took place in Thunder Bay, Ontario, a small northern urban community with a population of roughly 110 000 people, and extends theory on how youth develop critical civic praxis to the context of artist collectives engaging in public works of art. The aim of this research was to find where Ginwright and Cammarota's theory is supported and where this specific situation may provide alternative understandings and processes to those previously developed. Outcomes from this research are directly relevant to participants, and inform the ongoing development of existing theory.

Methods

Throughout the research process I purposefully engaged artists, artists' work, and myself as artist and researcher. Through in-depth interviews and extant texts, I looked at how artist collectives function as spaces for nurturing the development of critical civic praxis. This research resulted in an expansion of Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) substantive theory relevant to the unique contexts in Northwestern Ontario, and the experiences of artists engaging in public art.

Participants

This research was designed to involve two groups of interview participants, people who have acted as artist mentors, and people aged 18-34 ("youth" as defined by

Elections Canada) who have participated in art collectives in various capacities. My ongoing engagement in the arts community generated relationships with local artist mentors who were invited to participate in interviews (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Participants beyond my circle of relationships in the community were invited through a recruitment poster (see appendix A) that was distributed through social media, and at one of the art centres, and direct invitations were sent to potential participants who were identified through interviews with existing participants, a process commonly referred to as “snowball sampling”. Out of the 17 participants, eight had responded to the recruitment poster posted on Facebook, nine were personally invited, and there were six potential participants who were either not appropriate due to a low level of involvement (as a non-youth occasional participant, or involved solely in school-based arts education) or did not respond to an invitation to participate. Interviewees had varying levels of engagement in local art-collectives and programs ranging from those involved as participants, to mentors, to administrators and facilitators. Congruent with previous research, and to ensure participants had a rich history to draw on for the interviews, all participants had been engaged in art-collectives for greater than one year (Rhoades, 2012; Shiller, 2013).

My engagement in the arts community.

As a resident of Thunder Bay from 2007 to 2016 I built relationships with artists and the greater community through multiple volunteer and employment experiences. I volunteered as a collective member with the Biindigaate International Indigenous Film Festival, and Definitely Superior Art Gallery helping with events such as The Hunger, an annual Halloween fundraiser for the gallery. I regularly attended art openings at

Definitely Superior Art Gallery and The Thunder Bay Art Gallery, including annual events Urban Infill Art in the Core, an interactive multi-site and multi-media art exhibit, The Hunger, and Derelict: A Fashion Odyssey, an annual wearable art fashion show. In 2016, I exhibited a wearable art piece (see Figure 9) in the event/exhibition Urban Infill, I participated in Derelict as a model for a local designer, and I had an artwork exhibiting through the Lakehead Arts Integrated Research Galleries. While living in Thunder Bay, I worked and volunteered in various social justice organizations throughout the city, which has given me insight into local social issues as well as an understanding of how Thunder Bay's geography and socio-economic distribution affect access to programming. My own intimate knowledge of Thunder Bay and community arts have contributed to the richness of the interviews, my analysis, understanding, and representation of the social processes, rendering them in comprehensible ways (Atkinson, 2006).

Participant profiles.

My research design initially identified two groups of participants based on their role as either learner (youth aged 18-34) or mentor (not limited by age); my research revealed that these discrete roles did not exist and that often those most engaged as mentors and facilitators fell into the 18-34 age group. One of the contributing factors for the lack of discrete roles was how the collectives and programs encouraged lateral mentorship and knowledge-sharing as well as nurtured participants to become mentors and leaders. The majority of participants spoke of occupying both roles at various times. Out of the 17 participants, 11 were aged 18-34, and six were over age 34. Out of the seven participants who were in organizational positions, in effect running programming, six were in the youth category. Although every participant is referenced and or quoted in

the analysis and discussion, some participants are referenced more frequently because of their extent and reach of knowledge, and some are quoted more directly because their interviews lent themselves to direct quotation. The overwhelming majority of quotes and discussion in this analysis is comprised of youth voices; I utilized Atlas.ti to analyze the frequency of participant names in the analysis section and found roughly 90% of quotes and references are from youth participants.

I initially aimed to have a larger sample of participants in the youth category who were not involved in leadership roles, something I was not able to accomplish. In the participant profiles I identify their ages; as previously noted, for the purpose of this study I have used Elections Canada's definition of "youth" as being between the ages of 18-34 (Elections Canada, 2015), which is also congruent with the critical youth studies literature (Kellner, 2014). Participants who are over 34 years of age are identified as such to indicate that they are not considered "youth" for the purpose of this study. Participant profiles also provide insight into the extent and nature of participants' engagement in community arts. Further, out of the 17 participants only 4 presented as male, leaving little room to explore differences in pedagogical approaches in community settings based on gender identity. Later research could explore whether there are differences in community and collective organizing based on gender identity. The profiles are intended to give insight into the extent and nature of their participation in the arts community in Thunder Bay. The inclusion of these profiles also provides insight into the connectedness of the artistic community in Thunder Bay. An asterisk next to their name in the participant descriptions identifies participants who are part of the youth category. The following, presented in no particular order, are brief profiles of the participants who chose to be

identified in this research; two participants are not included because they chose to remain anonymous.

****Jayal.***

At the time of our interview, Jayal was 28 years old. She was born and raised in Thunder Bay. She is primarily a visual and spoken word artist. Jayal hosts *Queer Radio Hour* on LU Radio, the campus radio station at Lakehead University, and in 2015 won *The Walleye's* (the local arts and entertainment magazine) readers' choice award for community activism. She was involved with the creation of InVisible Ink, an LGBTQ2S writing workshop, and an exhibition for International Women's Day, and has participated in many collaborative murals throughout the city. Jayal was also a volunteer with *Walking With Our Sisters*.

Jean.

At the time of the interview Jean was over 34 years old. She was born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario with family ties to Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, Ontario. She is a contract lecturer for Lakehead University's Bachelor of Education program teaching "Native Arts and Crafts." Jean is a beader, has been a mentoring artist through Neechee Studio, an art collective for Indigenous youth, at Definitely Superior Art Gallery, and was involved with *Walking With Our Sisters*, a commemorative exhibit. Jean has been teaching kids how to bead for years within the school system.

****Julia.***

Julia was 34 years old at the time of our interview. She was born and raised in Thunder Bay, only leaving to attend university in England. Julia is a social worker by trade, but has been involved in grassroots organizing for many years, having had a hand

in starting the Die Active Art Collective, a youth art collective, The Other 10%, a support group for LGBTQ2S youth, and InVisible Ink. Although she does not consider herself an artist, she engages in artistic endeavours from time to time, and as a bit of a cycling fanatic, she makes custom saddlebags.

Eleanor.

Eleanor was over 34 at the time of our interview. Eleanor was born in and has spent most of her life in Thunder Bay. She has been involved in theater for over 30 years. Eleanor's career has focused on community-engaged arts, community-theater, and education through the arts. She has recently been focusing on distributing her film "Under the Pearl Moon," and has a business creating locally sourced teas (Albanese, 2008).

****Barbara.***

Barbara was 31 at the time of our interview. She has a Bachelor of Education and an Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts from Lakehead University. Barbara does work with The Community Arts and Heritage Education Project (CAHEP), a program that brings artists to classrooms and the community. Although Barbara was not born in Thunder Bay, she considers it her home. Barbara is a visual artist working with paint, pencil, textiles, and digital images (CAHEP, 2016a).

****Laura.***

Laura was born and raised in Thunder Bay, and was 30 at the time of our interview. She left Thunder Bay to attend college in London Ontario and received a diploma in photography. She is a photographer and regularly takes photos for Definitely Superior Art Gallery events, as well as weddings, and portraits. She is also a jeweler,

primarily working with silver. She has shared her skills by facilitating photography workshops with CAHEP.

Brian.

Brian was over 34 years of age at the time of our interview. He is originally from southern Ontario, but has called Thunder Bay his home for close to 40 years. He regularly does work in schools through CAHEP and the Artist in Education program through the Ontario Arts Council. He focuses on printmaking, with a special interest in sustainable and non-toxic methods.

****Alana.***

Alana was 32 when I interviewed her. She was born and raised in Thunder Bay and was the Executive and Artistic Director of CAHEP. She is a visual artist primarily working with painting, drawing, and textiles (CAHEP, 2016b). As the executive and artistic director of CAHEP, she coordinated community and school based arts programming throughout Thunder Bay. Alana also facilitates arts workshops in the community, and most recently in the pop-up gallery at Victoriaville mall, a gallery and arts space facilitated by CAHEP.

****B.***

B was 22 at the time of our interview. B was born and raised in Thunder Bay and considers it home. B was involved with the Die Active Art Collective since its inception and has exhibited in the Definitely Superior Art Gallery member shows, as well as created wearable artworks for *Derehcte, A Fashion Odyssey*, a fundraiser for Definitely Superior Art Gallery. B was involved in multiple Die Active Art Collective Murals throughout Thunder Bay.

****Lucille.***

Lucille was 26 years old at the time of our interview. She is originally from Eabametoong First Nation and moved to Thunder Bay to access high school. Lucille is now a student at Lakehead University in the concurrent Visual Arts and Education program. She was involved with Die Active for years before starting Neechee Studio with the support of mentors and the gallery. Lucille writes poetry, and is a visual artist working in multiple mediums including pencil, paint, and beading.

****Lora.***

Lora was 32 at the time of our interview. She was born and raised in Thunder Bay, and has an Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts from Lakehead University. Lora started Die Active when she was 22 and hired on at Definitely Superior Art Gallery as their youth outreach coordinator. Since then she has been running Die Active every summer. Lora is a visual artist primarily working with paint and ceramics, and has exhibited internationally (Northway, 2016).

Michel.

Michel was over 34 years old at the time of our interview. He is Métis and hails from Hurkett Dorion, in Northwestern Ontario, and has called Thunder Bay home since moving there for University in the 1980's. Michel is a visual artist, photographer, maker of things, painter, gay rights activist, and has exhibited nationally. He has been involved in LGBTQ2S activism in Thunder Bay for decades, and brings critical discussions into the arts programming that he facilitates at his son's school.

****Dayna.***

Dayna was 30 years old at the time of our interview. She is originally from southern Ontario, has spent some time in Quebec, and now, for the past 5 years has called Thunder Bay her home. Dayna recently completed her Masters in Education with a research thesis on community-based art in Thunder Bay (Slingerland, 2015). She has a Bachelor of Education from Lakehead University and teaches for the Catholic School Board. Dayna is primarily a fibre artist, and enjoys using natural and locally sourced materials. She has facilitated workshops with CAHEP, Die Active, and Willow Springs, an arts organization.

Elliott.

Elliott was over 34 at the time of our interview. He has been living in Thunder Bay for close to two decades but is originally from Southern Ontario. Elliott is Anishinaabe and Mohawk. He has a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Education from Lakehead University. He incorporates Indigenous philosophies and knowledges when he facilitates arts workshops in the school system, and in the community with community and professional organizations. Elliott is a visual artist, writer, and musician. He has created works for *Derelecte: A Fashion Odyssey*, and shown at Definitely Superior Art Gallery, and The Thunder Bay Art Gallery, as well as across Canada, notably at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

****boy Roland.***

boy Roland was 28 years old at the time of our interview. He was born and raised in Thunder Bay and completed his Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts at Lakehead University. boy Roland joined Die Active in its first year when he was 21 acting as a

mentor and lead artist. Outside of Die Active, boy Roland is a visual artist working in illustration, spray paint, animation, graphic design, painting and sculpture. boy Roland has exhibited in Thunder Bay and internationally and was named *best visual artist* by *The Walleye's* readers' choice award two years in a row (Allec et al., 2017; Lysenko, 2016).

Collectives and programs.

The following are descriptions of key collectives, programs, and exhibits that participants were involved with.

Community Arts and Heritage Education Project.

“The Community Arts and Heritage Education Project is a non-profit arts education organization” in Thunder Bay (CAHEP, 2017). CAHEP works in collaboration with artists to offer: “accessible multidisciplinary arts education programming for children, youth and families” (CAHEP, 2017) in the community, and schools.

Definitely Superior Art Gallery.

Definitely Superior Art Gallery is an artist-run gallery in Thunder Bay. “Formed and directed by artists in the city of Thunder Bay, the gallery’s role as a charitable, not-for-profit group is to support contemporary art and the artists that produce it.” (Definitely Superior Art Gallery, 2017a) DefSup supports workshops, lectures, film screenings, media arts, offsite public art and installations, performance art, and youth education (Definitely Superior Art Gallery, 2017a).

Neechee Studio.

Neechee Studio is an artist collective for Indigenous youth, aged 14-30, in Thunder Bay. Neechee is supported by and hosted by the Definitely Superior Art Gallery,

in partnership with the RCMP, Regional Multicultural Youth Centre, Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School, and Matawa Education Centre. Neechee has been running workshops led by emerging and Indigenous artists every winter since 2013 (Definitely Superior Art Gallery, 2017b).

Die Active Art Collective.

The Die Active Art Collective is an artist collective for youth, aged 14-30, hosted by the Definitely Superior Art Gallery. Going into its 9th year, Die Active provides mentorship and support to young artists “while creating unique and contemporary graffiti murals, publications, performances and public art” (Definitely Superior Art Gallery, 2017c)

InVisible Ink.

InVisible Ink was a monthly writing group run out of the Definitely Superior Art Gallery for young artists and writers who are part of “the LGBTQQ2+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans* Queer and Two-Spirit) and allies community” (MacArthur, 2015). The workshops involved “collaborative writing, silk screening, illustration, blogging, screenwriting, slam poetry, zine making” (MacArthur, 2015).

Walking With Our Sisters.

Walking With Our Sisters is a commemorative art installation to honour the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous Women of Canada and the United States; to acknowledge the grief and torment families of these women continue to suffer; and to raise awareness of this issue and create opportunity for broad community-based dialogue on the issue. (*Walking With Our Sisters*, 2016a)

Cliteracy.

Cliteracy is an installation exhibit by Sophia Wallace, a New York based artist that uses art to playfully educate about cis-women's anatomy and capacity for sexual pleasure. *Cliteracy* exhibited at the Definitely Superior Art Gallery in Thunder Bay for International Women's Day in 2014.

Interviews

I interviewed 17 artists; interviews lasted on average 90 minutes, ranging from one to three hours. Intensive interviews with artists were “open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28). Qualitative interviews allow participants to share their experiences in-depth that can “elicit views of this persons subjective world” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28). Intensive interviews are a common approach to soliciting in-depth information from participants in qualitative research; the participant is asked to “describe and reflect upon [their] experiences. . . . the interviewer is there to listen to observe with sensitivity, and to encourage the person to respond” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). I asked broad and open-ended questions to encourage the participant to share their experience of the topic (Charmaz, 2006). Existing research on critical civic praxis, and community organizations have used intensive interviews to centre participant experiences (Checkoway, 2011; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Nam, 2012; Shiller, 2013; Slingerland, 2015).

I developed an interview protocol (see appendix B) using the processes and conditions for developing critical civic praxis identified by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007). The original interview protocol was used for the first three interviews, and

adapted during interviews based on feedback from participants. The following questions shaped the initial interview protocol:

Guiding questions:

- 1) Are youth being actively involved in positive change in their communities?
- 2) Is the collective a site of social change knowledge transfer?
- 3) Are the youth participating in organizational processes and experiencing critical civic praxis?
- 4) Is there intergenerational knowledge transfer of political ideas? What does the participant consider in the scope of the political?
- 5) Are youth being supported and encouraged to examine, analyze and construct ideas?
- 6) Are youth building social networks and community-based knowledge?
- 7) Are youth being supported to be action agents for community change from conceptualization, to development, to action?
- 8) Are intergenerational relationships and mentoring a key part of these collectives?
- 9) Does this program/process challenge negative stereotypes about youth?
- 10) Are youth building collective interests through being critically conscious?
- 11) How do these conversations/processes play out in the arts?

The interview protocol was adjusted to be more informal, reflect the flow of interviews, and the experience and understanding of participants. The original questions used language unfamiliar to participants, for example, “social change knowledge transfer,” “critical civic praxis,” and “critical consciousness.” The questions also required a level of analysis on the participants’ behalf that was more appropriate for myself as the

researcher. The adapted guiding questions used plain language and solicited the same rich descriptions of processes and events as the original questions, without needing to interrupt the flow of interviews with definitions. The adapted questions for participants were:

- 1) Tell me about how you got involved with artist collectives.
- 2) What kept you going back?
- 3) Tell me about the workshops. What was the style of instruction?
- 4) Tell me about the space/atmosphere of the workshops.
- 5) Were you able to get more involved? Tell me about the opportunities presented.
- 6) Has involvement changed you? Do you think you've gained skills, grown? Has it led to involvement in other things?
- 7) Have you seen the arts change Thunder Bay?
- 8) What do you think about the word youth?
- 9) Is there anyone that you think I should interview who would be a good fit for this research?

Questions for participants who were primarily involved as mentors were adapted to solicit more specific information and reflect the language of participants. During interviews I encountered participant resistance to self-identifying as “mentors” or “teachers,” and I adjusted my language to reflect how they identified with the work they did.

- 1) When did you start sharing your art skills in the community? What led you to doing this work?
- 2) Where/what programs have you mentored or shared your art skills in?

- 3) Have you witnessed an impact for participants or the community?
- 4) How are participants brought into the planning process for art projects/workshops?
- 5) What is your mentorship/teaching style like?
- 6) Where have you exhibited/what arts events have you been involved in?

Ongoing Participant Input/Check-ins

As suggested by Priyadarshini (2003) I chose to take an inquisitorial stance to power in my research process, accepting the inevitability of power imbalances and taking steps to acknowledge and address power where possible. The artist community in Thunder Bay is small and close knit. My interviews with participants revealed some tensions and disagreements, as well as concerns about how participants' own words might affect others in the community. I decided to take the advice from a memo that I wrote during the analysis process in August 2016 to, "treat the dissertation as a mechanism for intergenerational knowledge transfer." I purposefully chose to write up my theoretical analysis in a manner that invites people in to learn about what people and organizations are doing that has been transformative. As I explained to my participants, I am not writing an exposé, I am interested in the larger picture of how community and collective arts processes contribute to critical civic engagement.

Participants were informed verbally and in writing of their right to withdraw from the research and interviews at any point in the research process, including after their interview(s) (see appendix C). As a mechanism to keep analysis as close to participant experience as possible, they were invited to contribute on an ongoing basis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Participants were provided with their interview transcripts to review and

revise before they were included in the final analysis and dissertation, at this point some made specific requests about how to quote them. As part of member checking participants were sent a brief summary of the research findings with analytical themes, and asked for their input as to whether the ideas resonated with them (see appendix D) (Creswell, 2009). Participants were then sent individualized copies of the analysis and discussion sections that included only their direct quotes and references to their interviews, including references to them by other participants, as a final member check (Creswell, 2009).

Participants had the option of being identified by name or remaining anonymous in the research. Having artist and interview participants' voices recognized in this research is one mechanism to detract from my position of authority as author and researcher. This research took place in a small community, and within the even smaller artist community. In this context the use of pseudonyms risks making participants identifiable as the sum of the statements attributed to one character may make them identifiable within the community. In order to ameliorate this issue, I chose to use the term "participant" to refer to all anonymous statements. I conducted 19 interviews with 17 participants. Some chose to be named, others chose to remain anonymous, while some have opted for a combination of the two. I have chosen to represent participants in this way in order to respect the interconnectedness in this community, to respect the relationships that participants have cultivated, and that I have cultivated in my time living in Thunder Bay. At times in interviews participants have made statements that are political, that are radical, and controversial, and are important to be heard – instead of

silencing these people, I have used the pseudonym ‘participant’ to mask their identity while keeping their statements and views intact.

Data in the Public Domain

An underlying premise of this research is that public art is at once political, aesthetic, and dialogical. In order to understand the dialogue that art generates I collected data from the public domain. Artists statements and their art are increasingly available to larger audiences through internet-based media. Artist statements and reviews of art published online can serve as extant texts to enrich the data. These texts provide insight into the impact and intended meaning of the artist’s work. Sixty articles, images, and artist statements were included as data. These texts were used as background for artists who participated in interviews as well as artists who were referenced by participants (Charmaz, 2006; Checkoway, 2013; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Nam, 2012; Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013). I collected *The Walleye*, the monthly local arts and culture magazine during the six months that interviews took place. The magazine was read for content relating to participants and events participants spoke of in their interviews. Relevant articles were scanned and uploaded into Atlas.ti for analysis alongside the interviews. 32 documents from *The Walleye*, 9 documents from *The Chronicle Journal*, 9 documents from *TB Newswatch.com* and 10 artist statements, blog posts, and event descriptions were included in the Atlas.ti analysis.

Analysis

Analysis began when I conducted my first interview, listening and conversing with the artist, I started to consider where my interests and their interests converged and departed, an ongoing process that continued to shape each successive interview

(Atkinson, 2006). This process of listening formed initial lines of inquiry for subsequent thematic and conceptual development that carried on throughout the analysis process once interviews were complete (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews yielded over 400 pages of written transcripts. Once I concluded interviews with participants I analyzed the 19 interviews individually and as a whole, moving back and forth between individual participant experiences and developing themes, or common threads that resonated throughout the majority of interviews. I was able to move throughout the interviews almost seamlessly, familiarity with the interviews aided in this process, having heard each interview at least three times: First when they were taking place, a second time during the initial transcription, and a third time as I polished the transcripts. As I developed new ways of understanding the data I could hear the participants' voices illustrating their experiences that either supported or at times contradicted developing themes. I designed my methods to gather rich data through multiple data collection methods including my own critical reflection as I engaged in interviews with participants, analysis of transcripts and extant texts, writing detailed field notes and ongoing memo writing (Charmaz, 2006; Checkoway, 2013; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Nam, 2012; Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013).

Coding and memo writing.

I analyzed interview transcripts, and extant texts utilizing Atlas.ti, qualitative data analysis software. Atlas.ti is a data management and analysis software that “lets you extract, categorize, and interlink data segments from a large variety and volume of source documents” and supports analysis through various organizational tools and output options including memo writing, coding, frequency tables and graphic representations that can be

created based on user specified parameters (Friese, 2003, p. 6). Atlas.ti does not take the place of the researchers' analysis, rather it is a system whereby large amounts of data can be easily navigated through once the user has created and implemented their specific parameters. Coding began when the research with participants began and was a "pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). I used both a priori codes developed based on Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) and grounded codes created directly from the interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). See Table 1 for the list of codes and examples of how interview text was coded with a priori codes, codes that arose during interviews, conceptual codes, and theoretical codes.

The first stage was coding of segments of data; from these I extrapolated the "most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Once coding began I began memo writing as both a process of reviewing and of beginning to analyze data early on: Memo-writing is a multi-stage process used to capture ideas and develop conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2006).

Memo-writing forces you to stop other activities; engage a category, let your mind rove freely in, around, under, and from the category; and write whatever comes to you. That's why memo-writing forms a space and place for exploration and discovery. You take time to discover your ideas. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 81)

As I wrote memos I pulled in raw data, quotes and codes, to ensure the link between participant input and analysis was kept intact (Charmaz, 2006). Memo writing was also utilized for self-reflection, taking note of what did and did not pique my interest, where I

felt myself agreeing or disagreeing with participant statements, what lines of inquiry I followed and which ones I abandoned, and taking time to examine why these may be occurring.

Table 1

Types of codes, code names, and examples of coded text

Type of Code	Code Name (* denotes how the example quote was coded)	Example Quote
A priori codes from Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) / guiding questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective as a site of social change knowledge transfer?* • How do these conversations/processes play out in the arts?* • Intergenerational relationships and mentoring • Is there intergenerational knowledge transfer of political ideas? • Program/process challenge negative stereotypes • Youth being actively involved in positive change in their communities* • Youth being supported and encouraged to examine, analyze and construct ideas • Youth being supported to be action agents for community change* • Youth building collective interests • Youth building social networks and community based knowledge* • Youth participating in organizational processes 	For <i>Walking With Our Sisters</i> it's about this travelling bundle and the bundle itself, it's physical aspects representing, it's the moccasins, the tops of moccasins representing the Missing and Murdered women which is one of the issues of violence against women. (Jayal)
Codes that arose during the interview process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of artist • Space and place* • Mentoring • I hate the word 'youth' by the way, it's just stupid 	Then I select artists based on how they relate to youth, I don't really tell the artists this or anything, but I try to make sure that the artists

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant writing • Elements for successful youth programming* 	<p>that are teaching also see themselves as learners and that they see themselves as on the same level, even if their age is much older that they mentally and physically kind of act and feel like they're the same age as the people they're teaching and that they're really humble that they don't just see themselves as the carriers of knowledge and that they're actually excited to be learning with and alongside the youth. (Lora)</p>
<p>Conceptual/action Codes that arose during initial coding process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Being encouraged to build skills • Collaborative work • Community development* • Directly link participation with further community involvement • Fostering critical civic praxis • How art is perceived in society • Identity • Interest in social justice • Personal growth from participation • Process of institutionalization • What actually draws me • Youth being supported 	<p>So when you do something like a mural and street art and whatever it is, there is participation for anybody who's walking by, they inadvertently are a part of that whether they like it or not, and a lot of people get excited or engaged whether you want them to or not, you know. (boy Roland)</p>
<p>Conceptual codes developed during focused coding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation Indigenous knowledge revitalization • Transformation physical • Transformation political • Transformation social* 	<p>yeah, good. People have come in and responded that it makes them feel really calm and peaceful, a lot of people say that they feel really at peace here and they feel hopeful about the fact that children have mentors who are artists who are working with them and being positive role models</p>

		for them. (Alana)
Codes identifying programs/ organizations/ events/people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Infill • Thunder Bay Art Gallery • RMYC • Jean Marshall • Definitely Superior Art Gallery • Cliteracy • WWOS • Willow Springs; • Neechee* • InVisible Ink* • Die Active • CAHEP • Anemki Art Collective 	then from Neechee Studio, I again was involved in applying for the grant for InVisible Ink, LGBT writing project that's happening now (Julia)
Conceptual codes for final analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic • Trust* • Humility • Reflection • Relationship building* 	What happens I guess when people get a chance to collaborate is friendships form, which is really important and people feel more supported, and they often say they feel like they've come out of it feeling a lot more inspired by the person that they've been working with, so that can create new projects. It can create deeper collaborations too which is something, I'm just starting with a collaborative thing a little bit more and trying to find funding to make it happen regularly, but I do hope at some point that we can do something that involves multiple artists and do maybe a community theater project or community, I don't even know what it could look like (Alana)

Through ongoing coding, memo writing, and using Atlas.ti to generate frequency tables and network maps, I used the analytical tools to develop themes that best fit with the data and my interpretation of the data set as a whole, moving from basic descriptive codes (CAHEP, Die Active, Grant writing, etc.) to more conceptual codes (transformation_physical, transformation_social, etc.). Once working in a network view (see Figure 5) of quotes coded as forms of transformation I read each individual quote within the network and renamed each with a salient theme (they are initially named in Atlas.ti with the first few word of the quote), then I re-organized the network map based on themes.

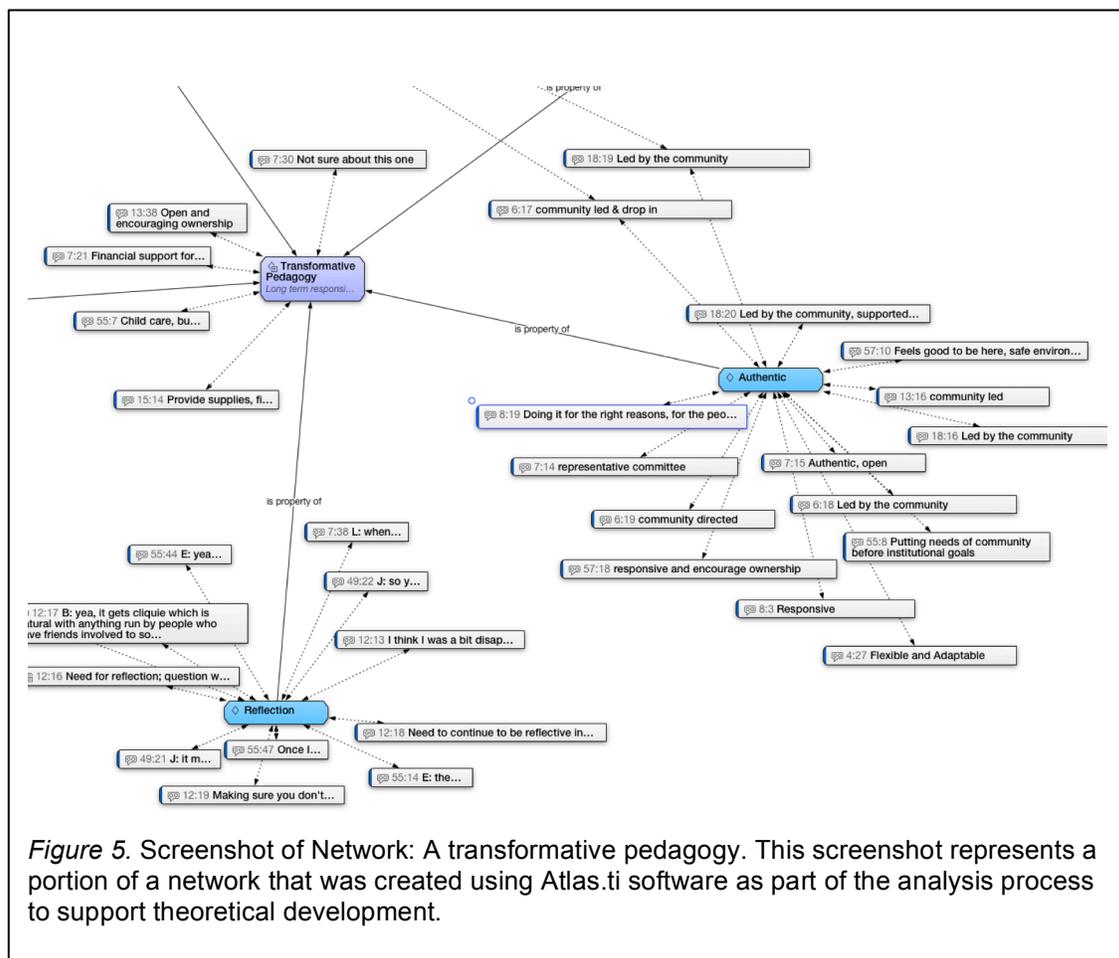


Figure 5. Screenshot of Network: A transformative pedagogy. This screenshot represents a portion of a network that was created using Atlas.ti software as part of the analysis process to support theoretical development.

This process of re-reading and re-organizing, and re-naming is how I created the conceptual categories that form the roots of the arts pedagogies. After re-organizing the network map and developing my final themes, I went through the raw data again to code segments of data that may have been missed.

Ethics.

The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board (REB) approved this study before data collection. I observed all Tri-Council ethics guidelines. Informed written consent was obtained from all participants before conducting interviews (appendix E), except one participant who provided verbal consent, which was audio recorded at the beginning of the interview.

Chapter 4: Rooted Transformative Pedagogical Practices

This analysis and conceptual development are rooted in the conditions and interactions unique to community and collective arts in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The transformation discussed by participants is connected to their worldviews and their social, political, and geographic location. The roots underlying the transformative work of participants are: *Authenticity, trust, humility, relationship (love), and critical reflection*, and come directly from the experiences described in interviews with participants engaged in collective community arts practice. The first step in understanding how these pedagogical practices are transformative is understanding the *space* these artists inhabit, the forms of oppression that participants spoke about and the way their art practices transformed their communities. I have intentionally kept conceptual development closely tied to the language and situation of participants because “any theory that cannot be shared in everyday conversation cannot be used to educate the public” (hooks, 1994b, p. 64). I have chosen to use italics to call attention to participant quotes, to differentiate them from the literature, and from quotes derived from extant texts such as newspaper coverage and artist biographies (Creswell, 2009).

The Space

The *space* where this research is rooted is a specific social, physical, and temporal space, created by participants engaged in the arts. The spaces inhabited by community art-collectives and programs foster different relationships, different expectations, and different rules for acceptable behaviour compared to more structured institutions such as schools and galleries. Censorship and restrictions on what constitutes legitimate expression in institutional settings creates barriers to participation. One participant,

Michel, shared how he did not complete his visual arts degree because of homophobia exhibited by an instructor. Speaking about the Definitely Superior Art Gallery (DefSup), an artist-run gallery, the following dialogue with Lora discusses how a space and the implicit and explicit expectations within a space impacts how people navigate it:

Lora: *[In schools] there's tons of restrictions, I just want to be myself and you can't. The way you dress, the way you talk, the sorts of projects that you do, everything is within a box. It's not an environment that feels creative, it feels very controlled.*

Varainja: *Not even when you're in the classroom and it's an after school thing when you have your—*

Lora: *No, the facilities themselves don't lend to creativity, they lend to rules, and creativity is all about rule-breaking and exploring beyond those walls to find new things.*

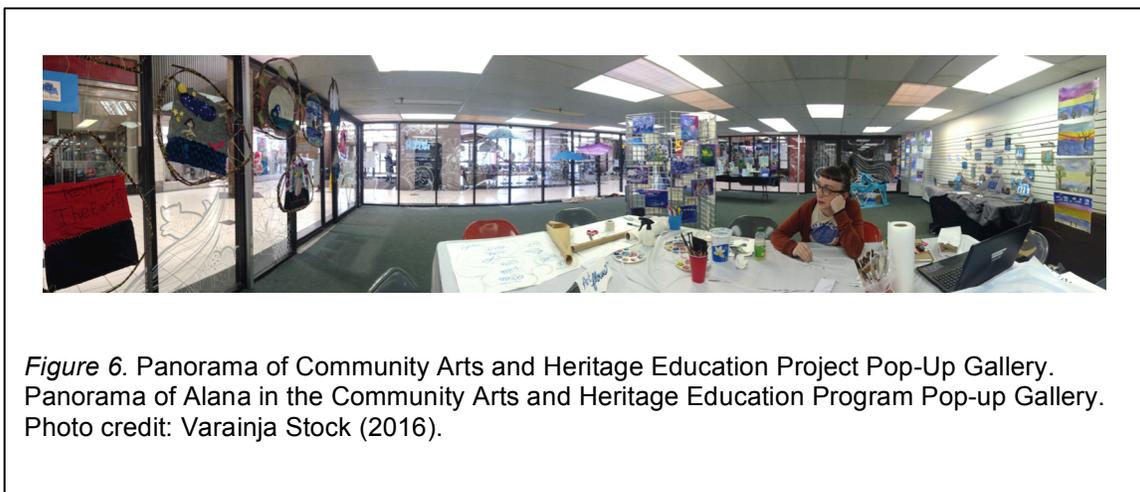
Varainja: *Do you think that's one of the reasons that things like Die Active and Neechee are so well attended in this [gallery] space because it's not at somewhere like a school?*

Lora: *Yeah, artist-run centres are all about rule-breaking. That's at the belly. So not just that it's not institutional, it's that we believe in breaking through and just creating space for newness, and for challenges, and mistakes, and for scaring yourself, and just inspiring other people too.*

Just as artist-run centres create space for rule-breaking and creativity, neighbourhood-run community centres can support community development. Through physical transformation of space, the Community Arts and Heritage Education Project

(CAHEP) created a social space that invites community members in to participate in the arts. On the south side of Thunder Bay, CAHEP installed a pop-up gallery, an impermanent space to hold art workshops and exhibit art from their community and school-based programming (see Figure 6). The gallery and creative space initially popped up to exhibit *Water's Wisdom*, a project undertaken by CAHEP in various schools throughout Thunder Bay.

By transforming the physical space into a social space, CAHEP's pop-up gallery has had a positive impact on the community. The pop-up gallery is located in the



Victoriaville Mall on the south side of town; the main entrance is kitty corner to a bar that has been an ongoing source of complaints from area businesses and residents due to high levels of intoxication and loitering of its patrons. To the surprise of the mall's security guards, Alana (the Executive and Artistic Director of CAHEP) never gets harassed by people coming from the local bar, and she recounted instances where people who were intoxicated expressed that they were happy that the gallery space was there and available for children and community to come and make art.

I love, I'm always advocating for making art accessible to as many people as possible, working in Victoriaville mall we see a lot of different people coming through. Sometimes they're people who just hang outside normally and just want to come into the space and check it out. But people from all walks of life come through and they just start talking about how art impacted them in different ways, and they respond to the space, which is really neat too. (Alana)



Figure 7. Community Arts and Heritage Education Project Pop-Up Gallery. Photo credit: Varainja Stock (2016).

The physical transformation into a community arts-focused space impacts how people perceive the social space and use the physical space. The CAHEP pop-up gallery has had a social impact in the neighbourhood as the location and the actual physical transparency of the gallery welcomes community members in who share their art experiences with Alana (see Figure 7). *“They talk about how it makes them feel and I really relate to that*

as someone working in the arts and as an artist myself. It's really grounding to have people talk about things in that way" (Alana).

Through spending time in collective art settings, creating and sharing stories, participants start to support each other. The dialogue that is encouraged between participants in collective arts settings supports the development of social networks. In this context, facilitators and participants can provide emotional support to each other.

I find them, a lot of times, really inspiring because a lot of people when they're engaging in art, focus on resilience and focus on sharing strength and you see, even if they're talking about challenges they're facing in their lives, you're seeing the community support each other. It's rare that I'm working with just one person, but you'll see a lot of people start to talk about challenges that they've faced and they're not only sharing stories with me but with each other. So that I think people find common ground and then they start to support each other. It's not always just on me and I think that's probably what keeps me going, is knowing that we're contributing to something larger. (Alana)

The emotional support shared in this setting creates stronger networks and helps to build communities within neighbourhoods. A similar process occurs with the Die Active Art Collective's public murals. The collective process of creating the Die Active murals encourages social interactions as the art-in-process, and the artists draw people in who are passing by on the street. boy Roland, one of the Die Active mentors, spoke about how Die Active affected their generation of artists in the community by building an atmosphere of support and collaboration, rather than competition and animosity.

I think the great part about Thunder Bay is that I think it's far easier to get connected with the community. Because its smaller and more accessible, in my experience the artists who are around my age, we're all pretty open and welcoming and accepting and I think that has a lot to do with that a lot of us have been involved with Die Active. You look at other artists not as threats but as collaborators. (boy Roland)

Existing outside of institutions with pre-existing implicit and explicit rules for behaviour, these community art-collectives provided room for rule breaking and creativity that can cultivate new possibilities for social transformation. Creating welcoming environments fostered a sense of hope and possibility, and allowed for open dialogue, relationship building, and new social networks.

Forms of Oppression

Critical consciousness marks an awareness of systemic forms of oppression limiting human potential and capacity for agency (Freire, 1970/2008). Participants in this research raised many issues of systemic oppression and discussed them in relation to the work they were doing as artists dialoguing, subverting, and disrupting. Artists had been involved in projects that addressed the high numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, through *Walking With Our Sisters*; Indigenous knowledge revitalization, through sharing teachings as part of exhibiting, and teaching as done by Elliot, and Neechee Studio; patriarchy and the control of women's bodies through exhibiting a series on abortion by boy Roland; trans-visibility and cisnormativity¹

¹ "Cisgender people are those whose gender identity conforms to their biological sex" (Schilt & Westbrook, 2015, p. 27) and "'cisnormativity' is the assumption that it is 'normal' to be cisgender." (Worthen, 2016, p. 31)

through street art; homophobia and social control through painting, street art, and exhibitions; and the policing of impoverished bodies as Eleanor did with theatre.

The projects, collectives, and events run by and with the community often addressed social justice issues in content; however, in their implementation they also address the structural forms of oppression by creating programming that is economically and geographically accessible. As well as programming by, and specifically for marginalized populations, as with Neechee, programming is brought into communities rather than expecting communities to come to them (CAHEP), is free (Die Active, CAHEP, Neechee), and organizers often provide food (Neechee, Die Active), transportation fare (Neechee, Die Active), and even child care for participants (some community theatre productions), meeting real concrete needs in order to support participation.

Participants who were also facilitators and regularly applied for grants to run their programming were often critical of the grant process, and limitations in funding streams while simultaneously being thankful that they do have access to funding. These participants are acutely aware of the issues with grant-based funding and tie this to the political context that necessitates they spend large swaths of their time trying to access the next grant to keep their programming going.

Throughout their interviews participants demonstrated their awareness of systemic oppression and were engaged in creating art and programming that responded to and disrupted oppression. Participants raised awareness of and disrupted dialogue that contributes to systemic violence, they made organizational decisions that addressed

barriers to inclusion, and they navigated economic systems that devalue their work in order to continue to improve the communities they live and work in.

Forms of Transformation

If critical consciousness denotes an awareness of systemic forms of oppression limiting human potential and capacity for agency (Freire, 1970/2008) then it also facilitates the creation of “new possibilities and capacities to see and act differently, proactively in the world” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 699). Discussions with participants raised numerous ways they and the various collectives and organizations they participated in as artists, were involved in transformation. An artist mentor with Die Active, Liz Buset directly connects the ability to express opinions and create dialogue through artistic mediums with actions for social change in her online artist statement:

At the heart of visual communication is a complex and ever evolving system of signs. While contemporary artists often forgo traditional lexicons in favor of alternative aesthetics and ideologies, I prefer representational painting for its ability to engage diverse audiences through decipherable imagery. . . . I strove to create contemporary icons in which to illustrate my re-evaluation of socio-political ideologies, such as gender stereotyping, mortality, genetic modification, animal rights and environmental sustainability. . . . I created large-scale realist paintings in which mundane, recognizable objects were re-contextualized through juxtaposition, enlargement and compositional isolation. (Buset, 2016)

Participants spoke of political transformation through Indigenous knowledge revitalization, transformation of physical spaces, creation of critical dialogue,

revitalization of social spaces through visibility in the community, and grassroots-led urban and economic renewal.

Indigenous knowledge revitalization.

Indigenous knowledge revitalization is an act of decolonization and resurgence through teaching new and old generations about Indigenous ways of being, knowing and relating (Alfred, 2015). Through volunteering with *Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS)*, Jayal learned about ceremony, and began to learn how to negotiate the physical, political, and social space she occupied as a non-Indigenous Canadian. Jean, who has also been involved with *WWOS*, relayed a story her sister shared with her about a local politician who attended the commemorative exhibit at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery:

My sister was telling me about a politician went in there and I guess, you know, the whole idea behind it is that you go in as yourself, without any hat on. . . . I guess this man went in and was really taken aback by all of it and he was in tears and he was, like, “who is behind all of this?” And he was really, really choked up and it hit home. . . . I can’t help but think that or hope that everyone who entered that room felt that way . . . and carried that truth after. I heard so many people . . . “Oh, I thought I was just going to an art exhibit, I didn’t realize I was going to learn to smudge, I didn’t realize I was going to-” you know all these things right, pretty crazy powerful. (Jean)

Another artist spoke about taking up public space in order to provide visibility for Indigenous knowledge and healing.

There’s the positive aspect of it too, right, where there’s cultural sentiment because of my heritage, I want to support First National pride and so I went out

of my way to go everywhere there was something negative in the city and I painted medicine wheels over stuff [negative graffiti]. Depending on how big it was, these medicine wheels were pretty big. (Participant)

This participant reclaimed space that had something negative, and transformed it into a space of healing and Indigenous knowledge revitalization. They further noted that the anti-graffiti group in Thunder Bay decided to leave the medicine wheels instead of removing them with the rest of the graffiti, an act that the participant took as understanding and respecting the purpose of the medicine wheel. Indigenous knowledge revitalization through *WWOS* and the occupation of visual space with Indigenous teachings are transformative because they present new ways for people to engage with Indigenous knowledges, and the ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands and peoples in Canada.

Definitely Superior Art Gallery.

Art exhibits can create intended and unintended dialogue that raises awareness and prompts people to think about issues differently. Working collaboratively with DefSup, Jayal brought *Cliteracy* by Sophia Wallace, a New York-based artist, together with artists from the Thunder Bay region for an International Women's Day exhibit. This exhibit brought together many threads of what feminism and women's rights encapsulates in a way that was seamless yet presented very different ideas and conversations together visually and conceptually.

Seeing also Leanna Marshall's piece with the Jingle dress that she submitted to be part of the show with Christian Chapman, and then seeing Liz Buset's giant pieces of artwork and her sharing about censorship, it all tied together and was very much

open for people to interpret these pieces of work. The whole thing was an experience, in a really interesting way I think, for people that maybe normally wouldn't come to the gallery. (Jayal)

As an attendee of the opening night of the International Women's Day exhibit, I witnessed the line-up out the door of the gallery, as people flocked to see the work of Sophia Wallace and hear her speak. The incorporation of works by local artists alongside Wallace's provided space to engage with the complexity of feminisms in North America challenging notions of what and whom feminism represents, and due to questions raised by audience members during Wallace's discussion, people were prompted to consider who is included and excluded in discussions of women's rights and sexuality.

Street art.

Public works of art are both static and impermanent places for dialogue where an artist can be in a space without remaining there physically.

When you have a tag that's thrown up somewhere you know you're in that public space – or at least were at one point – and people can see it and they probably won't attribute it to you directly, but you're in that space without being in it at the same time. In a way you are interacting with those who view whatever you put up.

(Participant)

Where tagging is an act of claiming space and gaining visibility, graffiti can act as explicit dialogue (Harazny, Sproull, & Terleski, 2014). One participant used graffiti to express their negative experience with Sophia Wallace's *Cliteracy* exhibition for International Women's Day.

Participant: *Yeah, so in the alley where some of her work was turned into stencils and thrown up on the Cook Street mural. . . . I threw up a few, it wasn't like a full paragraph or anything, but it was responding to how I thought her work was bullshit.*

Varainja: *How so?*

Participant: *How I interpreted what she was saying was that a lot of cis women specifically can get a lot of liberation out of sex, and that was it. It really forgot and ignored trans and non-binary folks in ways that implied your genitals, that can apparently without doubt, deliver you empowerment . . . because her art was for cis women, it forgot every asexual person and she didn't really seem open to criticisms on that. She wrote a couple articles, online interview type things, and she basically just dismissed anyone's criticisms of her work, which is kind of exhausting to see. I found a lot of people in town were really into her work and that's super cool if someone is, a lot of people who I really value and respect their opinion were super into it. That's fine but I was feeling really critical of what she was doing and no one was really listening to that. Other people who were critical of her work, people weren't really listening to them either. So I started doing aggressive guerrilla trans positive art in the city.*

Having attended the opening night of the *Cliteracy* exhibit myself, I witnessed a member of the audience question the hetero- and cis-normativity in Wallace's work, and Wallace's subsequent dismissal of the question as irrelevant to her work. Part of the history of graffiti is in claiming and taking up space where people are otherwise silenced.

Since street art is anonymous and quick to execute, it can play a unique role in documenting and reflecting on current events and social issues by expressing solidarity with a particular viewpoint. As more and more people begin to use the street as a forum for expression, communication, and debate, street art proliferates as a powerful tool of expression for those denied more traditional platforms.

(Harazny et al., 2014, p. 518)

People are forced to find alternative ways to express their ideas, opinions, and frustrations when they do not have access to 'legitimate' platforms. When this participant experienced being silenced and witnessed others being silenced for expressing views that challenged cis- and hetero-normativity, they responded by creatively taking up visual space to disrupt a dialogue that excluded them.

Die Active has been involved in creating invited graffiti murals throughout the city of Thunder Bay. The Die Active murals change both the visual landscape and the social landscape while being painted, and then also during the 'unveiling' street party.

And then street-art, specifically DefSup street-art, focusing on different neighbourhoods, I feel like it does bring people closer together. The street-art on the Macs by where you live, there was that opening and each time there's an opening its like a block party, cool people, food. Mhmm, people who maybe haven't heard about DefSup now know about DefSup and are engaged in that way to participate and to enjoy food, enjoy the performers, enjoy the music, for even just a minute, even if they're just walking by and they can return at another time. I feel like visibility, does bring people together, people are attracted to things that are beautiful and it adds to the community. (Jayal)

Jayal highlighted a number of ways that the Die Active murals affect their host communities. An economically and socially marginalized community, the Ogden/Simpson neighbourhood on the South side of town, has a reputation for poverty, violence, and prostitution. After repeated robberies of their stores in the Ogden/Simpson neighbourhood, Mac's Convenience Stores commissioned Die Active to engage young people from the community in painting murals on some of their buildings, in the hopes that the community would then see their stores as *part* of their community. The mural in the photo below (see Figure 8) is a block away from the house I lived in for almost a decade. As a resident of the neighbourhood I saw how ghettoization affected the community school and quality of my daughter's education, I saw johns picking up women working on the street, and I experienced the social isolation that came from living in an undesirable neighbourhood.

The murals bring visibility to Die Active, inviting more people into the collective in general, and more immediately into the painting of the mural. While the mural is being created it creates a temporary social space where the community engages people working on the mural and it beautifies the landscape, transforming brick and concrete into beautiful, colourful works of art. Attending the 'unveiling' street party, I witnessed members of the community coming together to share in the celebration of the beautification of this street corner. As a member of the community, I benefitted daily

from this visual improvement to my morning commute.



Figure 8. Die Active Mural Street Unveiling Party. Community members and performers at the ‘unveiling’ of the mural on the Mac’s Convenience store on Simpson St., Thunder Bay. Photo credit: Varainja Stock (2013).

DefSup has a number of events that engage and spill out into the downtown core on the north side of Thunder Bay; one annual event that increases foot traffic in the neighbourhood is *Urban Infill*.

Urban Infill, which is coming up in, like, the beginning of April, is awesome. The fact that they – they’re, like, hey lets take empty spaces in our downtown core and turn them into art galleries to get people into these spaces and engaging, and showing, not only showing off the amazing artists that this city has because there are so many, its jaw-dropping how diverse the amount of artists we have are. Then you’re also getting people into these spaces that are empty and it’s not

consistent from year to year because people end up checking out these spaces and they're like, "Oh, this is available to rent?" or people end up, that's a big part of it too. Part of the original goal for Urban Infill is to fill, get people into these empty spaces in our downtown core and build up downtown. (boy Roland)

The north core in Thunder Bay has experienced a grassroots-led economic and urban renewal in the past decade with local entrepreneurs taking up more spaces to open small businesses. *Urban Infill* has been credited with helping to highlight the potential of many of the empty retail spaces in the neighbourhood by using them as pop-up gallery spaces for an interactive exhibition that sees groups of people being led around town by tour guides in yellow raincoats with butterflies in their hair. Visitors are supplied with maps of where the various pop-up gallery and live entertainment venues are located and invited to wander the streets viewing window displays of wearable artwork, enter into pop-up galleries in empty retail spaces, and watch live entertainment from local musicians and performers.

Ten years ago, *Urban Infill - Art in the Core* was created to help fill up empty spaces with art and revitalized the downtown north core. "Generations of people weren't coming downtown anymore," explains Definitely Superior Art Gallery's executive/artistic director David Karasiewicz. "This was an opportunity to take back those underutilized commercial spaces and convert them into arts and culture venues over a three month period." (Jarva, 2016)



Figure 9. Urban Infill Art in the Core. Model: Janna Zachary, Wearable Art: Varainja Stock, Photo credit: Dan Ventrudo (2016).

Street art, in its various forms, is unique in that it engages people as part of their landscape on a daily basis and has a level of accessibility for artists and community members that gallery spaces do not. Street art is a way of reclaiming neighbourhoods through challenging legitimate discourses and creating canvasses out of commercialized spaces. The arts create transformation through inviting people to see and think differently, a process necessary for critical civic praxis (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). The International Women's Day exhibit and *WWOS* were spaces that encouraged critical dialogue through exhibiting different viewpoints and challenging people to engage with art on personal and emotional levels. *Walking With Our Sisters* and the medicine wheels

painted in public spaces were acts of Indigenous knowledge revitalization. The Die Active murals, *Urban Infill*, and graffiti contributed to economic and urban revitalization by creating dialogue and transforming the physical urban landscapes into vibrant social spaces.

The Roots

In the following paragraphs I present the pedagogical roots that fed the experiences and transformative actions of participants who were involved in collective and community arts. What makes these elements transformative is that they cultivate individual, collective, social, physical, and political transformation. At the root of the programs, collectives, and projects that participants spoke about are transformative ways that participants engaged with ideas and the community. From the interviews, I identified five principles guiding participants' approach to mentoring, facilitating, and program development that were also supported by the participants and learners experiences, these are *authenticity, trust, relationship (love), humility, and critical reflection*.

Authenticity.

Authenticity refers to programming that is developed and informed by the meaningful inclusion of community input on an ongoing basis. Authentic programming is community led, it originates in the community and is based on expressed interests of individuals, it invites community in and asks what they want, it involves collective decision-making, and it shifts with the community as needs and desires change. There is meaningful community involvement, where committees and boards are representative of the community, where community members are meaningfully involved in organizational and decision making processes, they actively resist co-optation by institutional interests,

and their processes are transparent. They prioritize process over outcome, participation is enjoyable, the social environment feels safe, participation and extent of participation is optional, and participation is experienced as nourishing.

Die Active and Neechee.

Lora attributed the success of the Die Active Art Collective and Neechee Studio to authenticity. As one of the founding members of Die Active, Lora defines authenticity as programming that is community led, created from the interests of the people who participate in the programming, including herself.

When I started Die Active I was 22 and I just remember instead of trying to create something that was wanted by my work, I just let myself be a young selfish person and said, “What do I want to do on the weekends with my friends in a gallery space?” And I made a list . . . and then the first Die Active meeting was all about asking other people to do the same thing. So all the information collected is then funneled down to everybody’s top interest and you just do it. And you don’t care about the outcome or any of that, so that’s how we ended up making a lot of hilarious art or doing weird art intervention or just going out into the public space and shaking things up a bit and making each other laugh. (Lora)

Julia drew on her experience starting Die Active when she decided to start The Other 10%, a group for LGBTQ2S youth (aged 12-25): “*You go find the youth, you meet with them, you ask them what they want, and that’s the thing with all this programming, all of it’s youth driven.*” Julia had already experienced success when prioritizing the ideas and needs of the community when starting Die Active, and then applied this knowledge to her next undertaking creating a support group with youth.

Neechee arose out of a need for an arts space specifically for Indigenous youth. Lucille had been attending Die Active since she was 20 or 21, dropping off artwork and submitting work for the Die Active Zine, but she did not fully engage with the group, talk to anyone, or stay for the full workshops. Neechee was created when Lucille advocated for programming for Indigenous youth, as an Indigenous youth who did not find a home at Die Active. *“Lucille let me know that it [Die Active] was exclusionary, and Lucille came up with the idea of creating a Die Active that was just for Indigenous youth”* (Lora). When discussing Neechee, Lora is quick to point out that Lucille created it. Lucille showed Lora that Die Active was not inclusive for Indigenous youth, and that specifically Indigenous youth programming was needed. *“Lucille is the one who started Neechee, I didn’t start Neechee”* (Lora).

Discussing Neechee Studio, Lora explained how having *“the right people on the committee”* keeps Neechee authentic and contributes to the overall success of the program. *“Neechee isn’t being run or created for anyone but the people coming to it, and we keep it that way”* (Lora). DefSup has provided the ongoing support for Die Active and Neechee that has facilitated the longevity, independence, and authenticity of the collectives.

The gallery is just this quiet backbone that gives space and money, so I’m trying really hard to hold on to that, this golden ball of light that drives all the work I do. Just putting art at the centre, and the actual interests of the young people engaging in it putting that at the centre. (Lora)

With a regular attendance of 40-60 participants for the past three years, Neechee Studio has provided a space where Indigenous youth (aged 14-30) feel welcome, safe, and heard.

Varainja: *Why do you think people show up?*

Lucille: *I think they show up because of the pizza, just kidding. . . . People look for free things to do and we try different things and it must interest people and I guess we try to make it a safe environment. . . . it just feels good to be there.*

Part of keeping programming authentic is being cautious about who is representing and promoting it. As Lora realized that Die Active was not inclusive of Indigenous youth, she also realized that it matters who is promoting and perceived as the face of Neechee because this affects who feels welcome in the space. Despite the good intentions of others who want to support Neechee by helping to promote the collective, Lora insisted that it is important to keep it in the hands of the community.

I have to stop them from promoting it in any way; they want to do it just because they want to support it, but it has to have the right voice. If it's being promoted, it should be promoted by the young people who are in it by word of mouth and we can't overpromote because we don't have enough room here as it is. And we don't want celebrity around Neechee at all, it's a quiet healing space for art creation.

(Lora)

Die Active and Neechee were created out of the expressed needs of young artists who first advocated for themselves, and then invited others in to share their needs. Being community-led keeps these collectives authentic.

Walking With Our Sisters.

Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS) began with Christi Belcourt, a Michif (Métis) artist from Ontario (Belcourt, 2016). Jean has been involved with *WWOS* since Christi

contacted her to make a pair of vamps (the ornate tops of moccasins) as part of the art installation. One way Jean has continued her involvement, beyond creating and submitting vamps, is to act as an ongoing support in the community through hosting bead-ins. Bead-ins are when people gather to do beading and hold space for *WWOS*, and have been held throughout Thunder Bay as part of the ongoing community work that has arisen from *WWOS*. Jean and others are invited to schools, organizations, and communities to teach people how to bead, to talk about *WWOS*, to bring people together, to provide a safe space to share stories, to mobilize their communities, and begin to heal.

And that started with one person, Christi Belcourt . . . she has a daughter, a young teenage daughter. . . . and she just did the call out for 600 [vamps] and then got over 1500 you know what I mean? And she just did it on the fly, like just putting it out there you know, like, I remember her sending me a message like, “hey, would you do me a pair of moccasin vamps for this? I have this idea,” “oh yeah sure, yeah,” you know, not thinking that it would turn into this movement, right. (Jean)

Starting with Christi Belcourt’s need to do something to “acknowledge the grief and torment families of these [missing and murdered Indigenous women],” *Walking With Our Sisters* has become a national movement with exhibitions booked through 2019 (*Walking With Our Sisters*, 2016b). *Walking With Our Sisters* began with members of the community and the need to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada and the US, it has an authentic committee made up of Indigenous women, and it has grown and moved responding to community feedback. What started out as a relatively small call for vamps to commemorate missing and murdered Indigenous women has had

an overwhelming response, and built a community around a shared experience and desire to commemorate and honour loved ones.

Community Arts and Heritage Education Project.

Alana, the executive and artistic director for the Community Arts and Heritage Education Project (CAHEP), spoke about the relationship between her collaborative process and the impact programming has in a community. Alana stated that even though her planning process is often confusing to others who run organizations, garnering meaningful input from the community through developing long-term relationships is integral to the work that CAHEP does in neighbourhoods.

There's a lot of work we do right now with neighbourhood organizations, working with more underrepresented neighbourhoods, and travelling our programs directly to those communities, and working in collaboration with children and youth in the area to establish what kind of programming they want to do and then find the artist to make it happen. We try to make sure everyone has an equal share in what's going on; I think that's really important to make sure people feel invested in what they're doing. There's no point in going and doing a graffiti art project in a community if they hate graffiti and all they want to do is paint butterflies [laughs]. (Alana)

Authentic programming is community led by involving meaningful community input in programming and organizational decisions, actively resisting co-optation, and prioritizing process over outcome. Die Active, Neechee, and *Walking With Our Sisters* all started with community members prioritizing their own needs, and then inviting more community members in, and they were successful because of the realization of a shared

need. Participants spoke about valuing ongoing dialogue with community to adapt and shift to continue to respond to community needs as they change. Ongoing dialogue helps programs stay focused on process, how they are organized and facilitated, rather than on achieving a product-based outcome by prioritizing the expressed needs of the community garnered from directly engaging the community, ensuring that the community is at the heart of programming and organizational decisions, and adapting and growing based on community feedback.

Trust.

Trust in people and the community should direct actions and decisions for programming. Trust involves giving up control and not censoring as a facilitator, mentor, or program director so that the community can experience freedom to determine their objectives. “A pedagogy of autonomy should be centered on experiences that stimulate decision making and responsibility, in other words, on experiences that respect freedom” (Freire, 1998/2001, p. 98). Trust involves creating an environment where participants are supported to develop their own ideas and trust in the communities’ process as they build momentum towards a goal. Trust allows for horizontal mentorship, where people have space to teach each other, and it supports development of leadership from within as people experience being heard, bringing ideas to fruition, and mentoring. When there is trust, community members are encouraged to participate in organizational decisions and take on leadership roles. Trust is integral to the organizational process, allowing time for people to direct the process, decide when they are ready to take the next step, and define what their goals are.

Definitely Superior Art Gallery.

As an artist run gallery, DefSup promotes community artist's initiatives, providing tangible supports to exhibit and run programming. Having access to a consistent physical space facilitates the intangible building blocks of communities including social networks, skill-sharing, mentorship, and leadership development. Jayal has stayed involved with DefSup because of the relationships she has developed through ongoing involvement, and the support she receives to bring her ideas to fruition. Along with her interest in learning and trying new things, Jayal has been invited in, had positive experiences, built relationships, and feels trusted.

. . . wanting to learn some specific skills or trying out things, and Lora Northway, and David [Karasiewicz] and Renee [Terpstra] in particular, those opportunities, talking to them, being invited to perform with, for example, Random Acts of Poetry. Being invited 2 years ago to perform and feeling great after having that experience. I think over the years I feel, friendship, I feel like I can be myself, I can really try things and they give me so much trust. (Jayal)

Experiencing a trusting relationship with DefSup encouraged Jayal to bring her ideas for International Women's Day to the gallery; DefSup provided practical support as well as enthusiasm and encouragement for her ideas.

I just decided to go and talk to Lora and they were excited about the idea. . . . I wasn't too sure what I was doing yet and then I was like, okay, I'm going to talk to Lora. . . . Lora was saying yes to stuff so I was like, whoa you know what would be really cool, can we bring this artist that I really like, Sophia Wallace? This is what she does and we talked about it and everybody like Lora, David, and Renee

were saying yes and I was just so excited about it. (Jayal)

DefSup provided the physical space and advertising for the exhibit, while Lora helped Jayal curate the show bringing together 40 local artists to exhibit alongside Sophia Wallace.

The Die Active Art Collective and Neechee Studio are both run out of the DefSup gallery and are artist collectives that have grown from the expressed needs of young community members. Julia, one of the founding members of Die Active, learned if you want to make programming for the community you need to engage the community to ask them what they want. Rather than design programming based on what you want to offer, or what you think would be ‘good’ or is ‘needed,’ a transformative pedagogy of place involves trusting the community to determine their own needs which in turn fosters horizontal leadership.

I think that some of the most important stuff I learned from working on that project and again not even through literature which I’m now reading, but just through this innate sense that if you want a kid to come to a workshop, you give them a workshop that they want to learn, ask them what they want. So we just met with a bunch of kids and were like, “What do you want to do this year?” That was how we started Die Active, like “what do you want to work on?” and people would be like “silk-screening,” “spray-painting.” Everyone was like “spray-painting, spray-painting, we want to learn spray-painting.” (Julia)

Lora explained that having the gallery provide practical support but not direct Neechee is one of the reasons they have had such high attendance (regularly 40-60 participants); Neechee is led by the community for the community.

It's about letting it be youth led. If you want to have youth attend your thing, you better fucking make it youth led. Then just giving up the control so that there's a freedom that is real that happens, and then you don't have something that feels like a lecture or something that feels like you're forcing people to come to, it has to feel empowering for them to go there. (Lora)

Die Active grew from Lora prioritizing her own “selfish” needs first, then inviting others in to figure out and share what they wanted, and that process of communicating their own ideas led to developing collaborative artwork.

So I get these people all together and they try and decide what they want to achieve that summer, and . . . it quickly shaped from just them wanting to publish their own art to wanting to create new art and learn how to create new art together. (Lora)

This was echoed in boy Roland's explanation of what kept him involved in the collective.

Also because I wasn't aware of any collectives ever existing in Thunder Bay, especially none that were so open and free. Not only financially free, but also just “do whatever you want, what are you wanting to do, what are you wanting to say” no restrictions, no censorship, just, you be you. And encouraging that really deep down. (boy Roland)

DefSup demonstrates trust in artists by providing space and support for artist initiatives and programming. Trust involves creating spaces where individuals are invited in, listened to, supported, and not censored.

Community Arts and Heritage Education Project.

Horizontal mentorship and relationship-building are nourished when programming

trusts in what people have to offer. Participants are treated as valuable and knowledgeable, capable of supporting each other, and are not dependent on a facilitator to maintain ‘control.’

What happens I guess when people get a chance to collaborate is friendships form, which is really important, and people feel more supported, and they often say they feel like they’ve come out of it feeling a lot more inspired by the person that they’ve been working with, so that can create new projects. It can create deeper collaborations too. (Alana)

Alana insists on working collaboratively with the communities she delivers arts education to, even though it can create more work and can be difficult, and is not always supported. Alana acknowledged that her position as executive and artistic director affords her privilege and makes it impossible to work completely non-hierarchically, however, she works to reduce as many barriers as possible to working collaboratively in communities.

I work in a really collaborative way, and I try to get everyone’s input. . . . I see that as really important, but you get a little bit of flak for doing things like that [laughs] sometimes. . . . even though my title is ED [executive director], I don’t really believe that I’m in a hierarchy, I try to level it out as much as possible [laughing]. You can’t because there’s privilege and things that come into play. There’s a lot of weird hierarchies within other organizations and I just don’t work that way at all, it’s tricky. (Alana)

From her own experience in high school, Alana understands the value of having space to create, without judgment or expectation, and she brings this experience into how she facilitates

That access to a space that I could create in was really, really important for me. . . . Every time I start a workshop, I love hearing kids talk about art, [especially] kids I've been working with for a long time because they say things like "art has no rules," or "there's no wrong in art," or "I really like art because you never tell me I can't do something," and I find kids sometimes start out challenging you and they're like, well, "I'm going to do it this way instead, and you told me to do it this way," I never tell them not to. I'm just like, "yeah, go and try it" and they don't know what to do with that [laughs] which is really fun. I love that part of it [laughs]. . . . it's really neat to see how kids who don't thrive in school blossom when you give them the chance to explore things, I love that part. (Alana)

Alana witnesses the positive effect on people when they are allowed space to challenge expected ways of doing, to think creatively, and receive support. When people experience trust through support to develop their ideas people start to take on leadership roles.

I think you see them start to take on leadership roles, which is really cool, it's really important to make a space where they feel welcomed and feel like they're listened to. Like I said before, if they're in there and they're saying "I hate this, this is not fun for me," instead of saying "well you have to do it," just let them not do it, or ask them what would be better and what would you rather be doing. Then bringing that kind of workshop or that kind of programming to them next time, and then you see them come back every single week. They're sometimes kids who maybe don't go to school or they just are facing a lot of stuff in their lives and they really find a home in the arts, which is really neat to see. (Alana)

Trusting people to know their own needs and supporting them to develop their ideas is an

important process in these programs. Despite claims to the contrary, valuing the process over a pre-determined end goal does not mean that the quality of work will suffer.

I would say that's really the difference between some of the formulas that we've put together for professional art that we've said 'this makes this professional,' is that, that end product is more important than anything else. You know it's a tricky conversation because people will say, "well if you only care about the process then you'll lose the professional quality, the push for excellence," all those things. And I think the opposite is true, personally. I think there's a quality process and I've worked enough with mentors and people who are incredible leaders in their field, worked enough with certain mentors that completely value the process and the product is exquisite so I know you don't have to sacrifice one for the other.

(Eleanor)

Trust in the community must direct actions and decisions for programming. Lucille explained how one of her mentors pushed her to get beyond her shyness and get involved in creating Neechee. Trust arose as a salient theme throughout the interviews as participants discussed how they either experienced it as a participant or demonstrated it as a facilitator. Facilitators talked about giving up control through non-censorship and seeking out community input; participants were trusted and received support to develop their ideas for exhibitions and programming; and there was space for intergenerational and horizontal mentorship as participants' knowledge was valued.

Relationships (love).

Cultivating relationships based on respect and love is integral for collective organizing and effecting social transformation. Participants described how they valued

fostering friendships and connected this to keeping programming authentic. Participants nurtured relationships with artists, participants, and the wider community, creating a sense of belonging and purpose for those involved. Intentionally fostering friendships grew pools of artists resulting in involvement based on a deep respect for the work. Long-term programming allowed for relationship-building with community members encouraging greater community control over programming. Jean shared with me a teaching that her Anishinaabemowin language teacher had shared with her about *gi zah gin* (love).

One of the teachings that she shared with us was 'gi zah gin,' which means love. She was saying that there's certain stages in your life, there's all these stages, but once you get to the end and you're preparing to journey on, your entire life should be guided by love. Say it's easy to love someone that you like, like when we see each other, like, "hey how's it going" there's love there. But say you and me don't really like each other, say there's some things in between us that are getting in the way, all the different kinds of love that exist and you have to challenge yourself with love. Sometimes, instead of me being like, "ugh, that Varainja" [laughs]. You know I should actually conquer that and get to a higher place with you, even though it's challenging and you drive me crazy, and all these things. . . . But then those people are there to challenge you, they're there to help you grow, so that's really interesting, it makes you think about everything completely differently. She said at the end, when you're getting ready to journey on. . . . love and kindness guides you and the more that you offer that and put that out there, the brighter your light is going to be, so the easier it's going to be for you to go where you go next.

(Jean)

This teaching about gi zah gin that Jean shared resonated with how other participants spoke about the value of relationships in their ongoing commitment to their work.

Listening to interviews I was often overwhelmed by this sentiment that seemed to feed these artists' ongoing work with the community.

Feeding the community both figuratively and literally brings people together. Food is offered at many of the workshops participants were involved in. Julia expressed how food brings community together and nurtures relationships.

Varainja: *Free food's a really big thing to get people to go to things.*

Julia: *And what kind of community do you have that you don't share food with, right? That's always the most important at community events I think. . . . It all revolves around food, man, it's the way to bring people together and it's the way to nurture each other.*

Sharing food also created a space where people could interact in a low to no-pressure environment. Dayna spoke about the conversations that participants engaged in while sharing food after the art portion of a workshop. Sharing food extended the space originally created by learning and engaging in art creation together.

So they are really good at teaching each other and helping each other, and that happens a lot just naturally, of people being like, "why don't you try this, and why don't you try that." . . . that one [program] is very very encouraging, they're just like "that's really good," "oh that's beautiful," "oh that's really nice" . . . and then when the art pieces are done you sit and have tea and have food, that's a part of the program and at that point it's a nice set-up for dialogue too because

you've shown that you've been afraid and that you feel nervous, that you're not sure about your talents, and they have this weird movement into like, "ok now we're going to eat this yummy thing and chat with each other," having opened up with a bit of nervousness and then support, supporting and encouraging each other. (Dayna)

Collective and community art spaces that are consistent, that provide a safe atmosphere, where people are brought in and can feel a sense of belonging and purpose, foster relationships with, and in, the community. Neechee Studio is one of those spaces, "it's the one place where I can meet all my favourite people in one spot, because we're busy" (Lucille).

But when they're at a place, where there's young people out there that feel alone and are seeking people out, they can find it for free, almost every single week at the gallery. Teach them how to get along with each other, it teaches them about organizing. Lora is always like, "ok I need help doing this, I need help doing this, I'm going to give you a job and give you a job," it makes them feel like they belong and they have a purpose. (Julia)

I experienced this when I attended Neechee with my daughter in 2016 with the intention of volunteering. Lora made sure we felt welcome by encouraging us to make art and letting me know when and how I could be of use. Living in a small urban centre has made it easier to develop a sense of community within the arts scene as artists and others can go to various events throughout the city and throughout the year and see the same people which provides familiarity that then cultivates relationships. In the following quotes, Barbara and Laura, both artists in the community who have mentored with

CAHEP, explain their experiences being part of a community of artists.

It just promotes that sense of community, again because you go somewhere, and say Urban Infill, which was the most current thing that is happening, and you go and walk around and you're constantly running into people and you're having conversations and it makes that more fun and more lively. I think coming from a small town, and again I'm really into that small town vibe, being part of that scene, it has that same, you know everybody and you run into the same people.

(Barbara)

I've created friendships through just being part of the art scene, just being an artist myself, I go and check stuff out, meet people, and then through those friendships see what's going on. It's a lot, probably a lot of stuff on online, on Facebook, you see like what's going on, "Oh, I'd love to do that," being invited that way or directly from people like Lora. Just for myself specifically. . . . I get a lot out of being part of a group, I think that it feels really good, it nurtures my soul. I enjoy coming down and being a part of something that's going on. (Laura)

One participant explained that even though they have not been able to participate as much as they would like to, they continue to be invited. This participant has had a difficult time balancing their work, art, and community involvement and was thankful that they were not forgotten, even though they could not attend workshops consistently.

Program facilitators expressed how relationships nourished their presence as well as created networks of artists who are invested in the impacts their programming has in the community.

I try to create a friendship, a family of friendships with artists, and not just me individually but Neechee does that so we're always inviting artists to come to Neechee, just to come to be part of the family, even if you're never going to teach a workshop, you come because you know it's important. That's one of the ways that we are meeting and growing our pool of artists. They want to be a part of it because they can see the impact, they can see how important it is, and how fun it is. (Lora)

Organizations need to demonstrate long-term commitment in order to build relationships within communities. Dayna and Alana both spoke about the importance of flexibility and consistency for developing relationships in community programming:

[It's] pretty open, it's okay if some people come one day, if lots of people come another day, we don't really have control over these things. At least we're here when we're needed and it's a reliable, consistent thing. (Dayna)

I have a real focus on long-term programming and getting to know people on an individual level. We have coordinators who work with the neighbourhoods and go and do shorter-term art activities with people just to facilitate conversation, and get to know the kids, and build up a relationship with them and build up feelings of trust, and feelings of consistency. . . . Long-term relationships are what is really important when you're trying to make sure the people you're working with have a say in what you're doing. (Alana)

Similarly, doing artwork out in the community over a period of time is a way to draw community into programming.

There's something about it that people get that same, people become comfortable, there's something that its like they can't help themselves, they're just drawn to it. . . . The way it draws people in and they want to know, which works really well for Die Active because then they're like, "what is this?" "can I be involved?" "do you do more of this?" whatever it is. If you're out there, this summer we're out there for 2 and a half weeks working on that wall, and that's a long time to be in one space working on something you can have a pretty consistent group of people that are always going through there. (boy Roland)

Collective organizing founded on loving relationships are necessary for transformative actions. Loving relationships support genuine community involvement and open space for critical dialogue that keeps programming authentic. They cultivate a sense of belonging and purpose for participants, create community, increase safety, and provide conditions for building strong networks.

Humility.

Exercising humility allowed artists to create transformative programming through trust in peoples' abilities to create their own solutions, aiding the development of meaningful relationships, and made room for the ability to engage in courageous reflection leading to individual and collective transformation. People in leadership, mentorship, and learner roles demonstrated humility in the ways they spoke about their involvement in community arts. Mentorship and facilitation that demonstrated humility valued participation from everyone, mentors saw themselves as part of the community, and strove to be relatable and find common ground. They saw themselves as learners and acknowledged the teachings that others shared with them. They saw knowledge as a gift

to be shared, and did so for the community and not for personal gain or their own ego. They were okay with not knowing, and letting others know the limits to their knowledge and/or asking for help. They saw the outcome as belonging to the participants, as facilitators and mentors they shared their knowledge so participants could choose to take it up and create something new. From over thirty years of experience working in community-engaged arts, Eleanor shared the importance of community ownership.

The difference between me coming in and being like, “this is how I work as an artist,” and me coming in in an invitational kind of way. I think you have to completely let go of the idea that the outcome is a reflection of you. You have to have no ego in a way, you have to not see the outcome as yours, it doesn’t belong to you. I think its important that you’re acknowledged, I don’t think its healthy for groups to not acknowledge their facilitator so I’m not saying you should go as far as not having your name on it, I’m not saying that. But when it comes to the creative ownership, that has to be given to the participants. (Eleanor)

While community ownership is important, it does not negate the value of a facilitator who shares their knowledge and supports the creative process. Eleanor’s statement highlights the nuance involved in balancing valuing the knowledge that mentors and facilitators bring and inviting the community in to take ownership. Exercising humility through being open to shifting and inviting in new knowledge facilitates relationship building and demonstrates commitment to community ownership.

Various professions create division between the professional and the client; this is often important in the professional context for the benefit of both parties, however, small communities present different dynamics that call for a more nuanced understanding of

community, relationships, and boundaries (Cooper, 2012). Julia enjoyed seeing people in community art settings that she had previously worked with in a clinical setting. These moments reduced institutional barriers created by work and cemented her as part of the same community.

I've seen kids that I've worked with, and that were part of The Other 10% years ago. I saw them at Neechee this week and they came up to me like, "hey Julia." I wouldn't have even recognized them, and I see them out and about all the time. I think that it's good. . . . being able to allow them to see you as a member of the community as well. . . . I just mean, I'm a person that participates in stuff at Definitely Superior Art Gallery. I think that's really cool. (Julia)

Breaking down barriers between professional and client, facilitator and participant, and teacher and student requires humility. Lora is purposeful when finding artist mentors to work with Die Active and Neechee, selecting artists who will work well with youth, and who see themselves as learners.

Then I select artists based on how they relate to youth. . . . I try to make sure that the artists that are teaching also see themselves as learners. . . . That they're really humble, that they don't just see themselves as the carriers of knowledge, and that they're actually excited to be learning with and alongside the youth. (Lora)

While Lora talked of intentional hiring, Eleanor explained how community settings are more conducive to non-hierarchical relationships and mentoring than school settings, and that these settings facilitate community-building.

I do think its fluid, much more fluid than in a classroom setting or in a setting

where you're not establishing that we're all learners, including the facilitator and that you're trying to build a community, that's what you're doing more than anything. (Eleanor)

When doing community art education, Brian, an artist facilitator with CAHEP, tries to establish himself as part of the community, to make himself approachable, and signal that he is there to be a source of information rather than to evaluate. He explained that it is up to the people to determine what they want to learn and why.

But as I said, we kind of walk it through and I try not to be too removed, I try to meet everybody on common ground. I'm your friend, a bunch of friends around the table having dinner, think of me in that regard, I'm not judging you or grading you on this, this is totally up to you and I say, "You're here for a reason and what is that reason?" (Brian)

Each facilitator had different ways that they broke down the barriers between themselves as a facilitator and the people attending. While Brian tries to establish himself as a resource rather than an evaluator, Laura sees her social awkwardness as making her more approachable and suggests it is an advantage to facilitating rather than a hindrance:

Varainja: *So what's your teaching style?*

Laura: *How I'm talking now [laughing], it's very ridiculous. . . . I would probably be a terrible actual teacher, I'm pretty free flowing and I made a presentation so people have visuals, so when I'm stuttering along they know what I'm talking about [laughing]. Hire me.*

Varainja: *That doesn't make a bad teacher.*

Laura: *I'm hoping, especially if I'm working with youth, it makes it more*

relatable because I'm obviously like, meeeh, I'm weird like you people in your adolescence [laughing].

Mentors work from a place of humility when they establish themselves as learners, and strive to reduce hierarchies between themselves and participants. Acknowledging how she has grown as a teacher with the support of many people, Jean was quick to speak about her teachers who have mentored her, and explained how she continues to seek out support. *"I think that's a very important place for a teacher, or someone who's mentoring, or like a person in general, is to not feel like you have to know everything"* (Jean). Eleanor explained that disrupting traditional expectations of who teaches and who learns is one of the advantages to doing intergenerational work:

What I saw happening was a 6-year old showing an 86-year old how to do something. There were these opportunities where everything was flipped around, and the reversal also. But the point being that, that happened very openly, naturally, easily. It was also a very open process where people brought whatever skills they had, and we found a way to use those skills as opposed to me having a set idea of how things would go. (Eleanor)

Eleanor's comment highlights how valuing the knowledge and experience that everyone brings, regardless of their age or their role as 'participant' or 'facilitator' can enrich educational spaces and disrupt traditional teacher/learner dichotomies. Across interviews, humility was demonstrated in peoples' facilitation styles, what they looked for in mentors, their relationships to knowledge, and whom they saw the creative outcomes belonging to. More than explicit statements about how they run programming, humility was apparent in participants regularly extending credit to their mentors, other facilitators,

artists, and colleagues for their own successes and for the success of programming. None of the participants saw themselves as standing alone in their success.

Critical reflection.

The root *critical reflection* arose out of two things: 1) people's direct accounts of their own missteps and processes to invite feedback and challenge themselves, and 2) people's expressions of instances where programming lacked adequate reflection resulting in their exclusion. There was not perfect agreement across all participants on whether programs and facilitators were always successful at being authentic, humble, relational (loving), and trusting. However, instead of entering into a debate about degrees of success I have chosen to present the underlying and salient principles that have resulted in success and use criticisms and negative experiences as reminders that critical reflection needs to be ongoing. Ongoing critical reflection through inviting feedback, assessing whether actions continue to be aligned with goals, being open to new ways of doing, and questioning access, representation, and participation are necessary to keep processes transformative.

Neechee Studio arose out of a process of critical reflection as Lora realized that she felt uncomfortable with some art and poetry, indicating her own possible bias, and out of Lucille advocating for herself and arts programming for Indigenous youth. Lora needed Lucille to help her see her own bias when it came to making Die Active inclusive.

When I started Die Active six years ago I had really, really good attendance and I had this super social cool group of artsy people that I was proud to be a part of, and everybody in it was really proud to be a part of, and without knowing it I think that I was creating a cool club. I was also creating, not me, but we were all

as a group creating a sense of exclusivity that I didn't really permissively create.

(Lora)

Representation in programming is important, because Die Active was promoted as being for 'all youth.' Lora didn't realize Die Active was not inclusive; the majority of the young artists attending were White, and she didn't realize this was related to how the program was run, and who was running it.

We didn't have attendance of First Nations youth in the Die Active Art Collective, we had fucking like, maybe 2 members out of two hundred that were Indigenous. I didn't even notice that. . . . There was one youth that would come the whole time right from the beginning and always participate but very minimally. She would drop off artwork for the zine and poems, she would never really speak with me or anyone, she'd never attend a full workshop, but she was super keen and you could tell that she wanted to be a part of things because she was coming year after year but never staying. (Lora)

Lora realized she had to come to terms with her own racism, as she felt judgment, and had a difficult time applying her own no-censorship rule to Lucille's work that often dealt with difficult and traumatic events.

Eventually I would read her work and I could feel these judgments in myself that I had to fight and learn about. Just my own dormant racism that I didn't know I had, because her poems were about her family, and suicide, and her having to deal with loss and grief and not fitting in. I could notice, how am I putting these in a book that's all this cool art done by youth? (Lora)

Censorship was an issue for a few participants. Lora spoke openly about her

difficulty reconciling her expressed no-censorship policy with Lucille's work whereas some participants shared their feelings of being censored. A couple of participants recounted how discussions regarding hetero- and cis-normativity were silenced. One participant spoke about advocating for a specifically queer art exhibit as a platform for queer voices and experiences. This participant stated that their suggestion was treated as irrelevant, as it was believed that it was no longer needed, presumably because of a belief that queer voices are no longer marginalized. Another participant shared how they were shut down and their concerns treated as non-issues when pointing out the cis- and hetero-normativity in Sophia Wallace's *Cliteracy* work. This participant was frustrated because instead of responding to criticism by engaging in constructive dialogue, their concerns were treated as irrelevant to the work. Whether intentional or not, censorship is one way that critical dialogue is shut down in favour of the status quo and can contribute to the further marginalization of certain voices.

The internal critical dialogue that Lora spoke about regarding wanting to censor Lucille's work led to the realization of bias and contributed to the eventual creation of Neechee, a platform specifically for Indigenous youth. Beyond the creation of a platform to hear marginalized voices, who gets to speak the loudest on that platform is important, as is the public face of the programming. The success of Neechee is due to Lucille being the face and spokesperson for Neechee, and that they have artist mentors, who are also Indigenous, lead the workshops. Lora's willingness to engage in active critical reflection about her own potential biases created space for a dramatic change in her thinking and understanding of how to run inclusive programming.

Longstanding programs need to guard against complacency; as they become

established in the community they run a higher risk of falling into comfortable patterns, working with the same core group of people, and not reaching out to the community as much as in the beginning. One participant spoke about not participating as much in a program because they were witnessing that, as the program became more established, it became less open to new people. *“Seeing that get repetitive and curated and the same people working on the same kinds of things in the same space, I just pulled back a bit”* (Participant). Seeking regular feedback from participants who continue to be involved as well as those who drop out or drift away can help facilitators see their blind spots. *“No one ever asked, ‘hey why aren’t you coming out anymore?’”* (Participant). Making program review, and assessing ongoing work in relation to stated goals part of the program or collective can help raise these issues so that they can be addressed.

Transparency in decision-making processes can help invite new people in. *“Who was getting asked first, and who wasn’t getting asked anymore. The ownership thing is really complicated and complex, and no one’s really talking about it.”* (Participant)

Checking comfort levels and blind spots can keep programs open to new members.

Program decisions should be transparent and invite community members into the process.

New members need to see how they can become involved in decision-making, what opportunities are available to them, and how they can access those opportunities. *“It can make a big difference for that centre core of people to do a little more reaching out to some of the newer members especially because they were all new members [once].*

Everyone seems to forget that really quickly.” (Participant)

Purposefully inviting critical feedback is an opportunity for mentors to learn and adjust in order to continue to meet the needs of participants.

So yeah, I don't know, I feel like in the teaching that I do, I like to make sure that it's very inclusive, and if I'm not I try to develop a relationship with people so they'll feel comfortable with me to say, "I still don't get it." I think that's really important because as a young person in school I was not comfortable to tell anybody that I didn't know something and I think that's the worst place for a young person to be, is to not feel comfortable or not feel like they can approach their teacher to say, "I don't get it". (Jean)

Non-hierarchical relationships in collectives and programming create space for mentorship and learning to be fluid. Many participants were involved in both mentoring and learning depending on the situation. They often moved through these roles seamlessly, offering their knowledge and regularly seeking out guidance and learning opportunities. All participants spoke of someone who had taught them, changed their perspective, or exposed them to new ideas. For example:

I had an amazing mentor who had an art centre in Atikokan, and like everybody, I had worked in certain age groups, you know, adults, teens, children, seniors, it was all separated. She invited me to come up and do a drama workshop. And it was one of those situations where I walked in and there was a 4-year old and an 82-year old and everything in between, and I was kind of shocked. I didn't know that this would be happening. She just seemed so relaxed about it, and so 'of course it will work' and we had an amazing time and I started to think differently about intergenerational [work] from working with her, because I have worked with her quite extensively, I did numerous projects with her and it was always intergenerational. (Eleanor)

Critical reflection needs to be an ongoing practice through inviting feedback, checking in with participants, and examining one's own assumptions and successes for possible bias. It contributes to maintaining programming that is responsive to the community and provides space for transformation. As Freire (1970/2008) said, "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (p. 60).

Chapter 5: Critical Civic Praxis Development and Youth

How naming restricts dialogue

"I hate the word 'youth,' by the way" (Lora). Only taking hold in recent decades (Steinberg, 2014), the social construction of 'youth' is frequently conjured as a derogatory and totalizing term referring to people who are roughly 15 to 30-ish (Kellner, 2014). Youth, who consist of a highly heterogeneous demographic, with no clear boundaries, are done a disservice when treated as a homogenous whole. The field of *critical youth studies* highlights the social and economic conditions that negatively affect young peoples' access to traditional markers of adulthood (Kellner, 2014). Critical youth studies "goes beyond traditional pathological approaches to assert that young people have the ability to analyze their social context, to collectively engage in critical research, and resist repressive state and ideological institutions" (Akom et al., 2008). Beyond understanding the conditions that disadvantage a whole generation socially and economically, poising youth as victims of circumstance, youth are responding and redefining success, carving out new economies, social relationships, and transforming the worlds they live in (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Boyte, 2011; Kelly & Carson, 2012; Marri & Walker, 2008; O'Neill, 2015; Skinner & Masuda, 2013). Freire (1979/2008) insisted that revolution must come from the oppressed, not from the oppressors: "this lesson and this apprenticeship must come, however, from the oppressed themselves and from those who are truly solidary with them. As individuals or as peoples, by fighting for the restoration of their humanity they will be attempting the restoration of true generosity" (p. 45). In the following quote, Lora expresses frustration with how the contributions of young people are ignored and dismissed out of hand, rather than being

recognized for their contributions and included in critical dialogue about the structures that contribute to their oppression.

I kind of want to reveal, through positive examples, the potential and the growth and the impact that has already happened, and that is happening, and that it is at the hands of the youth, and the young people are the culture and creative makers. If you see that, and you see that around you in your city, and you've been appreciating it the whole time, it's time to give credit where credit is due, and actually drop those awful stereotyping words that you see people defaulting to.
(Lora)

This research adds to a larger body of critical youth studies that aims to disrupt dialogue that places blame on youth for what are systemic economic (Kellner, 2014), social, and political issues that have led to lower levels of employment, higher levels of poverty (Giroux, 2014), and lower levels of formal political engagement (Milner, 2005), for example. The continuation of the term 'youth' in the context of critical youth studies is understood as problematic, and was called out as discriminatory, and a tool of oppression by many of my participants while being invoked in order to access grants for programming.

I think that society treats people that way. Especially if you're still in high school, people generally still treat you like you're just a high school kid, just a teenager, just dismissed before they get to know you or see what you're about, or understand what your relationship's going to be. (boy Roland)

There are multiple funding streams earmarked for 'youth' because of the recognition that 'youth' are a financially marginalized demographic, and in order to access this funding

organizations have to adopt the terminology of the granting agencies, further lending legitimacy to the signifier.

I think it's a word for bureaucrats and I think it's full of red tape. I think it's alienating, I don't think who you claim to be youth identify with that word. I think that they feel it's a demeaning word when they're called it. It doesn't have a place in our vocabulary any more. . . . I have to use it all the time, don't get me wrong, that's how I get grants, that's probably why I hate the word. (Lora)

Moving away from the term 'youth', Alana provided some examples of other ways of describing her participants, "*when I work with participants I try to use the word young artist as much as possible or just referring to people as artists as opposed to youth*" (Alana). Lora expressed frustration and connected the use of the word 'youth' with a dismissive attitude from older generations who discount the very real contributions younger generations make to the community. She thought it would be good "*to help them understand that all the power and potential is actually very much alive in young people and it's that stereotyping and that attitude that is crushing the future of our city, it's mind boggling*" (Lora).

Acknowledging this, it needs to be considered that those who are on the 'outside looking in' need to stop defining an experience that is not their own. Once people decide to trust and relinquish control they can start to listen and see how people are responding to society in new and innovative ways, ways that do not fit into pre-conceived expectations of what success, social change, politics, or community development looks like.

Developing critical civic praxis through community-based collective arts

This research demonstrates the possibilities for social transformation that materialize when there is support for collective arts spaces, when collaboration and lateral mentorship are valued, and when authenticity, trust, humility, critical reflection, and relationships based on love, guide organizational processes. Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) theory on critical civic praxis created an entry point to researching critical civic praxis within community art-collectives. My guiding question addressed how community-based art-collectives function as spaces for the development of critical consciousness. Previous studies on critical civic praxis were in locations where there is an explicit focus on teaching about social justice and political ideas (Abu El Haj, 2009; Akom et al., 2008; Checkoway, 2013; Erbstein, 2013; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Nam, 2012; Porfilio et al., 2014; Rhoades, 2012; Shiller, 2013; Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013). My research explored whether similar processes exist when organizations utilize similar structural elements without an explicit social justice curriculum. I argue that they do. The "act of becoming involved" in community organizations can support critical thinking and civic engagement (Spickard Prettyman & Gargarella, 2013, p. 5). The various artist collectives, programs, and exhibitions participants spoke of supported civic engagement as a natural consequence of the way they were organized and the work they engaged in. Ginwright and Cammarota concluded that,

by framing personal issues as political, mutual trust and collective interests are deployed on behalf of the common good. Through critical civic praxis, youth demonstrate how social ties, intergenerational relationships, and connections to

organizations support youth in their quest for social justice. (p. 708)

This study highlights numerous examples of engaging in critical civic praxis, supported by intergenerational relationships and mentoring, access to social networks and community-based knowledge, and institutions as sources of economic and structural support. Positive social change was a result of participant and community interests in various social justice issues including decolonization, women's rights, trans rights, LGBTQ2S rights, and poverty, and working collectively in a supportive community, creating dialogue through artistic mediums. Dialogue is an act of creation and transformation (Freire, 1970/2008).

The community-based art-collectives that my participants spoke of met the conditions that Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) suggested promote critical civic praxis. However, they were not organized around social justice education as a core activity – Ginwright and Cammarota focused their criteria around transmitting political knowledge, whereas in the examples in my research, the transmission of political knowledge is not the core purpose nor a cemented aspect of the collectives. The enactment of art processes provided experiential knowledge of praxis. Public art is transformative allowing students to imagine futures, engage in public dialogue, and take up space in society (Duncum, 2011). Duncum (2011) argued for social justice pedagogies in public spaces because they can play at answering back to power by taking up space; they can provide mentoring and model visual interventions, and “strategies of subversion, and compromise”; and they allow students to “play with ideas; often in a transgressive way” (p. 360)

The first of Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) conditions that support critical civic praxis is that youth are actively involved in positive change in their communities.

Duncum (2011) looked at public works of art as means for enhancing community cohesiveness and enriching the physical environment. He suggested that deteriorating and contested urban spaces are opportunities for expressing imagined futures. The Die Active street murals throughout the city of Thunder Bay have engaged neighbourhoods and transformed the physical landscape. Through the creation of colourful public murals, Die Active has brought new life into the city. boy Roland spoke about how excited people are to see things happening in Thunder Bay, and Laura shared feedback she has heard from community members about the Die Active mural on the façade of one of the public libraries:

Every time I've been outside the library, people are like, this is really cool. When we were working there everybody passing by was like, 'wow, why are you doing this? This is awesome,' because I think other people enjoy seeing a positive thing happening, a positive decoration of a building. (Laura)

The second process is the transmission of institutional knowledge for organizing social change (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). The various programs and collectives that participants were involved with were sites where community was invited in to enact various artistic projects that impacted the community through physical transformation of space, knowledge mobilization, and the creation of dialogue about social justice issues. Lucille got involved in organizing through the creation of Neechee after putting her ideas forward at a conference on Indigenous youth engagement. *"So we went to the art gallery to have a meeting, show them what's up, and they were interested so they applied together, so that's how we formed Neechee"* (Lucille). Jayal has been involved in organizing a number of collectives and events through DefSup, including InVisible Ink

and the International Women's Day exhibit. When people are engaged in their communities and have experiential knowledge of collective organizing and bringing ideas to fruition they are better equipped to extend this knowledge into other spheres of social and political life (Bourdieu, 1991).

Engaging in and experiencing critical civic praxis is an opportunity to “comprehend the full, humanistic potential to *create social change* [emphasis in original]” (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 699). Involvement in art-collectives provided opportunity to engage with local social issues, including revitalizing neglected neighbourhoods through public murals and pop-up galleries; creating accessible programming to address issues of financial and geographic isolation, by providing free programming, transportation fare, and food; and addressing violence against women, through *Walking With Our Sisters*. Bead-ins were one way that *Walking With Our Sisters* kept the conversation going outside of the commemorative exhibit, extending its impact in the community. The installation and creation of art provided opportunities for dialogue and social transformation as art acts upon us and we interact with art to create space for new ideas (Deleuze, 2002).

The three collectives and programs specifically targeting ‘youth’ that participants spoke of in this study emphasized the role that members had in ongoing program development and direction. Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) emphasized the importance of being involved in institutional processes from conceptualization to development to action. Facilitators spoke about the necessity of including members in organizational decisions and processes, and inviting them in to hold key organizational positions. Members also spoke about how their participation in various artist collectives had led to

taking on organizational and leadership roles. A participant spoke about how being involved with the Willow Springs Creative Centre introduced them to various networks of people involved in organizing craft markets, and from these connections they were able to organize a local artist craft market.

Intergenerational relationships and mentoring support the transmission of political ideas and knowledge (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Elliot intentionally shares Indigenous teachings and philosophy when he does arts education as Indigenous knowledges are missing in the formal education system (Hampton, 1995; Tejada, Espinoza, & Gutierrez, 2003). Through membership in the Die Active Art Collective and support from another community youth group, Lucille had the opportunity and access to mentors and institutional structure to start Neechee Studio.

I said “well what about art?” you know, “what about we do workshops throughout the school year or something” then I told them about Die Active, and how it happens in the summer time and all that. I mentioned Lora, and from there we just carried on. That’s when I got motivated to go back to school, to do better I guess. (Lucille)

Encouraging the examination, analysis, and construction of actions to address social issues supports critical civic praxis development (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). The mentorship and intergenerational structures of the collectives and programs provide opportunity to share and engage in political ideas. As part of *Water’s Wisdom*, a multi-site art collaboration through CAHEP, Elliot introduced students to Indigenous knowledge and philosophy about water to introduce the art practice he engaged students in. As part of *Walking With Our Sisters*, Jayal spent time with Indigenous elders learning

about protocol and respectful relationships. Aside from the more explicit conversations about Indigenous knowledge, or violence against women, and decolonization, artist collectives created lived experience of political engagement through art practice. By taking up public space, artists are involved in transforming the social and political landscape and re-affirming (through enacting) their rights to free speech, collective organizing, and expression.

Despite lower levels of formal political participation in younger generations, studies have documented how young people are engaged in numerous ways that affect the social, political, and physical landscapes (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Checkoway, 2013; Kelly & Carson, 2012; Marri & Walker, 2008; O'Neill, 2015; Skinner & Masuda, 2013). As previously mentioned, people are more likely to participate when they are engaged in their social world, are knowledgeable about their communities, and able to act on this experiential knowledge (Bourdieu, 1991). As part of the first Thunder Bay pride event, *Pride Thunder Bay*, Julia arranged for Die Active members to run an open spray-painting workshop where they “*wrote the word ‘gaze’ on these giant cardboard fridge boxes*” (Julia). A play on the word ‘gays’, they were speaking back to the experience of being subjected to the heteronormative gaze. Engaging people in discussions about issues that were relevant to them is essential to learning and meaningful civic engagement (Shiller, 2013).

The arts are an open space for people to express, examine, analyze, and construct ways to address social and political issues. Often artists experienced pushback from either their own expectations of how people would receive their work, or from members of community and other organizations. Overall, participants spoke about how their art

had a positive impact in the community and on their own sense of what they could accomplish. boy Roland shared his experience when exhibiting a ceramic series that addressed abortion:

I'm just this dumb young White guy in his early 20's and I'm engaging with a group of 90% women and a lot of them are much older than me. I was just terrified, I was being confronted by this thing. I was just like, okay great, I'm about to get slaughtered . . . for whatever various reasons. And no, it was great, I had these great conversations and before I talked about anything I had to say about it, I would just ask them, "Well what are you guys getting, do you have anything to think or say?" And hearing all these people talk about it, and talk to one another about it, and how two different people were getting totally different feelings from stuff that was happening. It just totally felt reassuring that I was doing the right thing. (boy Roland)

The collectives and programs were spaces that fostered community networks and lateral relationships where people's knowledge was valued and shared supporting the development of critical civic praxis (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Community arts programming can provide a safe space to engage with community. *"I like that there's the space for people where they can go where they can talk to other people, where they can get food, where you can learn something, where you can be quiet, be loud, be whatever, there's no pressure"* (Dayna). Through fostering intergenerational relationships and making space for artists of varying skill sets and experience to come together the collectives provided a space where knowledge transfer happened organically.

You didn't really realize that was what was happening which was kind of neat. If

someone was in the room you'd just ask them how to cut a stencil or something and it just seemed like you were all saving time, but you're actually doing a lot of knowledge and skill exchange. (B)

Rather than the arts being an isolating endeavour, artist collectives develop community and provide more than just a space to share technical art skills. *"There is a really awesome sense of community. If Die Active didn't exist I wouldn't be in Thunder Bay. I would have left and worked at my art career somewhere else in a different city"* (boy Roland). Laura finds being able to participate in community through arts-based events and collectives meaningful because the arts relieved some of the social pressure she experiences. *"That's why it's very meaningful for me to be a part of the arts and be doing things that way, because its comfortable for me and people know I exist and I'm contributing in a way"* (Laura). Jayal echoed a similar sentiment: *"I think in artwork it's about the relationship-building for me, and the reading, reading information, reading other people's frameworks and actually just talking to people who are Indigenous"* (Jayal).

Trust in the community to be able to effect social change from conceptualization, to development, to implementation supports critical civic praxis.

Trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust.

(Freire, 1970/2008, p. 60)

Alana develops programming based on solicited and non-solicited community feedback, trusting in community to conceive of their own needs.

We started doing programming with children in that area [neighbourhood] and the youth started, like kids who are 12-15 started coming out and being like, “Well, what about stuff for us?” So we just developed something with them because they were asking for it. Now it’s twice a month and we’ve nominated one of those youth for an Aboriginal Youth Leadership award because she’s been phenomenal in shaping what has happened with the program. (Alana)

Rhoades (2012) considers activism as creative critical civic praxis through Sandoval and Latorre’s (2008) framework of *artivism*, which is “a hybrid of artistic production and activism that embraces their symbiotic relationship for transformational purposes” (Rhoades, 2012, p. 319) and is a focused undertaking in social justice education through artistic endeavours. Rhoades found that the arts practice allowed youth to develop their “creative power” (p. 326). The artistic projects, exhibitions, commemorations, and programs discussed by participants in my research often addressed social justice issues; however, I would not label them *artivism*. Artivism, as explained by Rhoades, is an intentionally activist undertaking that utilizes arts processes. Participants in my study created and expressed ideas through art because art is what they do; their art practice is not being co-opted for political means even if political ideas were being addressed. The presentation of ideas in artistic forms was successful because art is a language that people can connect their identities to, and is capable of communicating values in a way that is both inviting and confrontational. Art allows people to access new information in an inviting medium that challenges their pre-conceived notions of social justice issues (Anzaldúa, 1987/2007).

The Importance of Neechee Studio

Programs targeted to ‘all youth’ often miss marginalized youth (Erbstein, 2013). The Die Active Art Collective targets all youth, however, after realizing they were missing Indigenous youth in a city with a large Indigenous population, and at the initiative of Lucille Atlookan, Neechee Studio was created. In order to ensure Neechee engages Indigenous youth, it needs to have Indigenous youth on the committee, Indigenous mentors, and have Indigenous youth promoting it. Research has shown that programming for marginalized youth should recruit mentors who have a “deep respect, care and high expectations; a critical stance toward systems that affect youth; communication skills; shared culture, language, and experience; and local networks and the capacity to help young people tap them to pursue their interests” (Erbstein, 2013, p. 113). Studies on programs for marginalized youth highlight that privileging and cultivating the youths’ existing social capital through intergenerational relationships was the key to the success of programs (Akom et al., 2008; Erbstein, 2013; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007).

Research by Porfilio et al. (2014) on community-based social justice hip-hop programs suggested that community-based arts programs offer humanizing education, in contrast to formal education settings, which are dehumanizing, situating students as lacking capacity and agency. Built on a colonial ideology, education for Indigenous peoples in Canada has a long history of dehumanization for the purpose of assimilation and eradication of Indigenous worldviews (Battiste, 2013; Faries, 2004). Colonization in Canada has been enacted through “cognitive imperialism” as “Eurocentric educational practices ignored or rejected the world-views, languages, and values of Aboriginal

parents. . . . [resulting in] widespread social and psychological upheaval in Aboriginal communities” (Battiste, 1995). Colonization is carried out through educational institutions through curriculum, teaching practices, how learning is organized, and forms of evaluation (Tejeda, Espinoza, & Gutierrez, 2003). Formal institutions of education continue to be spaces of ongoing colonization, where “most colleges and universities are organized around the principles of dominant culture. . . . Concurrently, students are encouraged to doubt themselves, their capacity to know, to think, and to act” (hooks, 2003, p. 130).

Youth need new spaces where “resistance and resiliency can be developed through formal (and informal) processes, pedagogical structures, and youth cultural practices” (Akom et al., 2008, p. 2). Combining critical media studies, critical race theory, and youth participatory action research, Akom et al. (2008) proposed ‘youthtopias’ as “pedagogical spaces of resistance and resiliency” (p. 2). Youthtopias are places

where young people depend on one another’s skills, perspectives, and experiential knowledge, to generate original, multi-textual, youth-driven cultural products that embody a critique of oppression, a desire for social justice, and ultimately lay the foundation for community empowerment and social change. (Akom et al., 2008, p. 3)

Neechee Studio and Youthtopias incorporate similar organizational principles: they are participatory and youth driven; they are cooperative, engaging youth and adults; they challenge traditional paradigms, methods, and texts; they are committed to co-learning, co-facilitating, and a “pedagogy of collegiality”; they involve local capacity

building; they are an empowering process through which all participants can increase control of their lives; and they emphasize a union of mind, body, and spirit rather than a separation of these elements (Akomo et al., 2008, p. 5). According to Akomo et al. (2008) studying youth-constructed spaces can improve “our understanding of the role of youth agency in the production and consumption of forms of social and cultural capital as well as deepening our understanding of the innovative ways young people are forming social critiques and envisioning new democratic possibilities” (p. 10). The community and collective arts settings were places where critical civic praxis was fostered and practiced resulting in transformation through education, promoting critical dialogue, revitalizing neighbourhoods, and creating positive social spaces.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This research began with a desire to explore how community-based art-collectives can be sites where ‘youth’ develop critical civic praxis. Developed through an arts-informed research process and directly rooted in interviews with participants, I have identified the roots of a transformative pedagogy found in community arts practices in Thunder Bay, Ontario. It is important to emphasize that my analysis of interviews and supporting documents began with the data rather than a theoretical framework such as critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, or public pedagogy. My aim was to provide an analysis of factors and processes that were being enacted and contributing to the success of the various programs and collectives presented.

The Roots for Social Transformation

In the experiences and words of the participants engaged in collective community arts practice I found the roots—authenticity, trust, humility, relationship (love), and critical reflection—that support transformation. The key to social transformation is knowledge and analysis of oppressive systems, and the ability to act upon that knowledge for positive social change (Freire, 1970/2008). A transformative pedagogy is a way of approaching teaching and learning that supports this knowledge and analysis, and creates the conditions for positive social change (hooks, 1994b, McLaren, 2000). The roots of this transformative pedagogy are compatible with previous work by Freire, who stated:

It is fundamental for us to know that without certain qualities or virtues, such as a generous loving heart, respect for others, tolerance, humility, a joyful disposition, love of life, openness to what is new, a disposition to welcome change, perseverance in the struggle, a refusal of determinism, a spirit of hope, an

openness to justice, progressive pedagogical practice is not possible. (Freire, 1998/2001, p. 108)

Narrative research with artist program facilitators conducted by Slingerland (2015), which also took place in Thunder Bay, supports the roots presented in this analysis. Slingerland found her participants' valued care, mentorship, and creating safe spaces in the programming they facilitated. Slingerland's themes were *foundations*, *community*, *acceptance*, and *care*. *Care* reflected the type of relationships her participants valued, and *acceptance* referred to aspects of what I have labeled trust, and acceptance of where people are at when they engage in programming. *Community* referred to participants' commitment to the communities they work with.

In the current study, the root authenticity was demonstrated in programming and collectives that were informed by meaningful community involvement; they were community-initiated and led, they maintained meaningful community involvement in decision-making processes, and they prioritized the process – in how they were run as well as in how the arts were taught and engaged in – over a pre-determined outcome. Authenticity in this research refers to being authentically committed and responsive to the community. This can be related to Freire's (1970/2008) idea of authentic commitment to the people and liberation. Authentic commitment requires: constant self examination, refusal to impose ones own ideas on the people, not seeing themselves as the experts, not considering themselves as above the people, re-birth into critical consciousness, and the confrontation of their own oppressor consciousness housed within.

The programs and collectives presented in this research authentically engaged participants throughout programming which has been shown to have a positive impact on

youths' sense of personal empowerment and community connection as well as foster a sense of ownership, greater understanding of place and personal efficacy (Flicker, 2008). Authenticity involves transparent and open dialogue, belief in people's ability to comprehend complex issues, and soliciting participants' knowledge and input in the development and implementation of projects (Erbstein, 2013; Flicker, 2008). Part of the success of Neechee Studio was in how it was structured and facilitated; Erbstein (2013) highlighted the importance of developing authentic relationships, valuing participant experiences as assets, and working with adult mentors who have shared experience with participants including "race/ethnicity, language, or low-income background" and shared cultural norms when working with marginalized youth (p. 115). Mentors with shared backgrounds bring valuable insight, commitment to the community, the ability to build relationships, create safe spaces, and negotiate cultural dynamics (Erbstein, 2013).

In my research, trust in the community was implicit in how mentors and facilitators engaged in programming. People were trusted to determine their own objectives, facilitators refrained from censoring peoples' ideas and gave up control over outcomes, people were supported to develop their own ideas, and horizontal mentorship was encouraged. Trust contributed to developing leadership as people experienced being heard and being involved in actions that created change. Freire (1970/2008) stated that, "the leaders must believe in the potentialities of the people, whom they cannot treat as mere objects of their own action; they must believe that the people are capable of participating in the pursuit of liberation" (p. 169).

Freire (1970/2008) referred to "faith" along with love and humility, as essential to dialogue that results in trust. Faith in humans' ability to remake, create, and re-create the

world, and faith in their ability to achieve their true “vocation to be more fully human” (p. 90) is a requirement for dialogue. Freire spoke of trust as built through dialogue based on faith, love, and humility, as well as the trust that educators need to earn from the people. Trust in this sense has to do with a result of relationships built on authentic dialogue, whereas in this dissertation, trust refers to the necessity of trust in the abilities of the people who are being mentored.

Prioritizing loving relationships cultivated authenticity and trust. Networks of relationships fostered a sense of belonging and purpose for participants and an emphasis on long-term programming increased community ownership and control. Jean shared a teaching on *gi zah gin* (love) that was shared with her. I included this teaching because it illustrated how the majority of participants approached their work and the people they work with. Participants spoke about loving relationships when they talked about the importance of sharing food, of fostering horizontal relationships, and providing a consistent space where people felt a sense of purpose and intrinsic value.

“If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue” (Freire, 1970/2008, p. 90). Critical pedagogies stemming from a Freirean tradition incorporate an ethics of relationships based on love. Freire stated: “The distortion imposed on the word ‘love’ by the capitalist world cannot prevent the revolution from being essentially loving in character, nor can it prevent the revolutionaries from affirming their love of life” (1970/2008, p. 89). Freire posed love as a necessary precondition for authentic and liberatory dialogue. While acknowledging the emphasis on love in critical pedagogy, the concept of relationships based on love that is presented in this dissertation research is from an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) teaching.

The research that I conducted was situated in an artist community with a large Anishinaabek population and influence. Thunder Bay is on traditional Anishinaabe territory and situated next-door to the Fort William First Nation. The teaching on love that I presented, as fundamental to understanding the approach to program development and implementation that participants took, was inspired by my interpretation of an Anishinaabe teaching. I made the deliberate decision to keep the Anishinaabe teaching central rather than centering the field of critical education that “is limited by its Eurocentric origins, as it was very influenced by European Marxist thought and structural analysis, and by a conflict view of history” (Reinsborough & Barndt, 2010, p. 164). In contrast, traditional Indigenous education methods “occurred within cultural settings that were characterized by subsistence economies in-context learning, personal and kinship relations between teachers and students, and ample opportunities for students to observe adult role models who exemplified the knowledge, skills, and values being taught” (Hampton, 1995, p. 8).

It is also worth noting here that it is impossible to disentangle the pedagogical approaches of mentors and facilitators from their respective influences, and considering the Anishinaabe influence in Thunder Bay, it is impossible to know to what extent Anishinaabe teachings have shaped them. Beyond the teaching about love that Jean shared, I would like to acknowledge that the Seven Grandfather Teachings that were shared with me, while living in Thunder Bay, could also be used to frame the pedagogical analysis. The seven teachings are about love, humility, bravery, honesty, wisdom, truth, and respect. However, as a White settler, with only minimal and surface knowledge of Anishinaabe culture, I am not in a position to offer that analysis.

Humility was revealed in facilitators who valued and took measures to garner participation from everyone. It was apparent in mentors and teachers who saw themselves as learners and regularly gave credit to the people who taught them. Humility was seen in approaching knowledge as a gift to be shared, recognizing their own knowledge as incomplete, and being able to ask for help. Being able to acknowledge imperfection through reflection demonstrated humility. Finally, humility was demonstrated in an ability to let go of ownership over outcomes and acknowledge participants as leaders.

Authentic dialogue “cannot exist without humility” (Freire, 1970/2008, p. 90). Freire (1970/ 2008) explained that true dialogue does not exist when people project ignorance onto the people they are attempting to dialogue with, there is no student-teacher/ teacher-student relationship when one believes one is above the other. He stated, “how can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own” (p. 90)? Humility requires acknowledging that no knowledge is complete, that we are all learners, and maintaining openness to learning. “At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know” (Freire, 1970/2008, p. 90).

Critical reflection came as participants recounted their own shortcomings, and how they took measures to address gaps in their practice and programs, as well as through negative experiences recounted by some participants. The importance of ongoing critical reflection was also raised as some participants expressed being silenced, and raised concerns over whether programming continued to reflect stated goals. Critical reflection should be built into programming by involving mechanisms to invite regular

critical feedback to guard against complacency in the face of success, to realign processes with purpose, and to remain transparent and open to the community.

Even Freire, one of the most prolific writers on progressive and transformative pedagogies was not immune to his own biases; however his humility and commitment to ongoing learning made him open to accepting criticism and adjusting his views and work in response. hooks (1994b) recounted how Freire responded to her criticism of the sexism in his work:

I did want to interrogate Paulo Freire personally about the sexism in his work. And so with courtesy, I forged ahead at the meeting. Immediately individuals spoke against me raising these questions and devalued their importance, Paulo intervened to say that these questions were crucial and he addressed them. Truthfully, I loved him at this moment for exemplifying by his actions the principles of his work. (p. 55)

For the critical thinker “the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality” (Freire, 1970/2008, p. 92). Freire presented critical thinking as necessary for dialogue and dialogue as generative of critical thinking. Speaking about oppressive non-dialogical approaches to education, Freire suggested that a lack of critical thinking and considering the situation and world-views of participants has resulted in failure of political and educational programs. Programs need to be designed with those for whom their actions are directed; otherwise, they risk using oppressive tactics for indoctrination, rather than engaging in dialogue and praxis.

Programming and collective organizing in community arts collectives that begin with and are rooted in authenticity, humility, trust, relationships based on love, and

ongoing critical reflection results in transformative actions and supports the development of critical civic praxis. The artists created transformation through inviting people to see and think differently, a process necessary for critical civic praxis (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Through the ability to engage in artistic and creative dialogue, supported by strong networks and relationships, artists engaged in creating art and programming that responded to and disrupted oppression. Participants created dialogue that disrupted systemic violence, they made conscious decisions that addressed barriers to inclusion, and they intentionally navigated economic systems that devalue their work in order to continue to improve the communities they live and work in.

I began with Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) to look at whether their theory on the development of critical civic praxis extends outside of youth-serving organizations with an explicit focus on teaching social justice issues. What I found where collective spaces, public spaces, and art intersect was how the arts and collective organizing can support critical civic praxis and transform society. Unlike formal political processes that are seen as “corrupt, ineffective, and unrelated to their deeper ideals” and public institutions, which are considered “remote, opaque, and virtually impossible to control” (Galston, 2001, p. 220), community art-collectives provide an accessible and responsive avenue for action, and have direct and immediate impacts on the community. Engaging in critical civic praxis is essential for the maintenance of a democracy (Freire, 1970/2008; hooks, 2010), which must be continuously enacted since democracy is “neither stable nor certain” (Pell, 2014, p. 30). Possibilities for social transformation materialize where there is support for collective arts spaces, where collaboration and lateral mentorship are

valued, and where relationships (love), authenticity, trust, humility, and critical reflection guide organizational processes.

I identified five roots that informed participants' approaches to mentoring, facilitating, and program development that were also supported by the participants' and learners' experiences, these are: *authenticity, trust, relationship (love), humility, and critical reflection*. These roots are transformative because they facilitate positive individual, collective, social, physical and political transformation, and they create the conditions that cultivate critical civic praxis.

As has been previously noted, the various origins of participants' pedagogical practices are likely comprised of multiple influences, including Anishinaabe teachings and practices. While critical pedagogies rooted in Freirean theory have discussed in-depth the same concepts I have presented, so do many Indigenous knowledges. I chose to go back to Freire, and hooks to connect my analysis to the theoretical literature because their work has largely influenced my understanding of critical pedagogies and liberatory practice, and subsequently influenced my reading of the data. Further, Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) specifically name Freire's influence in their work and on the idea of critical civic praxis. I have also chosen to highlight that my participants' pedagogical influences are in many cases unknown, and likely influenced by Anishinaabe teachings as the majority of participants are originally from and have spent the majority of their lives in Thunder Bay.

A Look at Critical Civic Praxis in Schools

It was suggested by participants that their programming was valuable and well attended because they created spaces where children and youth were not constrained by

implicit and explicit rules, where they were encouraged to be creative, and where they felt a sense of belonging and purpose. This was at times contrasted with the experience some children and youth have in the formal K-12 education system; as Alana stated, *“they’re sometimes kids who maybe don’t go to school or they just are facing a lot of stuff in their lives, and they really find a home in the arts, which is really neat to see.”*

Studying educational spaces outside of institutions can provide insight into how education structures that are experienced as oppressive can be disrupted and “how very different hegemonic strategies may lead to very different political and cultural results” (Apple, 2003, p. 5).

Critical pedagogy is not simply for one interest group. Critical pedagogy serves both teachers and cultural workers who engage in social activism outside the boundaries of schools. Some of the most depressing moments I have spent engaged in critical pedagogy have occurred either when teachers view the classroom as the central if not only domain for critical pedagogical analysis and action or when cultural workers see schools as “lost places” where nothing matters because the institution is flawed. (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 150)

When considering this research within the field of education, questions arise regarding the ability of critical pedagogies to address institutional structures and the implicit rules and expectations that result in the alienation of some students (Cho, 2006).

Teachers encounter a number of barriers to implementing critical pedagogies they adopted during their education degrees, including “excessive testing, restrictive or canned instructional programs, and coaches and administrators who operate under their own high stakes pressures” (Morrison, 2016, p. 111). As previously noted, what makes the arts

unique and particularly conducive to transformative social change is the space they can create for exploration, rule-breaking, imagining, and collaborating. Despite institutional expectations and barriers inherent in K-12 and in post-secondary education settings, educators can endeavour to actively resist oppressive educational practices. Freire (1970/2008) referred to the banking concept of education as an oppressive educational practice that was often employed in formal educational settings, where the student is objectified, turned into an empty vessel for the teacher to fill with knowledge, as a process of alienation or de-humanization. Freire stated that banking education serves to “minimize or annul the students’ creative power” hampering the development of critical consciousness and creation of transformative actions (p. 73).

The roots I have presented, authenticity, trust, humility, relationship (love), and critical reflection can be places for educators to begin their teaching practice while working within and against the limits that institutions impose on their implementation. “Integrating the concept of social justice into a critical program is difficult, often contentious, and demands a rethinking of everything a school of education and schools of arts and sciences do” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 112). While ceding complete control over educational content is often not compatible with meeting curriculum expectations, the specific route to reaching those curricular expectations can incorporate student input. Engaging in dialogical practice in the classroom increases authenticity, as students are included in constructing the program content by valuing their experiences, knowledge and interests (Freire, 1970/2008).

Opportunities to build trust into K-12 as well as post-secondary educational spaces can take the form of student-led projects, opportunities for horizontal mentorship,

fostering collegial relationships amongst students, and providing space and guidance for students to develop personal learning goals (Smith, 2013). Outside the classroom, educators can foster relationships with colleagues to develop networks to nurture and support the incorporation of critical pedagogical methods within the classroom (hooks, 2010). Prioritizing the value of the collegial relationship over possible interpersonal differences will support the integration of critical pedagogies in institutional settings by developing a network of people with common goals. Practicing humility in the classroom by rejecting the role of the ‘expert teacher’ supports developing trust and authenticity in implementing dialogical educational practices. In her work on elements of teaching critical thinking in post-secondary institutions, hooks (2010) speaks about enacting an “engaged pedagogy” which “establishes a mutual relationship between teacher and students that nurtures the growth of both parties, creating an atmosphere of trust and commitment that is always present when genuine learning happens” (p. 22). Acknowledging limits to individual knowledge allows space for the development of collective knowledge and can subsequently foster greater contribution of students in guiding classroom activities (Smith, 2013).

Finally, critical reflection can be incorporated into classroom practice through dialogical practice, fostering trust (Smith, 2013), and integrating feedback loops for students to express constructive criticisms with the goal of adjusting educational practice. If relationships have been fostered with colleagues they can provide another avenue for providing and receiving feedback on effectively implementing critical pedagogies in the classroom. While formal education settings within K-12 and post-secondary institutions carry implicit and explicit limitations and expectations that constrain the implementation

of critical pedagogies in these settings, understanding the roots that guide transformative practice aides in developing methods for implementing transformative pedagogies to the furthest extent possible.

The role of the critical complex teacher educator is to view practice through the lenses of the theoretical framework and the theoretical framework through the lenses of practice. In this process, the kinetic energy of each is intensified, but the exact nature of their relationship unresolved. (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 121)

Teachers who wish to practice transformative education must engage in praxis: the “combination of theory and practice resulting in informed action” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 120). Further, the existence of spaces that foster critical spaces outside of formal education settings supports the work of critical pedagogues who are working within formal settings by providing students with experiences such as collaborative endeavours, creative thinking, social transformation, and critical thinking.

Critical Youth Discourses

This research adds to the literature by disrupting hegemonic discourses that discount the very real contributions that young people are making in society. Participants words challenged the continued use of the term ‘youth’ by critical scholars, and policy makers as the term has been largely denounced by the population it purports to represent and support. I have presented an original context to extend the relevance of Ginwright and Cammarota’s (2007) work on critical civic praxis development to include collective and community arts spaces that utilize similar structural elements without an explicit social justice mandate. Community arts-focused spaces can serve as examples and lessons for creating transformative education contexts.

Next Steps/Future Directions

As a qualitative methodology, arts-informed methods are designed to keep analysis tied directly to the experiences of participants resulting in detailed but not generalizable results. On its own, this study can only speak to the experiences of participants; however, re-situated within the research literature it helps expand existing theory on critical civic praxis and youth engagement in society and politics. The more research that is conducted with various sites and populations, the more can be said about what conditions or processes do to contribute to critical civic praxis.

Further research with a larger sample of people who participate in artist collectives but are not also in leadership roles within those collectives could add insight into whether the roots presented resonate with their experiences and to understand what motivates them to participate, why they continue to participate, what they learn from participation, including how and if these experiences flow out into other aspects of their lives. Research with people who drop out after ongoing participation could provide further insight into the experiences expressed by some participants in this research to further understand whether organizations that successfully and comprehensively implement the roots, as I have presented them here, are adequate for a truly inclusive transformational pedagogy, although accessing this population could prove difficult.

Comparative research with other types of community-based organizations in Thunder Bay could assess whether the roots that were feeding the success of these arts organizations are present in other settings, to what extent, and whether shifting to incorporate them would facilitate developing critical civic praxis in other organizational contexts. Conducting further research on the roots that make up this transformative

pedagogy across different sites in Canada, ranging from remote and rural settings to dense urban settings would strengthen and expand our understanding of the influence that place has on collective organizing and social transformation, and could increase the generalizability of both Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) work on critical civic praxis and the transformative pedagogy I have presented. Approaching community organizing and education from a place of relationships, trust, humility, authenticity and incorporating critical reflection has implications beyond community arts settings. The research presented here illustrates how these root processes were incorporated into programming and mentoring, and provided insight into how the arts contexts facilitated their presence, providing insight into how they can be incorporated in other settings.

Outside of presenting this research at conferences and in academic journals for the benefit of other academics, I am seeking out non-academic venues to share this research with the wider community. As part of this process I organized a community presentation in Thunder Bay on the main findings of this research. I invited participants as well as members of the arts community to attend. The presentation was informal, encouraging conversation amongst attendees, and involved a lengthy discussion and question period following my formal presentation of my dissertation. My next step is to honour the time that participants spent with me by taking what I have learned and sharing it in ways that it can be taken up beyond the academy. This includes creating and seeking out further opportunities to share with the community of Thunder Bay.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Flyer

Varainja [va~rain~ya] Stock

PhD Candidate, Lakehead University, Faculty of Education
Supervisor: Dr. Pauline Sameshima

Invitation to participate in research
on youth, arts, and society

**Community-based art-collectives as spaces for the
development of critical consciousness: A constructivist
grounded theory study**

**How do people engage socially and politically through
creating collective works of art? This study extends
existing research on youth participation in social justice
organizations.**

**I want to talk to young artists (18-34), and artist mentors
who have participated in local (Thunder Bay) artist
collectives.**

**If you are a young artist who has been involved in local
art collectives for a year or longer, or an artist mentor,
and would like to find out more about this study or how
you can participate please contact me at the number/
email below.**



Varainja Stock

807-343-8701

rstock1@lakeheadu.ca



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

A. Guiding questions for artist mentors:

1. How long have you been mentoring/teaching arts in the community?
2. What organizations/programs have you mentored through?
 - i. What skills/knowledge have you shared?
3. Is mentoring a key part of the artist collective process in the programs/organizations you have participated in?
4. Have you participated in any public art pieces?
 - i. Can you share some examples?
 - ii. Why do you choose to create public works of art?
 - iii. Do you consider art political?
5. Why do you choose to share your skills and knowledge with the community?
6. What are some of the benefits you have experienced from being a mentor in the community?
7. Have you witnessed any benefits to youth artists who you have mentored?
8. How do you think the arts fit in the community/society?
 - i. Is this ever discussed with mentees?
 - ii. Can you provide an example?
9. How do you see the community benefitting from youth participation in the arts?
10. Do youth participants have any say in the programming?
 - i. How are they engaged in this process?
 - ii. What is the extent of their involvement?
 - iii. How are they supported?
11. Have you witnessed youth increasing their social networks or involvement in the community from participation in art collectives?
 - i. Have you witnessed any changes in youth understanding of community?
12. Are youth engaged in conversations about the community, society, or politics?
 - i. Can you give a contextual example of these conversations?
13. From your experience, do art collectives support developing a critical understanding of society?
 - i. Can you give an example or illustrate how you have witnessed this?
14. How do the programs you have participated in as a mentor challenge negative stereotypes about youth?

B. Guiding questions for youth artists:

1. How long have you been involved in community art collectives?
2. What collectives have you been involved with?
3. Why did you get involved/what has kept you involved in artist collective(s)?
4. How do you see the arts as part of the community?
5. Have you participated in creating any public works of art? (i.e. the commissioned graffiti piece on the Waverly public library)
 - i. What pieces have you worked on?
 - ii. What was the extent of your involvement?
6. What has been your experience learning from the artist mentors in these programs?
 - i. What kinds of instruction have you received from mentors?
 - ii. What have you talked with them about beyond the arts?
7. Have you been encouraged to participate in the programming for the art collective?
 - i. How has this been followed up?
8. How has participating in art collectives changed your social network?
9. How has participating in art collectives changed your understanding of community?
10. What community programs/organizations/initiatives are you involved in that would be considered beyond the arts?
 - i. When did you become involved?
 - ii. Why did you become involved?
11. How would you describe the relationship between the arts and society/politics (if you believe there is a relationship)?
12. What do you find valuable about participating in art collectives?
13. Have you engaged in conversations about the community, society, or politics while participating?
 - i. Can you give a contextual example of these conversations?
14. From your experience, do art collectives support developing a critical understanding of society?
 - i. Can you give an example or illustrate how you have witnessed this?
15. How do the programs you have participated in challenge negative stereotypes about youth?

Appendix C: Participant Consent Letter

Participant Consent Letter

Community-based art-collectives as spaces for the development of critical consciousness: A constructivist grounded theory study

[Date]

Dear Potential Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study by Varainja Stock, PhD Candidate, Educational Studies, Lakehead University. This research is entitled: **Community-based art-collectives as spaces for the development of critical consciousness: A constructivist grounded theory study**. The purpose of this research is to understand how people engage socially and politically through the creation of collective works of art. This study extends existing research on youth participation in social justice organizations in the US.

Research Question: How do community-based art-collectives function as spaces for the development of critical consciousness in the context of collective community art practice?

This research expands on research and theory developed in the US by Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) on the relationship between youth agency and community social justice organizations. I focus on members of community-based art-collectives to ask how art-collectives can be spaces that encourage youth to build the capacity to respond to and change oppressive conditions in society. This research will take place in Thunder Bay, Ontario and is building off of Ginwright and Cammarota's (2007) work.

Procedure

This research will involve two groups of interview participants, people who have acted as artist mentors and people (aged 18-34) who have participated in art collectives. Participants will take part in in-person interviews about their experiences engaging as artists and mentors in art collectives and public art.

I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview at a place and time that is mutually convenient. Interviews are expected to take between one and two hours. With your consent I may request follow up interviews to seek clarification about your statements.

Your participation is voluntary, if you participate in the study you may refuse to answer any questions asked of you as well as to have things you have previously said taken out of the research. You can refuse to participate in any or all parts of this study and can withdraw from the study at any time, up until the final research report is submitted for review, without penalty or negative consequence. Further, you can have any of your comments during interviews withdrawn from the study without penalty.

This research involves discussions about art, if visual representations of your artwork are included as part of the interview it will only be with your expressed written consent.

Your confidentiality and anonymity

Pseudonyms and identifiers (i.e. 'artist') will be used at your request. Discussions will be audio taped and later transcribed. If you request a pseudonym, it will be used, along with reference to your role in the study in all transcripts and later findings. If you choose to remain anonymous and have your artwork included in the study, your artwork will not be connected to any statements you make as an anonymous participant. Raw data will only be accessible to myself, Varainja Stock, and to my PhD supervisor, Dr. Pauline Sameshima. There are no known risks to participation in this study.

The information from this study will be used for a PhD in Educational Studies dissertation. Reports of the findings may also be published in professional academic journals, conferences, in the media, and presented back to the community.

All data that you provide will be kept confidential and securely stored for at least five years. If you are interested in the findings or analysis of this research they will be made available to you at your request upon completion of the study.

When Confidentiality May Be Broken

If you choose to interview alongside another participant you and any other participants present will be asked to maintain confidentiality, however, I cannot guarantee that the discussions and data disclosed in these settings will remain confidential.

Results

As a participant in this study, you will be offered a summary of results via email, which will be delivered upon request by contacting Varainja Stock at rstock1@lakeheadu.ca

Contacts and Questions

If you agree to participate in this study please sign and complete the attached form. This study is being conducted by Varainja Stock, PhD Candidate in Educational Studies, at Lakehead University under the supervision of Dr. Pauline Sameshima, Canada Research Chair in Arts Integrated Studies, Graduate Studies & Research in Education, at Lakehead University. If you have any questions concerning this study, please do not hesitate to contact me, or my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Pauline Sameshima. Thank you for considering your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

R. Varainja Stock

Varainja Stock
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education

Dr. Pauline Sameshima
Supervisor
Faculty of Education

Office of Research

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This research has been approved by the Lakehead Research Ethics Board. They may be contacted with questions or concerns about the research (research@lakeheadu.ca tel: 807-766-7289 fax: 807-346-7749).

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix D: Participant Research Summary

Dear:

I hope this email finds you well. I have created a brief summary of the theory that I have developed from the interviews with you and the other participants. I am inviting your input at this point to make sure that the ideas I am expressing resonate with your experience. Because this comes from the sum of the interviews and not one specific interview, there may be parts that resonate more than others. I do want to know what you think, whether you see yourself in the ideas, or if anything seems out of place.

One of my next steps will be sending you an individualized piece that includes your quotes as another opportunity to check that a) I am representing ideas properly, b) if you want to change whether a quote or quotes are anonymous or attributed to you, and c) to have a quote taken out of the dissertation altogether. Because I have not done this step yet, I have not included any quotes in the summary.

And finally, even though I will not be defending my dissertation until the spring, I will be back in Thunder Bay the first weekend of February (2nd-5th) to present on this research at the Faculty of Education Graduate Conference on the 3rd. While I am there I would also like to arrange a public presentation/discussion at a less academic (not on campus) and more casual setting, to share this work with you and the community as one of the first steps in making this work accessible and useful. If you have any ideas about that, I welcome those too.

Best wishes,
varainja

Summary of A Transformative Pedagogy Rooted in Place For participants

I have developed a substantive grounded theory for a transformative pedagogy based in the expressed experiences of participants. This transformative pedagogy is rooted in the conditions and interactions unique to community and collective arts. **The roots of this pedagogy are: authenticity, trust, humility, relationship (love), and reflection**, and come from the experiences of participants in collective community arts practice. Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) showed how youth organizations are places where youth can build social networks, are exposed to new ideas and experiences, and increase their individual and collective capacity leading to critical civic praxis. My research demonstrates how community artist collectives' foster places where people build relationships, increase community involvement, and are supported and encouraged to develop their ideas leading to transformative actions and greater capacity for social change.

The spaces inhabited by community art collectives and programs foster different relationships, different expectations, and different expectations for what is acceptable compared to more structured institutions such as schools and galleries.

Participants in this research raised many issues of systemic oppression and linked them to the work they were doing as artists creating dialogue, subverting, and disrupting. Artists had been involved in projects that addressed Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Indigenous knowledge revitalization, patriarchy and the control of women's bodies, trans-visibility/ cis-normativity, homophobia and social control, and the policing of impoverished bodies.

Discussions with participants raised numerous ways they and the various collectives and organizations they participated in as artists, were involved in transformation. Freire explained that the world always being in a process of becoming, and that people should not only be aware of the world but they should also act upon their awareness in order to transform it (Freire, 1998/2001, p. 73). Participants spoke of political transformation through Indigenous knowledge revitalization, transformation of physical spaces, and revitalization of social spaces through visibility in the community.

Authenticity

Authenticity refers to programming that is developed and informed by the meaningful inclusion of community input on an ongoing basis. Authentic programming originates in the community; it is *community led* and based on expressed interests of individuals, it invites community in and asks what they want, it involves collective decision-making, and it shifts with the community as needs and desires change. There is *meaningful community involvement*, where committees and boards are representative of the community, where community members are meaningfully involved in organizational and decision making processes, they actively resist co-optation by institutional interests, and processes are transparent. They *prioritize process* over outcome, participation is enjoyable, the social environment feels safe, participation and extent of participation is optional, and participation is experienced as nourishing.

Trust

Trust in people and the community is integral to a transformative pedagogy, and must direct actions and decisions for programming. Trust involves *giving up control* and not censoring as a facilitator, mentor, or program director so that the community can experience *freedom to determine their objectives*. "A pedagogy of autonomy should be centered on experiences that stimulate decision making and responsibility, in other words, on experiences that respect freedom." (Freire, 1998/2001, p. 98) Trust involves creating an environment where participants *are supported to develop their own ideas* and trust in the communities' process as they build momentum towards a goal. Trust allows *for horizontal mentorship*, where people have space to teach each other, and it supports development of leadership from within as people experience being heard, bringing ideas

to fruition, and mentoring. When there is trust, community members are encouraged to participate in organizational decisions and take on leadership roles. Trust is integral to the organizational process, allowing time for people to direct the process, decide when they are ready to take the next step, and define what their goals are.

Relationships (love)

Relationships based on respect and love is integral for a transformative pedagogy based in collective organizing and effecting social change. Participants *valued fostering relationships* and considered them fundamental to keeping programming authentic. Relationships with artists, participants, and the wider community *were nurtured and modeled* by program facilitators, which created a sense of belonging and purpose. Fostering friendships grew pools of artists resulting in *involvement based on a deep respect for the work*. *Long-term programming* allowed for relationship building with community members encouraging greater community control over programming.

Humility

People in leadership and mentorship roles demonstrated *humility*. Exercising humility allowed the artists to create transformative programming, based in trust in peoples' abilities to create their own solutions, fostered meaningful relationships, and the ability engage in courageous reflection that led to personal and social transformation. Mentorship and facilitation that fostered community ownership *valued participation from everyone*, mentors saw themselves as part of the community, and strove to be relatable and find common ground. They *saw themselves as learners* and acknowledged the teachings that were shared with them. They *saw knowledge as a gift to be shared*, and did so for the community and not for personal gain or their own ego. They were *ok with not knowing*, and letting others know the limits to their knowledge and or asking for help. and they *saw the outcome as belonging to the participants*.

Reflection

Critical reflection needs to be an ongoing practice through inviting feedback, checking in with participants, and examining one's own assumption and apparent successes for possible bias. This practice can contribute to maintain programming that continues to meet the needs of community and creates space for transformation. Ongoing critical reflection through inviting feedback, assessing whether actions continue to be aligned with goals, being open to new ways of doing, questioning access, representation, and participation are necessary in a transformative pedagogy.

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Community-based art-collectives as spaces for the development of critical consciousness: A constructivist grounded theory study

Thank you for your participation in this study

By signing this paper I am agreeing to participate in a study by Varainja Stock, PhD student of Lakehead University entitled “Community-based art-collectives as spaces for the development of critical consciousness: A constructivist grounded theory study” and that I have read and understood the following:

1. The purpose of this research is to understand how people engage socially and politically through the creation of collective works of art.
2. I have read and understood the cover letter for this study.
3. I voluntarily agree to participate.
4. There are no known or anticipated potential risks of the study.
5. I can withdraw from the study at any time, and may choose not to answer any question or have any of my responses removed from any write-up of the findings without any adverse consequence to me.
6. Any information I may provide will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the project.
7. I can request a copy of the research findings from Varainja Stock at rstock1@lakeheadu.ca at the conclusion of the study.
8. I will remain anonymous in any publication/public presentation of research findings at my request.

Audio Recording: I agree to have discussions I am involved in recorded electronically and understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that audio files will be kept securely at Lakehead University for a minimum period of five years. I understand that not agreeing to audio recording does not exclude my participation from the rest of the study.

YES ____ NO ____

Anonymity and Confidentiality: I wish to have my name included in this study and waive my right to privacy and confidentiality.

YES ____ NO ____

Consent to include visual art as part of interview: I agree to have photographs of my artwork included as part of my interview. I understand that this inclusion reduces my anonymity if I have chosen to use a pseudonym for my participation in this study.

YES ____ NO ____

Statement of Consent to Participate

I have read and understand the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I understand the potential risks and/or benefits of the study and consent to participate in the study. I understand that I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time, up until the final analysis of the data or point of publications. The data I provide will be securely stored at Lakehead University for five years.

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

I would like a summary of the research findings YES____ NO _____

E-mail _____