Visualizing the Margins:

The Experiences of Queer People of Colour

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ABSTRACT/RESUMÉ

This study incorporates a critical AOP theoretical framework in order to answer the central research question which seeks to reveal the ways in which queer people of colour conceptualize their intersecting identities and resist interlocking systems of domination. Photovoice, a community-based and visual PAR methodology, enables participants to visualize their everyday realities through photography, describe their lives through these photos and individual narratives, and through critical dialogue create themes which speak to their collective experiences. Participants spoke of how historical displacement and intersecting experiences of marginalization resulted in emotional and psychological responses which complicated their relationships to mental health. Key findings reveal the complexities of integrating a historicized trans-national identity and the contemporary effects of political and structural intersectionality on the lives of queer people of colour in Canada. By collectively conceptualizing strategies of survival and resistance, this collaborative and community-building process generated new knowledge, which will serve to inform social work policies and practices.

Cette étude emploie un cadre théorique critique AOP afin de répondre à la question centrale de recherche suivante: Quelle sont les façons que les minorités sexuelles racialisées conceptualisent leurs identités intersectionnelles et comment résistent-ils aux systèmes de domination qui s'enclenchent? Photovoix est une méthode de PAR, visuelle et communautaire, qui permet aux participants de s'imaginer leurs réalités quotidiennes à travers la photographie en prenant des photos et en créant des narrations. Avec le dialogue critique, les participants ont crée des thématiques collectives. Ils ont décrit le rapport entre leur santé mentale et leur état émotionnel et psychologique résultant des effets complexes de déplacement historique et des expériences d'exclusion intersectionelles. Les résultats indiquent que les minorités sexuelles racialisées au Canada développent une identité historique et transnationale et sont enclavées par les effets politiques et structurelles de l'oppression intersectionnelle. En créant des stratégies de survivance, ce processus communautaire a produit des nouvelles connaissances qui serviront de s'informer des pratiques et des mesures politiques de travail social.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and literature review

Light casts its shadows
The heart knows no understanding
Looks of anguish
The cry of those unheeded

Softly, go softly
Gently, go gently
Rest your weary, tired soul
Rest and let it all unfold

Voice of a thousand souls
Liberation   - Woo Jin Edward Lee

1.1 *Introduction*

This thesis explores how queer[1] people of colour[2] visualize, describe, and

conceptualize their life experiences. In particular, the central research question for this

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[1] Within Anglophone, North American culture, the term *queer* has historically been used to disparage gays and lesbians. During the past three decades, this term has been "reclaimed" by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans activists and scholars, under the rubric of *queer theory* (Carlin & DiGrazia, 2003). Re-framing *queer* by de-constructing hetero-normativity through the disruption of the heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy, has created a space where sexual identities become fluid and dynamic, troubling categories such as gay and lesbian (Arrizon, 2006). However, the term *queer* has been argued to be a "white" construct, failing to acknowledge the ways in which sexuality and gender have been historically constructed and presently negotiated differently for contemporary racialized communities than from white North American activists and scholars who first reclaimed the term (Ryan et al., 2008). There are multiple reasons for why I have chosen to employ *queer* within the parameters of this research project. I have chosen to inscribe *queer* into my written theorizing and use it as an umbrella term, to include those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, two-spirited, pan-sexual and allosexual. Furthermore, the political employment of *queer* can be seen as a re-claiming of the word from its previous negative connotations. Finally, using the term serves to challenge the dominant understanding of *queer* as an incredibly useful political tool that only white activists and scholars have access to.

[2] The term "race" is understood as a socially constructed (thus the term "racialisation"), rather than biologically determined concept or category espoused by colonial and white supremacist epistemologies in which skin colour among other visible, socially selected traits are used to classify groups hierarchically (Ryan et al., 2008). Historically, the term "coloured people" has been used by white people to inscribe racial inferiority of non-white communities within North American culture, and over time, was re-claimed by those communities to become a positive and empowering identity marker. My decision to employ the terms, *people of colour and racialized communities* interchangeably for this particular research project is manifold. First, I have chosen to use this term in my written theorizing as an umbrella term for those who identify as visible minorities, mixed-race, bi-racial, ethno-racial and racialized. Second, using the terms *people of colour* and *racialized*, will serve as a political tool in explicitly identifying race and calling attention to the ways in which racial hierarchies have been socio-historically produced because of colonialism, imperialism and racism.

study seeks to understand the ways in which queer people of colour conceptualize their intersecting identities[3], and resist interlocking systems of domination[4]. The following sub-questions render visible how intersecting identities and interlocking systems of domination function in the lives of queer people of colour at individual, familial, community and institutional levels. How do queer people of colour historicize their identities? How do queer people of colour respond to marginalizing experiences? How do queer people of colour conceptualize their relationships with their families and communities? How do queer people of colour access institutional "support systems"[5]?

Through the use of a photovoice research design, the primary objectives for this study include exploring how queer people of colour visualize their experiences through photography, describe their lives through these photos and individual narratives, and create themes which speak to their collective experiences. Photovoice, an innovative, community-based, and visual participatory methodology, enables people in photographing their everyday realities, promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about personal, and community strengths and concerns, and engaging in dialogue with key policymakers (Wang, 2006). This collaborative and community-building process generates new knowledge which may serve to inform social work policies and practices.

One of the primary benefits of engaging in a photovoice research process is the value gained from providing individuals from historically marginalized communities an opportunity to be co-knowledge producers within a process that is both individualized and collective. The knowledge produced through this project will be shared with an aim to engage queer and/or racialised communities, in addition to key social work

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[3] Feminist and critical race scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) brought forward theorizing about the particular burdens placed on black women in the US, and coined the term *Intersectionality*, which has since gone on to be incorporated as an integral aspect of a critical, anti-oppressive framework (Mullaly, 2002). While the existence of distinct categories of oppression (such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc) is acknowledged, they can not be essentialised or separated our from each other (Brotman & Ryan, 2003; Crenshaw, 1991; Mullaly, 2002). Crenshaw (1991) explains multiple oppressions as experienced simultaneously, thus creating political, structural, and representational forms of intersectionality.
[4] Sherene Razack (1998), citing Patricia Hill Collins and Trinh T. Minh-ha, describes the concept of *interlocking systems of domination* as differing from *intersectionality*, emphasizing the importance of examining the interlocking effects of race, class, gender, disability and sexuality in a historical and site specific way (p.12). Therefore, the existence and maintenance of systems of domination, across categories of oppression, are dependant on each other, producing complex, hierarchical and symbiotic social relations (Fellows & Razack, 1998; Razack, 1998).
[5] The reason why I place quotations around "support systems" is to acknowledge the fact that while institutions are meant to serve as systems of support, they do not necessarily adhere to this purpose.

policymakers, and social service providers through the dissemination of the findings and policy recommendations across various contexts including academic conferences, future publications, community workshops, and photo exhibits. In order to provide an outline for my research process, this thesis has been divided into five chapters – *Introduction and Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Findings,* and *Discussion and Conclusion*.

The first chapter, *Introduction and Literature Review,* provides the reader with an initial picture of queer people of colour in Canada. Furthermore, this chapter provides an overview of empirical research about queer people of colour within a North American context, by identifying key texts, examining relevant scholarship and critically exposing tensions and contradictions across the literature.

This study uses a theoretical lens which incorporates an Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) approach that is critical[6] (Mullaly, 2002), and heterodox[7] (Baines, 2007), while paying particular attention to the social construction of difference. Therefore, employing this AOP theoretical framework in this chapter will include the meaningful interweaving of a diversity of critical social theories mainly from feminist, post/anti-colonial, critical race, queer, and post-structural perspectives. Moreover, specific attention is paid to historicized theorizing related to the constructs of intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression.

In the third chapter, *Methodology*, I detail my engagement with a photovoice research design, which includes an explanation of my overall research process. This includes identifying my research questions, describing my participant recruitment strategy and iterative nature of data analysis and collection. Furthermore, I explain the importance of reflexivity and examine my social location, in addition to considering key ethical considerations that are particular to the photovoice process. Finally, I identify specific evaluative criteria to assess the credibility, trustworthiness and action-ability of this research project.

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[6] Becoming prominent in the 1970s, Bob Mullaly (2002) defines critical theory as one which "attributed social problems to social structures that favour certain groups in society and oppress others along lines of class, race, gender, and so on… the solution is to transform society to one where social equality replaces the present system of dominant-subordinate relationships" (p.5).

[7] Baines (2007) defines the term *heterodox* as a set of "theories or beliefs that are in disagreement with and challenge mainstream or orthodox beliefs in any given field or discipline… tend to focus in or bring together multiple theories and perspectives that challenge orthodoxy and fundamentalism" (p.22).

The fourth chapter, *Findings,* will include the participant photos, and individual narratives that were developed specifically for the community photo exhibit. Moreover, this chapter will provide a comprehensive description of the final collective themes and specific policy recommendations to be given to key policy-makers, social service providers and community leaders.

The final chapter, *Discussion and Conclusion*, will examine the possible impact of the research findings on further empirical research and theorizing about queer people of colour, in addition to its implications for social work practice, research and social policy. Furthermore, this chapter will explore the transformative possibilities in engaging in social work research as a practice of freedom, in order to counter the contemporary dominance of a globalized, neo-liberal value system and politics whereby the social welfare landscape is depoliticized and individualized. How can social work researchers engage with the "politics of knowledge production" (Grundy & Smith, 2005) and advocate for an agenda of social justice and transformation?

1.1.2 *Demographics*

Queer people of colour are a diverse group of individuals who have migrated to Canada for centuries as refugees, migrant workers and immigrants. As settlers within a colonized geography[8], they presently reach across the strata of citizenship, as non-status, international students, migrant workers, refugees, permanent residents, and first, second, third (and sometimes more) generation Canadian citizens.

Over the past three decades, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of the Canadian population being identified as "visible minorities"[9], from representing approximately 4.7% of the population in 1981, to accounting for an estimated 16% in

[8] Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005) differentiate between First Nations people and people of colour while identifying Canada as a colonized space, due to the specific genocidal policies and practices directed at indigenous peoples, including the Indian act, residential schools, and the continual erosion of First Nations land rights and sovereignty. They argue for solidarity between indigenous people and people of colour through the decolonizing of antiracist theorising and activism (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). For this reason, I have chosen to explicitly identify people of colour as settlers to Canada. It is important to note that some scholars also choose to employ the term "people of colour" as inclusive of indigenous peoples (see Smith, 2005).
[9] "Visible minorities" is the term used by the Canadian state to identify people of colour. While there can be value in identifying racialised communities for statistical purposes, this term is contentious, not only in the social relations embedded into the discourse around how "visible minorities" are framed, but also in its limitations in accurately describing people of colour.

2006 (Canada Census, 2006). Moreover, this increase in racial diversity are disproportionately located within Canada's largest urban centres, as visible minority communities represent over 49% of the total population of Toronto, and over 40% of Vancouver (Canada Census, 2006). Presently the second largest Canadian city, Montreal's visible minority communities represent approximately 16% of its total population (Canada Census, 2006). Furthermore, Montreal has been identified as the city with the third largest visible minority population in Canada, with an estimated number slightly over 590,000 people (Canada Census, 2006).

While Census Canada (2006) has begun to identify the number of same-sex partners living together, it has yet to gather population data related to the number of queer people living in Canada, thereby making it difficult to ascertain even approximate figures. Nonetheless, this increase in the visible minority population, particularly in urban areas, certainly indicates the likelihood for an increased presence of queer communities of colour across the Canadian urban landscape.

1.2 *Reviewing the literature*

Research about queer people of colour are located across academic disciplines and areas of scholarship. This review of the literature related to queer people of colour is informed by its research questions, and therefore organised in a particular way. It begins by identifying and exploring scholarship within a Canadian context. Expanding to include relevant North American literature, the central features of this review examines three spheres related to how queer people of colour conceptualize their intersecting identities. These spheres are divided into three components - *identity formation*, *families and communities* and *health care and social services*. It is important to note that these spheres are not meant to be viewed as rigid categories as they are in fact inter-related and oftentimes overlapping. I conclude by examining the gaps and limitations of current empirical research about queer people of colour.

1.2.1 *Canadian context*

Table 1: Canadian-specific published empirical articles

Empirical Articles	Qualitative	Quantitative	Law-related	Total
Canadian Specific	9	5	7	21

Using Amy Woodruffe's (2008) critical literature review of qualitative research about queer people of colour as a starting point, an exhaustive search of a variety of databases was completed (i.e. psycinfo, CSA, EBSCO, etc). A total of twenty-one published empirical articles across research disciplines were found within the Canadian context. This reveals a paucity of published empirical literature about queer people of colour living in Canada, as previously articulated by Ryan et al., (2008), citing Wayne van der Meide's (2002) research paper[10] commissioned by EGALE Canada[11]. A recent contributor to this body of knowledge is a book edited by Shari Brotman and Joseph J. Levy (2008) titled *Intersections: Cultures, sexualités, et genres*. Nine out of the twenty-one Canadian articles identified are included in this book, which therefore, makes up a significant proportion of the empirical literature about queer people of colour living in Canada.

Upon further examination of this grouping of published empirical research, clear gendered differences in the focus of these articles have been identified with queer men of colour clearly overrepresented. While ten articles identified both queer men and women in their research, eight articles were solely about queer men of colour, while only two articles focused solely on queer women of colour. Meanwhile, bisexual people of colour were only included in five articles, and trans people of colour were invisible, with no articles highlighting their experiences.

This minimal amount of Canadian specific empirical scholarship about queer people of colour necessitates the expansion of this literature review to include American scholarship in this area. Therefore, subsequent components will draw from North American empirical literature. At the same time that American-produced research in this

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[10] While the research paper by Van der Meide (2002) is not published in an academic forum, it is empirical in the way that interviews and focus groups were conducted with queer communities of colour in Canada.
[11] EGALE Canada is the largest national organisation committed to advancing the equality and social justice of queer people and their families (www.egale.ca).

area is connected to and will provide insight into the Canadian experience, significant differences between these locations must also be acknowledged as "these two countries still remain culturally and socially different in many ways" (Ryan, et al., 2008). For example, state policies and practices related to migration, social services, and health care are constructed and implemented differently in Canada versus America (La Violette, 2007; Miller, 2005; Ryan et al., 2008). Therefore, it is paramount to continue advocating for the creation of Canadian-produced empirical research which examines the intersections between race and sexuality.

Moreover, given the historical marginalisation of queer peoples and people of colour from the academy (Bishop, 2005; Henry & Tator, 2009; Woodruffe, 2008), and the fact that most of the research done about people of colour has been produced within anthropological settings whereby members become "objects" of study (Ryan et al., 2008), it is imperative to consider the relevance of alternative bodies of knowledge about queer people of colour produced outside of empirical research and the academy[12] (Woodruffe, 2008; Ryan et al., 2008).

Before moving forward, a key variable that must always be considered when looking at research about queer communities of colour is that of socio-economic status. In the majority of comparative empirical research studies about queer people of colour versus their white counterparts, the queer white group was found to have significantly higher socio-economic status versus their queer racialised counterparts (Consolacion et al., 2000; Kreiger & Sidney, 1997; Parks et al., 2004). Therefore, the variable of socio-economic status is a key factor which must be taken into consideration when entering into research about queer people of colour.

1.2.2 *Identity formation*

The first empirical studies which focused on the identity formation of queer people of colour began to surface in the mid 1980s in the US. These initial studies (Chan, 1989; Espin, 1987; Wooden et al., 1983) primarily relied on using the theoretical *Model*

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[12] Key queer authors of colour include Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, Gloria Anzaluda, Cherrie Moraga, Joseph Beam, Michael Smith, Makeda Silvera and Barbara Smith. Key anthologies include: This bridge called my back: writings by radical women of colour (1983), home girls: a black feminist anthology (1983), In the life: a black gay anthology (1986), Black men/white men: a gay anthology (1983), and Piece of my heart: a lesbian of colour anthology (1991).

of Homosexual Identity Formation developed by Cass (1979) in order to measure the "stages" accrued by various research participants. Chan (1989) and Espin (1987) also utilized the Minority Identity Development Model (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1979) in order to ascertain the "stages" accrued in terms of the research participants' cultural identity. Aliquijay (1996), in investigating the relationship between self-esteem, acculturation and homosexual identity formation among Latina lesbians, decided to measure level of acculturation (versus minority identity development), interfacing this measure with Cass' Homosexual Identity Formation model. These researchers broke new ground by examining the effects of intersecting queer and racialized identities, and identifying issues which were particular to queer people of colour. Furthermore, Chan (1989) and Espin (1987) brought to light issues specific to lesbians of colour, who Chan (1989) identified as experiencing higher degrees of discrimination due to their "triple minority status" (p.19).

However, there are some particular deficits to applying Cass' Homosexual Identity Formation model for queer people of colour. While its use has been common in research of sexual minorities, Parks et al., (2004) argue that most "research on sexual identity formation has been conducted with White, middle-class, older men" (p.242). This must be taken into consideration when asking questions about the effectiveness of this model for not only queer people of colour, but also white queer women (Parks et al., 2004; Gonsiorek & Rudolph, 1991; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000).

Furthermore, some researchers have questioned the linear or sequential developmental stages which form the foundation of Cass' model, stating that sexual identity processes must take into consideration the diverse histories and changing socio-cultural contexts of queer people of colour (Harper et al., 2004; Parks et al., 2004; Rosario et al., 2004). The ways in which ethno-racial[13] and/or gender identity interface with sexual identity creates variation in this process, and should not necessarily result in interpretations of ethno-racial minorities being "developmentally-delayed" in stock comparison with gay white middle-class men.

Another important nuancing of this model by researchers is the demarcation of internal and external factors within the identity development process (Consolacion et al.,

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[13] I used the term "ethno-racial" here because this term is used by specific authors in this literature review.

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2004; Parks et al., 2004; Rosario et al., 2004). Rosario et al., (2004) found that identity-related developmental differences between white and ethno-racial sexual minorities as "expected only in those aspects of the coming-out process that are vulnerable to external influences but not aspects that are driven by the self" (p.218).Thus external factors within the identity model, such as disclosure, and community involvement could take into consideration experiences of racism within mainstream queer communities, and experiences of heterosexism within racialised communities. Moreover, queer women of colour would also be able to acknowledge particular experiences of sexism within both these communities in addition to their experiences of marginalization within queer communities of colour.

If these external influences on ethno-racial minorities are not acknowledged, the reasoning behind why a disproportionate number of gay white middle/upper class men occupy the "highest stage" of development (regarding public acknowledgement or disclosure) could reproduce racist and sexist assumptions (Parks et al., 2004). This breaking of the sequential (and hierarchical) identity model, and therefore, the gay white middle/upper class norm is critical in order to develop more complex and multi-dimensional models of identity formation. For example, Harper et al., (2004) identify same-sex sexuality as multi-dimensional, and draw distinctions between sexual identity, sexual behaviour, and sexual desire, arguing that these dimensions of same-sex sexuality do not always coincide. This kind of complex and multi-layered approach to understanding sexual identity formation can provide contextualized explanations for differences between white and ethno-racial sexual minorities. While sexual minorities of any racial background may choose to conceal same-gender sexual behaviour and identify as "straight" because of denial of their sexual attraction or out of fears of heterosexist individuals in the community, the reasons for why and how ethno-racial minorities experience heterosexism is sometimes different from white sexual minorities (Harper et al., 2004; Parks et al., 2004).

In addition, some studies have begun to incorporate an analysis of both sexual and gender identity in better understanding identity development processes of queer people of colour (Consolacion et al., 2004). This creation of a gender identity development model includes men, women and trans people. However, the incorporation of a gender identity

formation model is currently under-utilized in studies which include queer women of colour, and are practically non-existent in studies about queer men of colour.

In their study on duel identity among gay Asian Pacific Islander men, Operario et al., (2008) incorporate a newly developed, non-linear and fluid theoretical model on social identity complexity first developed by Roccas & Brewer (2002), which describes how individuals organize both their sexual and racial identities through the concepts of intersection, dominance, compartmentalization and merger. Furthermore, Minwalla et al., (2005) explores the identity experience among progressive gay Muslims in North America by identifying three major dimensions to a progressive gay Muslim identity – religious identity, cultural identity, and color identity. The studies completed by Consolacion et al., (2004), Operario et al., (2008), and Minwalla et al., (2005) indicate significant advancements in empirical research about queer people of colour and how they have re-conceptualized and applied integrative, multi-dimensional models of gender, sexual and racial identity formation.

1.2.3 *Families and communities*

The second sphere explores the various factors influencing the relationship between queer people of colour and their biological families or communities. Some of the interactions examined are how queer people of colour experience the broader queer community, their respective racialised community, and within queer communities of colour. A growing body of literature has begun to trace the particular issues faced by queer people of colour in "coming out" to family members, as well as negotiating their religious community (Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Minwalla, 2005; Tremble, 1989).

A growing body of literature investigating the relationship between identity integration and group membership have found that queer people of colour often experience conflict in their relationship with their varying communities (Consolacion et al., 2004; Harper et al., 2004; Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Minwalla, 2005; Parks et al., 2004; Operario et al., 2008; Tremble et al., 1989). One identified explanation for this particular tension is how queer people of colour experience racism within mainstream queer communities. A number of articles have identified the negative impact of racism experienced by queer people of colour within the broader queer community (Tremble et

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al., 1989; Minwalla, 2005; Nemoto et al., 2003; Operario et al., 2008; Kraft et al., 2000). Rosario et al., (2004) found that black youth, for example, were less involved with gay-related social and recreational activities, and suggest "that after initial involvement, Black youth may retreat from gay-related social activities in the LGB community, perhaps because of racism in the LGBT communities" (p.225).

A particular form of racism identified in the literature is found in the conflicts that queer people of colour encounter within their intimate relationships. Ryan et al. (2008), citing Wayne van der Meide (2002), describe the paradox of either being hyper-visible and racially exoticised, or being rendered sexually invisible as "the most "visible" form of racism…(is) the way people of colour are depicted in the area of sexual attraction and interpersonal relationships" (p.312). JeeYeun Lee (1996), articulates the marginalisation facing Asian lesbian and bisexual women within the broader mainly white lesbian community by examining the butch/femme dichotomy within lesbian culture, and describes the difficulties for Asian women to be "seen" as butch. As a result, Lee (1996) explains, "for femme Asian women who look recognizably feminine and Asian, this confluence of various discourses works to almost completely erase their existence as lesbians and bisexuals" (p.122).

Additional forms of marginalisation of queer people of colour within mainstream queer communities include experiences of discrimination, and stereotyping (Nemoto et al., 2003; Operario et al., 2008; Kraft et al., 2000). Van der Meide (2002) describes the marginalization of queer people of colour as feelings of alienation and explains this as arising "from many complex and interrelated causes which range from an inability by the larger dominant Western white community to appreciate racism and simple cultural differences to the overwhelming emphasis on Western and white ideals of beauty in the media and in interpersonal relationships" (p.10).

Ryan et al. (2008) and Van der Meide (2002) identify the negative impact of the internalization of racism[14] in the lives of queer people of colour. Ryan et al., (2008) describes this internalization as existing in varying forms, including "refusing to acknowledge existence/signs of racism; denying its applicability on one's self; or at best,

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[14] Smith (1997) describes the internalization of oppression as "the acceptance and internalization by members of oppressed groups of negative stereotypes and images of their groups, beliefs in their own inferiority, and concomitant beliefs in the superiority of the dominant group" (p. 289).

verbalising racism in such an apologetic manner for it to be the most subtle possible" (p.314). In describing the social relations between gay white men and gay men of colour, Van der Meide (2002) states "many gay white men, in particular, are aware – whether consciously or not – of the power they derive from the internalized racism of many gay men of colour" (p.11).

The racialised communities and families that queer people of colour belong to can also be a site of conflict and tension. Some articles identify differing cultural norms or values related to gender or sexual identity as a possible reason for why queerphobia[15] is manifested within racialised communities (Lee, 1996; Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Minwalla, 2005; Tremble et al., 1989). Merighi & Grimes (2000) identify cultural factors as sometimes stopping gay men of colour from coming out to their families, especially in relation to the effects their gay identity may have on others perception of their family members or the ability to continue the family lineage. This results in queer people of colour withdrawing from their racialised community, and thereby making themselves invisible, as a way to respect their families' difficulties with their sexual orientation (Harper et al., 2004; Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Tremble et al., 1989). Tremble et al., (1989) postulates that for the gay or lesbian child of immigrant parents "the coming-out process takes place against the backdrop of ethnic traditions, values, and social networks" (p.255).

At the same time, both Tremble et al., (1989) and Merighi & Grimes (2000) identify how cultural factors can also facilitate the coming out process for gay men and lesbians of colour. Merighi & Grimes (2000) explain that some gay men of colour described how their cultural background meant "that the importance of family unity and unconditional caring made it easier for them to disclose their sexuality" (p.36). Furthermore, researchers are beginning to incorporate a historicized interpretive lens to their analysis of how racialised communities may understand "culturally" interpret same-sex behaviour and homosexuality (Harper et al., 2004; Kimmel & Yi, 2004; Lee, Y.J., 1996; Operario, D., 2008; Parks et al., 2004).

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[15] I use the term "queerphobia" in order to include the discrimination and fear of a range of sexual and gender identities, expanding from the usual term of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT).

Furthermore, there are some tensions that exist within the literature in relation to the notion of the coming out process being categorically more difficult for queer people of colour versus their white counterparts. Parks et al., (2004) cites research by Bradford et al., (1994), which found African American lesbians to be more out to family members than their white or Latina counterparts. Parks et al. (2004) identifies a shift in this assertion within their own research, where they found older lesbians of colour were *more* likely than younger lesbians of colour to disclose their sexual identity to their families, whereas older white lesbians were substantially *less* likely than younger white lesbians to be out (p.250). By examining the generational differences in relation to coming out to family between African American, white and Latina lesbians, Parks et al., (2004) make the assertion that "these findings suggest the possibility that social/historical changes in LGB visibility may have had less effect on the disclosure decisions of women of colour than on those of White women" (p.250). While Parks et al, (2004) identify public visibility and greater access to resources as possible reasons for why younger white lesbians are coming out in greater numbers, they do not look into the possibility of this public visibility being white women dominated, which could therefore help to explain why younger African American lesbians were coming out less than their older counterparts[16].

For some queer people of colour, there may be difficulties in identifying as lesbian or gay not only because of heterosexism by the society at large, but also because of their fear of losing their intimate friend and familial relationships within their community of colour which may have shielded them from racism. Harper et al., (2004), citing Fukuyama & Ferguson (2000), argue that some community of colour members may see the "gay liberation movement and LGBT identification as Westernized White middle-class phenomena and feel that those people of colour who join this movement are rejecting their culture or origin and joining the White oppressor" (p.188). Furthermore, specific queer communities of colour have created alternative sexual identity categories, for example, the "down low" category for gay black men (Christian, 2005; Wheeler, 2003), which indicates a degree of same-sex sexual activity, but does not have the same

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[16] For more theorizing about invisibility and queer people of colour see Deborah Carlin & Jennifer DiGrazia's (2003) Queer Cultures.

socio-cultural implications of claiming a gay or lesbian identity (Harper et al., 2004; Mays et al., 2002). Harper et al. (2004), goes on to claim that "participating in same-gender sexual activity and not identifying as LGBT also may be connected to varying cultural conceptualizations of sexuality and sexual expression" (p.188).

1.2.4 *Health and social services*

While theorizing around the relationship between queer people of colour and their health has been present in feminist, queer and critical race related scholarship since the early 80s, empirical articles began surfacing in the mid 90s and were concerned about a diversity of issues, including addictions (Reyes, 1998), anti-gay discrimination (Kreiger & Sidney, 1997), HIV/AIDS (Cappon et al., 1997; Peplau et al., 1997), social service provision (Lopez & Lam, 1998; Sohng & Icard, 1996; Swigonski, 1995) and health care access (Stevens, 1998). While these articles were few numerically, they were fairly evenly distributed between gay men and lesbians of colour.

However, surveying the landscape of health research with respect to queer people of colour from the 1990s and onwards, reveals that the vast majority of this particular kind of research has been about the health implications of HIV/AIDS on gay men of colour. Out of seventy one empirical articles found about queer people of colour and health within a North American context, a total of fifty five empirical research articles were found in relation to HIV/AIDS and gay men of colour, while a total of sixteen remaining articles were found about queer people of colour and health. Out of the sixteen articles that did not have a HIV/AIDS focus, only ten articles either focused on, or included women in their research. Out of the seventy one articles related to health and queer people of colour, only two articles were found to include trans people of colour (O'Brien et al., 2005; Sugano et al., 2006).

This under-representation and therefore invisibility of women and trans people of colour within the completed health research about queer people of colour must be articulated and addressed. At the same time, this should also be understood in relation to empirical research that has been done across the HIV/AIDS field as a whole, which reveals an under-representation of gay men of colour within the empirical literature. In 5 HIV/AIDS journals, Jernewall & Zea (2004) found that out of 1674 articles, forty seven

empirically-based research articles contained samples of gay and bisexual men of color. This only represented 3% of the total number of articles, compared with the 15% of articles which contained white gay and bisexual male samples. Harper et al., (2004) argue this to be a strikingly low proportion of articles about queer men of colour "given that HIV/AIDS is overrepresented among gay and bisexual men of color" (p.192).

While a substantive amount of research in this area focuses on examining individual behaviours in the context of HIV risk and vulnerability, some articles also connect sexual behaviour to external factors, such as an individual's socio-cultural context, internalized homophobia, and heterosexism in their community or broader community (Diaz et al., 1999; Kraft, 2000; Nemoto et al., 2003; O'Leary, 2007; Poon et al., 2005; Wilson & Yoshikawa, 2004). Furthermore, there is a growing body of HIV/AIDS literature which is generating knowledge about cultural and social barriers which increase HIV/AIDS vulnerability (O'Brien et al., 2005; Poon & Ho, 2002), the role of the community in HIV/AIDS interventions (Kraft et al., 2000), and HIV Stigma (Peplau, 1997). For example, Poon & Ho (2002) conducted a qualitative research study with gay, lesbian and bisexual Asian youth, and found that not only did queer Asian youth encounter homophobia within their cultural families and communities, but they also faced social exclusion from health and social service providers and mainstream queer youth organisations in Toronto.

As a first of its kind in Canada, O'Brien et al., (2005) conducted a community-based qualitative research project, with three fact sheets being produced about the HIV vulnerability of queer refugees living in Toronto, particularly in relation to poverty, racism, language barriers, mental health issues, isolation, and access to health care and social services. In another ground breaking study, Sugano et al. (2005), discovered a correlation between the exposure to transphobia and increased HIV risk for trans women of colour.

Upon examination of published literature in two well known empirical journals related to health and social services within a North American context, Maurice K. Poon (2004) found that out of 673 articles found, only ten were about Asians, eleven were about Latino/as, ten about Native Americans, and ten about Blacks (p.90). Moreover, Poon (2004) goes on to explain that the majority of these articles are ghettoized to

"special issues" editions that are specific to race and ethnicity and goes on to suggest that it is "white, middle/upper class queer who control most, if not all, of the publishing work and resources in North America gay and lesbian communities" (p.94).

While the concept of intersectionality has been a central theorizing tool for feminist and critical race scholars for over two decades (Crenshaw, 1989), and has been explored in American specific social service literature related to the specific health concerns of queer people of colour (Kanuha, 1990; Kreiger & Sidney, 1997; Lopez & Lam, 1998; Reyes, 1998; Stevens, 1998; Swigonski, 1996) it has only more recently been applied specifically for research about queer communities of colour by Canadian researchers (Ryan et al., 2000; Ryan et al., 2008; Ristock, 2008).

Both Ryan et al., (2008) and Janice Ristock (2008), place an intersectional approach as central to their analytical framework around health care access (and queer people of colour) and same-sex relationship violence (and queer women of colour). Ristock (2008) contends that research "with women who experienced violence in same-sex relationships reveals the differing social and personal effects of heterosexism, racism, sexism, and classism on relationships and on women's experiences of violence" (p.452). Moreover, Ryan et al., (2008) argue that "it is essential to acknowledge that different systems of oppression (such as racism, classism, sexism, etc) are interwoven and that in order to unpack and better understand the complications of these systems, one needs to look into the intersection of oppressions" (p.315).

Patricia Stevens (1999) examines the effects of oppression and prejudice on lesbians of colour in how they accessed health care and their encounters with health care professionals. In analysing patterns within the stories of lesbians of colour and their interactions with health care professionals, Stevens (1999) found that many described their experiences of perceived prejudice as due to sexual orientation, race, class and gender simultaneously. Sugano et al., (2006) describes the impact of the exposure to both racism and transphobia as uniquely experienced by trans women of colour, and urge social service providers to not only develop health care programs specific to this community, but also recognize their particular social and legal barriers to self-identification.

In their critical analysis around the level of importance given to disclosure of sexual orientation in the health care setting, Ryan et al., (2008) contend that the common assumption of *coming out* as "liberating" must be reconsidered, and instead, develop a more complex understanding of its particular implications for queer people of colour. Ryan et al., (2008) go further to identify the paramount importance for queer people of colour to be respected in health care settings through their lives being viewed holistically and in their entirety, with health care professionals ensuring that institutional and professional policies and practices are reformulated to better reflect their health concerns. Moreover, Ryan et al., (2008) identify the critical importance of incorporating the experiences of queer people of colour within adapted queer health training programs specifically for health care workers, both in educational and practice settings.

1.2.5 *Gaps to address*

For empirical research which focuses specifically about issues related to the identity formation of queer people of colour, contradictions arise when examining the ways in which these studies incorporate racial and/or ethnic identity models into their research methods. For example, some researchers who have conducted identity-related research about queer people of colour, have tended to primarily use sexuality-related identity models to see how queer people of colour then differ in their sexual identity development versus their white counterparts (Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999; Parks et al., 2004; Rosario, et al., 2004; Morrison, 2008; D'Amico et al., 2008). While this kind of research can be useful, it nonetheless fails to take into account the significant influence that ethnic/racial heritage has on identity formation (Harper et al., 2004; Quintana, 2007; Operario et al., 2008).

For example, in her study on the sexual and ethno-cultural identities of Aboriginal and Chinese sexual minority men, Melanie Morrison (2008) spends a considerable amount of time contextualizing the effects of homonegativity and discrimination because of sexual orientation on identity formation, but includes almost no contextualizing of racial identity formation or the impact of racial discrimination. The rich amount of empirical literature which takes into account racial discrimination (Chae et al., 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Guthrie et al., 2002; Jackson, et al., 2001; Jones et

al., 2007; Kessler, 1999; Kreiger & Sidney, 1996; Kreiger et al., 2005; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Quintana, 2007) could be used more often when conducting research about the health and well-being of queer people of colour. Moreover, all research conducted about queer people, should *explicitly* identify the racial identity of their participants. Poon (2004) suggests that "similar to queers of colour who are labelled as such, white queers should begin to identify themselves as white gay men or white lesbians instead of "gay men and lesbians" alone" (p.101). This would allow for readers to know whether or not a study sample includes people of colour, rather than assume that a study that only has gay white men can represent all queer people.

Another important gap identified in the literature is the significant under-representation of queer women of colour in empirical research. Further Canadian specific research in the area of queer women of colour and health should be done, in order to take into consideration their unique health needs and barriers, as previously identified by American researchers. Two groups which are practically invisible in this literature review are bisexual and trans people of colour. While there are justifiable reasons for why some researchers have chosen not to include trans or bisexual people, there must be ways for research projects about queer people of colour to have the capacity to include bisexual and trans people of colour in a meaningful way.

Finally, very little empirical research about queer people of colour incorporates ways to conceptualize the impact of historical and trans-national processes on identity formation (Manalansan, 2003; Cantu, 2009). Therefore, I suggest the importance of framing empirical research with queer people of colour within a socio-historical context which acknowledges their specific histories of oppression because of racism, imperialism, and/or colonialism. This includes not only historicizing Canada as a white settler society, and its material and inter-generational implications for people of colour (Razack, 1998, 2002), but also rendering visible the knowledge that has previously been generated by queer people of colour, but ignored by the dominant white queer culture (Harper et al., 2004; Warner, 2002).

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

2.1 *Introduction*

This study employs an Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) theoretical framework, incorporating a critical (Mullaly, 2002), and heterodox (Baines, 2007) approach, through interweaving, in a meaningful way, a diversity of critical social theories mainly from feminist, post/anti-colonial, critical race, and post-structural insights. However, even though these perspectives can work in solidarity with each other, they can also be contradictory. Therefore, the goal is not to prioritize one theory over another, but to apply them in strategic and particular ways, while understanding them to be inter-active, and at times over-lapping.

Moreover, putting these theories in dialogue with each other ultimately allows for what Donna Baines (2007) describes as "lenses for viewing the world, ways of asking questions and techniques for reaffirming social justice oriented social workers' commitment to resist, expand resources to the oppressed, redistribute power and resist again in the new spaces and opportunities that open up as a result of that resistance" (p.29). This kind of politicized and transformative approach challenges the notion of social work functioning as a mechanism for social control and moves towards theorizing and practices which provide pathways to social change, rooted in a worldview espousing equality, connection and solidarity.

As a scholar-activist committed to a process of critical analysis, I seek to un-earth the fractured linkages between specific histories of colonialism and imperialism, the organising of hierarchies and inequalities into contemporary social structures and its varied effects on the present day realities of queer people of colour in Canada. My aim is to not only begin to frame an understanding of the *specific ways* that queer communities of colour are marginalized, but also start to historicize these experiences by un-ravelling the difficult question of *how* this oppression came to be. By not attending to the potential significance of this socio-historical context, Ann Stoler (2006) eloquently warns, "ethnographies of empire will remain safely out of relevant bounds rather than what they should be – implicated histories in the disquieting present." (p. 20).

Therefore, my framework for theorizing will employ three key vectors of critical analysis. First, examining the role of 19th and 20th century colonial/imperialist makings of Canadian empire within the context of the development of Western, industrial capitalism, allows for a specific, *historical tracing* of the complex ways in which race, gender and sexuality was socially constructed in Canada. Secondly, paying particular attention to how state regulation and policing of same-sex sexual behaviour and cross-gender roles served as a violent colonial instrument used to displace, incarcerate and marginalize indigenous peoples and people of colour will reveal the ways in which *interlocking systems of domination* resulted in specific material and discursive consequences for these communities. Finally, providing this historicized context allows for a more complex understanding of how *intersectionality* frames the contemporary experiences of queer people of colour in Canada.

2.2 *Re-membering Canada as a white settler society*

Susan Strega (2005) historically locates the epistemological and ontological foundation of contemporary Western European ideologies during the Enlightenment period, with the marriage of "science" and "knowledge". Thereafter, "scientific knowledge" became one of the dominant ways of knowing, defining the rational producer of objective research as white, upper/middle class, and male (Strega, 2005). This privileging of "scientific knowledge" and global developments related to the industrial revolution and capitalism in the 19th century, resulted in a particular shaping of discourses and regulatory practices for all categories of difference, including those of race, gender and sexuality (Carty, 1999; Fellows & Razack, 1998; Kinsman, 1998; Loomba, 2005; Strega, 2005;).

While there are inherent dangers in reductively transposing European histories with North American ones, the interconnection between the expansion of European empires, and therefore its dominant discourses and regulatory practices, and the historical origins of Canada as a white settler society[17] are difficult to deny (Carty, 1999; Fellows

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[17] Razack (2002), describes white settler society as "one established by Europeans on non-European soil…a quintessential feature of white settler mythologies is therefore, the disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour" (p.2). This framework for conceptualizing white settler society draws from critical theorizing about "whiteness", and how white bodies are socially

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& Razack, 1998; Stoler, 2006). Therefore, understanding Canada as a white settler society can not be divorced from the historical origins of colonial nation building and development of capitalism and industrialisation in Britain and France (Carty, 1999; Fellows & Razack, 1998; Haney, 1989; Mensah, 2002; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007).

As Fellows & Razack (1998) explains, citing Edward Said, "the American experience… was from the beginning founded on imperialism; as the century progressed, the extermination of native peoples, the enslavement of Africans, and the displacement of populations the world over" (p.344). The popular perception of Canada as a benevolent nation-state has served to virtually erase the collective memories of Canadians and its historical origins as a nation founded on the principles of white supremacy, whereby citizenship was granted to white settlers, while concurrently being denied to most people of colour[18] and organising what Sunara Thobani (2007) describes as "the genocidal violence of colonization, exist(ing) in a dialectical relation with its *Other*[19], the Indian, for whom the emergence of this citizenship was deadly" (p.74). This critical re-framing of Canadian history is paramount to our capacity to trace how these histories of oppression have contemporary implications for queer communities of colour.

2.2.1 *Scientific racism*

Canada's legislation of explicitly racist immigration policies and desire to be a white settler society were mutually constitutive to the developing of scientific epistemologies which classified "race" hierarchically (Waddell, 2007). This dominance of scientific racist discourse was "so congruent with social and political life (with power relations, that is) as to be virtually uncontested from inside the mainstream of science" (Somerville, 2000, p.245). One example of this dominant discourse was the ways in which the visibility of racialised bodies were pathologised and medically de-lineated as

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constructed and therefore, revealing the ways in which dominance and normalizing processes become invisible (Frankenburg, 1997). Moreover, those who are positioned as "white" shift and change over time.

[18] For detailed analysis about the ways in which people of colour in Canada have historically been exploited and marginalized, see Sherene H. Razack (2003) Race, space and the law: Unmapping a white settler society, Sunera Thobani (2007) Exhalted Subjects, Enakshi Dua (2007) Exclusion through inclusion: Female Asian migration in the making of Canada as a white settler nation. Notisha Massaquoi (2007). Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspectives on Black Feminist Thought.

[19] Edward Said (1978) describes colonized groups as signifying the *Other*, therefore separate from and inferior to the colonizers, re-inforcing socially constructed unequal social relations. The *Other* can be conceptualized as the ways in which any dominant group view and subordinate oppressed groups.

qualitatively different to that of "normal" white bodies (Somerville, 2000; Waddell, 2007). Furthermore, these racial categories were simultaneously gendered, as Somerville (2000) describes how medical journals from this period "repeatedly located racial difference through the sexual characteristics of the female body" (p.245).

This marking of racialised bodies as inferior, served to consolidate the developing of white, middle-class ruling power, in addition to the normative force of the nuclear heterosexual family (and thereby excluding all other familial structures), an institution which, for the most part, only white people had access to[20] (Dua, 1998; Fellows & Razack, 1998; McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 1995). Razack & Fellows (1998) go further to examine the normative power of middle-class domesticity[21] by describing the "home" as a "site where a class was produced and reproduced and where the life of the individual was connected to the making of a liberal democratic social order" (p.345). Therefore, the practice of racist classification and labelling, versus white, middle-class domesticity was a relational one, whereby the inscribing of racialised bodies as inferior was *essential* to re-inforcing the imagining of superiority within the dominant group (Fellows & Razack, 1998; Hill Collins, 1999).

Above all, Fellows & Razack (1998), citing George Mosse (1997), identifies the dominant group's desire for "respectability" as the primary self-regulatory practice which drove the middle-class to maintain their dominance. Moreover, this *respectability* was accomplished not only through the pathologizing of indigenous peoples and people of colour, but also through the *racial* labelling of other "degenerate classes" whom Anne McClintock (1995) identify as "the militant working class, the Irish, Jews, feminists, gays and lesbians, prostitutes, criminals, alcoholics, and the insane – who were collectively figured as racial deviants" (p.43).

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[20] While the formation of the nuclear family as an institution regulated white women's social roles in order to preserve particular familial and patriarchal relations, Dua (1999) also reveals the ways in which "Canadian state managers have acted to destroy, prevent or disrupt the ability of people of colour to participate in family relations" (p.245). Therefore, because of these precarious, or lack of citizenship rights, women of colour were structurally forced out of the nuclear family institution.

[21] For more about the socio-historical development of middle-class domesticity, see Leonore Davidoff (1995) Worlds between: historical perspectives on gender and class, and Anne McClintock (1995) Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest.

2.3 *Sexual perversion and heterosexual hegemony*

One particular facet of this dominant-subordinate social relation of *respectability -degeneracy* was the way in which it was reinforced through sexual expression and practices. Kinsman (1998), citing Michel Foucault (1980), describes the emergence of a distinct realm of discourse and regulation around sexuality during the 19th Century as "rooted in the new industrial capitalist societies, which organized profound transformations in family, generational, class and sexual relations" (p.257). Furthermore, Bleys (1995) describes this particular discourse as the inter-action between scientific discovery and "Victorian" era morality resulting in the coercive binding of sex and gender, with cross-gender expression and same-sex sexual behaviour being pathologized and located within degenerate bodies.

Similarly to the construction of racist scientific discourse, during the emergence of the "homosexual" identity[22], the classifying of "sexual problems" by professional experts, as "sexual perversions" practiced specifically by prostitutes, gay men and lesbians, resulted in the establishing of what Kinsman (1998) describes as *heterosexual hegemony*, and therefore, subordinated these groups. Interestingly, Somerville (2000) identifies the similarities between the scientific classification of both black-white and homosexual-heterosexual binaries in America as appearing at roughly the same time, and therefore makes the assertion that the "categories of race and sexuality were not only historically coincident but in fact structurally interdependent and perhaps, mutually productive" (p.243). Therefore, it can be argued that the scientific discourse which analogised racial *Otherness* with same-sex sexual perversion influenced the formation of the Western construct of the "homosexual" identity (Bleys, 1995; Somerville, 2000). This historical tracing of oppressive scientific discourses related to race and sexuality serve to demonstrate the complexities of how interlocking systems of capitalism, white

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[22] While there are a multitude of ways in which same-sex behaviour, and cross-gender expression had been constructed and expressed prior to Western European colonial empire making, Bleys (1995) and Somerville (2000), both explain how same-sex sexual behaviour and cross-gender expression transitioned from being identified as particular sex acts (i.e. sodomy), into a "homosexual" identity. Therefore, Somerville (2000) postulates that Western conceptualisations of homosexuality and heterosexuality have developed relatively recently, and thus, are not "natural" categories spanning across cultures and histories, rather they were constructed within a particular socio-historical context, as "only in the late nineteenth century did a new understanding of sexuality emerge in which sexual acts and desires became constitutive of identity" (p.241). During this time period, Namaste (2000) contends that transsexuality was also collapsed into definitions for homosexuality, with effeminacy being seen as a homosexual characteristic.

supremacy, patriarchy, disability[23] and heterosexual hegemony produced complicated, and hierarchical social relations within the colonial and imperial context of North American white settler societies.

2.4 *Same-sex sexual behaviour as colonial tool of domination*

Thus far, I have intended to historically trace some of the ways in which dominant scientific discourses related to both race and sexuality has served as fundamental facets for the imperialist nation building of Canada as a white settler society. Here, I wish to extend this framework by building on Sherene Razack's (1998) theorizing around the "culturalization of sexism"[24] , in order to begin to reveal how the *culturalization of same-sex sexual behaviour* and cross-gender roles, not only worked *in concert with* racist scientific discourse, but it additionally served as a *strategic mechanism* through which colonial subjects culturally *Othered* indigenous peoples and communities of colour, ultimately reinforcing Razack's (2008) assertion of how interlocking systems of domination within a colonial context assist us to "trace how colonizers sought to establish their claim to ownership of the land and conquest of its occupants, not only through the rape of women but also through the feminizing of colonial men[25]" (p.63). Therefore, I seek to articulate the particular ways in which the "culturalized" labelling by Western European colonizers of specific groups of feminized colonial men who expressed same-sex sexual behaviour and cross-gender roles resulted in these sexual and gender practices being viewed as a product of *their* inferior cultural practices.

Through his critical mapping of the racist, sexist and queerphobic interpretations of same-sex sexual behaviour and cross-gender roles in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and North America by Western European colonial powers, Rudy C. Bleys

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[23] I identify the term "disability" here within the context of critical disability theorizing in order to draw a linkage between the social construction of disability in relation to a set of practices and discourses of "normalcy", as Lennard Davis (2000) describes as "linked to late eighteenth and nineteenth-century notions of nationality, race, gender, criminality, sexual orientation" (p.10).

[24] Sherene Razack (1998) contends that the Canadian legal system oftentimes views sexist violence in racialised communities as a kind of "cultural practice", confirming the inferiority of the cultural values of communities of colour in relation to the superiority of dominant Canadian societal values. Therefore, she describes this process as the "culturalization of sexism" (p.68).

[25] For more about histories of colonizer-colonized relations see Sherene H. Razack (2008) Casting out: the eviction of muslims from western law & politics, Ruth Frankenburg (1997) Displacing whiteness: essays in social and cultural criticism, Andrea Smith (2005) Conquest: Sexual violence and American Indian genocide, and Ania Loomba (2005) colonialism/postcolonialism.

(1995) traces the complicated ways in which the colonial gaze and marking of the colonized Other's same-sex sexual practices and gender expressions became "a vehicle of propaganda not only against the paganism of indigenous populations, but also against their presumed cultural inferiority" (p.23). Therefore, the marking of "deviant" male-to-male sexual behaviour, such as sodomy, onto colonized bodies, became a tool through which empire building European nations could maintain their dominance over indigenous communities (Bleys, 1995).

Bleys (1995) goes further to identify particular instances where same-sex sexuality was "emphasized when military and political circumstances required it, while it was played down when alliances were made to combat a joint enemy" (p. 25). This highlights the strategic and calculated nature in which the marking of same-sex sexual behaviour as a sexually deviant cultural practice, was deployed for specific purposes at particular junctures in order to maintain dominance over indigenous communities. This colonial tool was deployed for centuries, from the pre-Enlightenment era (during the 16th Century), through to the early 20th Century, albeit to varying degrees and with varying material consequences to indigenous peoples and communities of colour (Bleys, 1995).

While Bleys (1995) adequately links the Western European project of colonialism and imperialism with the construction of a multitude of racialised, feminized and sexualized social hierarchies across the globe, he pays little attention to how these processes may have functioned on Canadian soil. Fortunately, some theorising and empirical research about how these processes may have functioned within a Canadian context, is beginning to emerge.

2.5 *Criminalization of homosexuality as imperial tool of violence*

Because centuries of Canadian empire building was founded on the colonizing of indigenous communities, the most visceral way in which the *culturalization of same-sex sexual behaviour* and cross-gender roles was used as a violent colonial tool could be seen through the treatment of indigenous people who identified as two-spirited[26]. As slaves,

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[26] Indigenous scholar Fiona Meyer (2008) explains the historical place of two-spirited[26] individuals within some indigenous communities prior to colonial contact, and explores the traumatic effects of "civilizing" policies "aimed at destroying Aboriginal traditions and cultural viability, including the residential schools, radically transformed traditional acceptance of non-binary gender varience and Aboriginal sexual norms"

indentured labourers or migrant workers, communities of colour experienced the imperialist processes of Canadian nation building in substantively different ways from Indigenous peoples (Crawford, 2007; Dua, 2007; Oikawa, 2002; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007).

Gordon Ingram's (2003) article *Returning to the scene of the crime: Uses of trial dossiers on consensual male homosexuality for urban research, with examples from twentieth-century British Columbia,* reveal critical insights for those seeking to render visible specific histories related to how interlocking systems of domination served to criminalize and marginalize entire communities of colour, including queer people of colour in Canada. It is during this time when same-sex sexual behaviour was coalescing into a homosexual identity, where Ingram (2003) critically examines the criminal trials and hearings for consensual homosexuality during the early 20th Century, describing them as a "key source" for revealing particular lesbian and gay histories in Canada. I would add onto this by stating that they are not only a key source for revealing lesbian and gay histories, but in addition, provide insight into how racial, sexual and gendered categories converged in specific ways which resulted in the oppressive surveillance and marginalization of entire communities of colour.

Examining the specific history of Victoria and Vancouver, Ingram (2003) explicitly differentiates the "political economy of sexuality" of urban British Columbia from that of other parts of Canada as he described them as racially segregated spaces with some neighbourhoods having "majorities or near majorities of non-European heritages for a century" (p.78). It is important to note, that the processes leading to these racially segregated spaces were neither innocent nor simply a "natural" result of migration. They were, in fact, a direct result of the calculated and structured ways in which the Canadian state closed off migration paths, limited the citizenship rights and forcibly dis-located communities of colour during this time period (Dua, 1999; Nelson, 2002; Razack, 2002; Ward, 2003). For example, the primary reason for why these spaces were not only racialised but almost completely inhabited by men of colour (with the exception of racialised sex workers) were due to racist and sexist immigration policies whose explicit

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(p.249), on the contemporary lives of two-spirited peoples in Canada. Meyer (2008) describes Two-spirit individuals as "those who were seen to have both male and female spirits acting within them, and were sometimes asked to fulfill key ceremonial roles" (p.246).

purpose was to keep women of colour out of the Canadian landscape (Dua, 2007). Furthermore, these spaces were certainly not free of racial prejudice or even violence at the hands of white Canadians[27].

While racist scientific discourse, in full effect during this time, enabled the enactment of specific racial laws targeted towards indigenous peoples and communities of colour, this also coincided with the criminalization of consensual homosexuality between adult males (Ingram, 2003). This legal viewing of same-sex sexual behaviour as acts of degeneracy served to reinforce the growing power of white, heterosexual, middle-class respectability, as Ingram (2003) argues "arrests for consensual homosexuality between adult males in British Columbia were part of an almost strictly urban discourse to create, shore up, or re-establish a hetero-normative social order" (p.87). Furthermore, Ingram (2003) links the disproportionate application of laws against consensual homosexuality within racialised spaces as resulting from late Victorian notions of race, gender and sexual propriety being inscribed onto communities of colour, since "the South Asian population in British Columbia numbered only in the thousands. Yet Sikh males were defendants in scores of "oriental cases" and in British Columbia's first legal attacks on group and public homosexuality" (p.91).

Therefore, homosexuality was regulated and policed through a particular form of *sexualized* racial profiling of men of colour. The disproportionate surveillance of consensual homosexuality within racialised spaces resulted in the hypervisibility of "sexual degeneracy" within communities of colour. Interestingly, during this exact time period, Ingram (2003) notes his curiosity regarding the fact that none of those criminalized were U.S. citizens, a large migrant group, living in close proximity, but separate from communities of colour in Vancouver and Victoria. This hypervisibility of men of colour, versus the invisibility of white American men indicates a social relation framing the degenerate Other in relation to the respectable white subject, who is seen as completely innocent of sexual depravity. The fact that the white subject is not Canadian, does not seem to matter, in this case.

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[27] For more information about the white supremacist race riots during this time, see Peter Ward's (2003) White Canada forever: Popular attitudes and public policy towards orientals in British Columbia.

Furthermore, at the particular historical moment in which Ingram (2003) situates his study, he reveals a specific program targeted to the policing of homosexuality of South Asian men, mainly Sikh men, during a period of time which heavily discouraged "Indian" immigration[28], as Gordon (2003) declares "the sexual and racial hierarchy evident in the British Columbia dossiers suggests that the imperial project used the criminalization of homosexuality to suppress dissident groups" (p.91). Therefore, it seems that an interlocking of an imperialist form of racism (targeting of Sikh men), sexism (due to the exclusion of women of colour from migration to Canada), and state sanctioned homophobia (reflected in the criminalisation of consensual homosexuality), during a specific era of capitalist industrialisation and urban expansion resulted in the state sanctioned surveillance, incarceration and physical violence towards queer men of colour (or at least, perceived queer men of colour). To view this as simply an act of homophobia against queer men of colour would erase the specific workings of interlocking systems of domination and the material consequences not just for queer men of colour, but for entire communities of colour, in this case.

Furthermore, I would argue, that it was the *possibility* that same-sex sexual behaviour could be "culturalized" within dominant discourses, which enabled the Vancouver and Victoria police force to use the legal mechanism of the criminalization of consensual homosexuality as an Imperialist tool, in order to provide a rationale for the high degree of surveillance and sexualized racial profiling of communities of colour, in order to incarcerate not only queer men of colour, but also, men of colour who as a group (Sikh men), were seen as a threat to white Canadian dominance. This speaks to the power of what Razack (2008) suggests as a focus on how dominant groups understand themselves, their 'self', in relation to the subordinate Other (p.63).

For example, in one specific case, whereby two Sikh men, identified as "domestic partners", had proposed a foursome with one white man who then informed the police and brought along a white undercover detective (Ingram, 2003). Not only were these two Sikh men victims of police brutality, during the trial one of the Sikh men admitted to knowing the detective when he was a witness in a previous trial regarding the murder of

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[28] For more information about the marginalization and explusion of South Asians from the west coast during this time period, see Peter Ward's (2003) White Canada forever: Popular attitudes and public policy towards orientals in British Columbia.

Bela Singh, a man whom the Sikh community believed to be the victim of police violence and murder (Ingram, 2003). Furthermore, Ingram (2003) explains that during the initial conversation the two Sikh men had with the first white man, it was revealed that one of the Sikh men had been involved with resisting the Canadian Navy from deporting the *Komagata Maru*[29], and therefore "an intricate entrapment against the same group at the same time was hardly coincidental" (p.92). This example demonstrates the importance of paying particular attention to state regulatory practices, in order to see how the policing of same-sex sexual behaviour served as a violent imperialist instrument used to displace, incarcerate and marginalize people of colour in Vancouver and Victoria, revealing the ways in which interlocking systems of domination resulted in specific material and discursive consequences for these communities.

It is important to note, that these processes are specific to the Vancouver and Victoria area during the early 20th Century. Further critical historical research which examines the workings of the interlocking systems of class, race, gender, sexuality and ability within a colonial and/or imperialist context in other urban areas in Canada, such as Toronto and Montreal, may reveal troubling continuities as well as particular differences between these geographic spaces. Nevertheless, tracing these historical processes will begin to allow for the examinination of the contemporary intersectional experiences of queer people of colour in Canada within a historicised context.

2.6 *Political intersectionality*

Intersectionality can be a useful theoretical tool to better understand how marginalised communities conceptualise and negotiate their multiple grounds of identity in complex and complicated ways. As Gloria Anzaldua (1990) gracefully articulates "identity is not a bunch of little cubbyholes stuffed respectively with intellect, race, sex, class, vocation, gender. Identity flows between, over, aspects of a person. Identity is a river – a process" (p.251). Of particular importance for this research project will be critically analyzing and illuminating the particular ways in which political and structural

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[29] In 1914, a ship titled the *Komagata Maru* arrived from India with 376 prospective immigrants (Ward, 2003). Because of state intervention and racist anger from white Canadians, this ship stayed in Vancouver's harbour for two months before it left (Ward, 2003). After a legal protest by the South Asian community, a total of 20 men on board were eventually allowed entry into Canada, as they were previous residents and "medically fit" for entry (Ward, 2003).

forms of intersectionality constrain the present day realities of queer people of colour in Canada.

Political intersectionality can be defined as when identity categories become compartmentalized because individuals are situated in at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas (Crenshaw, 1991). For queer people of colour, this can potently be felt in their experiences of racism within the queer community, and queerphobia within communities of colour. Furthermore, queer women of colour face the additional burden of encountering sexism within these spaces. (Bohan, 1996; Kumashiro, 2001; Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Van der Miede, 2002).

2.6.1 *Racism within queer communities*

As my literature review has demonstrated, there is an increasing focus within empirical research upon the experiences and effects of racism on queer people of colour within mainstream queer communities in North America. These experiences of racism are found in overt and covert forms, whereby queer people of colour are oftentimes not welcomed in mainly white spaces, viewed as exoticized sexual objects or rendered invisible through social exclusion.

One particular concern is the degree of invisibility of queer people of colour within mainstream queer discourses and cultural productions. While American queer scholars and authors of colour have been identified within and outside of academia and in particular, feminist and anti-racist scholarship, there is still a dominant cultural perception of the queer identity residing within a body which is gay, white, middle/upper class and male (Conerly, 1996; Duggan,2003; Goldman, 1996; McRuer, 2003).

The dominance of the gay white middle/upper class male subjectivity and the resulting invisibility of queer people of colour is partly explained by D'Emilio (1998), as he historically traces the social construction of gay and lesbian identities in North America, by postulating that the evolution of the contemporary urban and partially ghettoized constructions of queer geographies, and the multitude of complex and contradictory trajectories of queer culture, is a byproduct of capitalism[30]. Ironically, it

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[30] D'Emilio (1998) postulates that capitalism "has allowed large numbers of men and women in the late twentieth century to call themselves gay, to see themselves as part of a community of similar men and

was the very same capitalist system that provided a pathway to the dominant discourses of white middle class domesticity (Davidoff, 1998; Fellows & Razack, 1998), and respectability (Fellows & Razack, 1998; Mosse, 1995) that produced specific patterns of living whereby "capitalism allowed individuals to survive beyond the confines of the family" (D'Emilio,1998, p.242)[31].

D'Emilio (1998) contends that throughout this time, queer people of colour existed and collectively met to form various configurations of community, but that the changing patterns of group life "also reflected the differentiation of people according to gender, race, and class that is so pervasive in capitalist societies" (p.242). Therefore, while queer communities of colour were indeed formulating[32], because of the greater degree of socio-economic power afforded to those with class, gender and racial privileges, gay white men as a group were provided a greater degree of individual autonomy, thereby obtaining greater visibility (D'Emilio, 1998, 2003).

One salient example of how queer people of colour have been rendered invisible has been the particular framing of the Stonewall riots in 1969 as the critical juncture whereby queer people asserted their civil rights (D'Emilio, 1998, 2003). Examining the specific geography and socio-historical context of these riots, reveals that the Stonewall Inn was, in fact, located in a poor, racialised community, where most of its patrons were drag queens, sex workers, street youth, and people of colour (D'Emilio, 2003). Furthermore, the Stonewall riots did not happen as an isolated event specific to gay liberation. Rather, these riots were heavily influenced by the strategies and tactics of civil disobedience intimately connected to the black civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and the women's movement (D'Emilio, 2003)[33]. However, mainstream

women, and to organise politically on the basis of that identity…only when individuals began to make their living through wage labor, instead of as parts of an interdependent family unit, was it possible for homosexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity" (p.242).

[31] As Bleys (1995) and Somerville (2002) also postulated, D'Emilio (1998) describes this time period as the one in which dominant discourses around homosexual behaviour shifted as the medical establishment "developed new theories about homosexuality, describing it as a condition, something that was inherent in a person, a part of his or her 'nature'" (p.242).

[32] D'Emilio (1998) provides an example of annual drag balls occurring with gay black men during the early twentieth century.

[33] D'Emilio (2003) explains the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) as a result of the Stonewall riots, having emerged just a few weeks afterwards, and "many of the GLF's early actions were not gay events at all, but rather displays of commitment to a much larger project of political change… they appeared in rallies in support of the Black Panther Party and at the massive antiwar mobilizations held in Washington" (p.7).

discourses within queer communities of how these riots came to be, and who were a part of them, have either completely erased or severely marginalized the role of people of colour (both the queer people of colour directly involved in the riots, and the communities of colour involved in the civil rights movement). As Lisa Duggan (2003) contends, "any gay politics based on the primacy of sexual identity defined as unitary and "essential" residing clearly, intelligibly and unalterably in the body or psyche, and fixing desire in a gendered direction, ultimately represents the view from the subject position 20th century Western white gay male" (p.57)[34].

Within a Canadian-specific context, theorizing about the racism experienced by queer people of colour or their socio-historical invisibility is minimal (Fung, 1996; Walcott, 2006; Warner, 2002). Tom Warner (2002) in his book, *Never going back: A history of queer activism in Canada*, is able to collect a small amount of evidence related to the experiences of queer people of colour in Canada. Warner (2002) identifies the 1970s as the emergence of queer people of colour within queer spaces, and contends "racism on the part of individuals who were publicly identified with the struggle for sexual liberation also poisoned the environment within the movement, igniting explosive debates over race and sexuality" (p.183)[35].

In his article, *Looking for my penis: The eroticized Asian in gay video porn*, Richard Fung (1996), through de-constructing gay video porn, examines Asian gay and lesbian representation within the context of living in a society which solely affirms white male beauty. In addition to criticizing the racial *Othering* and "white centredness" of gay porn, Fung (1996) also identifies representational visibility and political voice as principal concerns within the Asian gay and lesbian movements in North America. In *Black men in frocks: Sexing race in a gay ghetto (Toronto)*, Rinaldo Walcott (2006) confronts the domination of white gay male representations of urban queer life through the articulation of a "multicultural queer space…we must confront the politics of what I

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[34] In his critical appraisal of the invisibility of the main character, yet simultaneous dominance of his whiteness in Edmund White's *A Boy's Own Story*, McRuer (2003) describes this as "white apositionality", when constructions of sexuality inadvertently colludes with hegemonic constructions of whiteness.

[35] Furthermore, Warner (2002) describes the surfacing of *Gay Asians of Toronto* (GAT) in 1980 as the first organisation to specifically meet the needs of queer people of colour, followed by the formation of *Zami* in 1984, the first Canadian group for queer people of colour from Black and West Indian heritage (p.185). In the same year, the organisation *Lesbians of Colour* (LOC) was created and resulted in their organising of workshops about racism at the *Lesbian Sexuality Conference* in 1984 (Warner, 2002).

will call "creole space"… an acknowledgement that cultural encounters indelibly change us, both consciously and unconsciously." (p.129). Walcott (2006), therefore argues for queer black spaces that are diasporic and attune to difference, evident in events such as Blockorama[36].

2.6.2 *Queerphobia in communities of colour*

Another example of how political intersectionality impacts queer people of colour would be how they experience queerphobia from their racialised communities. A particular focus identified within the empirical research in my literature review, are the conflicts and tensions which exist regarding the relationships that queer people of colour have with their biological families, especially in relation to coming out as queer. In addition, the empirical literature explores how queer people of colour negotiate their multiple identities in relation to religion, and differing cultural norms.

As previously identified in the empirical literature, Warner (2002) notes the complex, inter-relationship between the protection from racism experienced from dominant Canadian society that communities of colour give to queer people of colour, and yet, the risks of identifying as queer within these communities. Another common theme identified in my literature review is how certain communities of colour, especially newcomer immigrant communities, view homosexuality as a Western concept, Warner (2002), citing Nickolus Plowden (1992), describes how "in some African cultures, for example, there has been no word for homosexuality… one gay man of African descent who immigrated to Canada has stated that in his country of origin 'homosexuality is a white man's disease'" (p.35).

The empirical literature suggests that queer people of colour often describe their experiences of queerphobia within their communities as linked with homosexuality being framed as a white cultural practice. While these experiences accurately describe how queerphobia is sometimes discursively manifested within communities of colour, much of the literature implies, either directly or indirectly, that these acts of queerphobia are

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[36] Walcott (2006) describes Blockorama as a part of Gay Pride "which draws heavily from African-American black prides, yet is deeply influenced by Caribbean block celebrations and Canadian forms of pleasure and celebration… Blockorama is a provocative and assertive taking of space in the queer community, but it is also a part of the ongoing struggle for space in the public sphere of a multicultural city" (p.129).

simply due to the cultural beliefs of communities of colour, versus integrating a broader critical analysis of the social, economic and political factors related to histories of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism which have influenced the particular kinds of discourses about homosexuality available to communities of colour.

In order to do this, the material, psychological and inter-generational consequences of centuries of colonial and imperialist empire making and the inscribing of mutually constitutive racist and homophobic scientific discourses onto communities of colour must be taken into account. These racist and homophobic ideologies converged to produce a particular *racialized* discourse of "homosexuality as disease" [37] and were being solidified during the evolution of the "homosexual" identity within 19th Century Western capitalist societies which saw a rise in the concentration of queer people within North American urban landscapes[38]. Yes, queer white men and women suffered greatly from the psychological consequences of societal policing and persecution due to heterosexual hegemony and these discourses of *homosexuality as disease* (D'Emilio, 1998; Chauncey, 1994; Demczuk & Remiggi, 1998).

At the same time, it was the systemic and cultural benefits embedded into white citizenship that have been accrued onto white and male bodies due to centuries of colonial and imperialist exploitative practices which paved the way for the contemporary socio-economic and cultural dominance of gay white middle-upper class men (and to a lesser degree white women) within North American queer geographies. This kind of historicized and critical theorizing about how queer geographies and "queer culture" has been socially constructed allows for the tracing of complex and unequal social relations which have played a significant role in producing the racialized hierarchy of a discourse of *"homosexuality as white"*.

Therefore, one can not diminish the inter-generational impact of white gay men benefiting from the interlocking systems of capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy, even as they were simultaneously *Othered* as sexually deviant. Furthermore, this helps to provide a historicized and contextualized understanding as to how the discourses of *homosexuality as disease* and *homosexuality as white* intersect, resulting in communities

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[37] See Somerville (2000).
[38] See D'Emilio (1983;1998).

of colour identifying homosexuality as a "white man's disease". Furthermore, would communities of colour have expressed these kinds of homophobia if some had not internalized discourses around scientific racism while having their own historical constructions of same-sex behaviour and cross-gender roles vilified and erased from collective memory?

Therefore, just as we can historically trace the evolution of the homosexual identity as a Western construct, so too can we trace the evolution of these *discourses of homophobia*[39] to Western societies. While this does not diminish the importance of addressing manifestations of queerphobia within communities of colour, rather than simply blaming these communities or the "backward cultures" they come from, it is of equal importance to implicate and examine the responsibility of broader colonial and imperialist forces, social structures, political economies and therefore, *Western complicity,* in influencing the ways in which dominant homophobic discourses have been internalized and manifested.

For example, Andil Gosine (2008), in his article *Fobs, banana boy, and the gay pretenders: Queer youth navigate sex, "race", and nation in Toronto, Canada*, examines the complexities embedded within underlying discourses, which surface when particular rationales are used to explain why homophobia exists within communities of colour, especially immigrant communities. In his critical appraisal of a documentary made by a gay youth of Chinese heritage, Gosine (2008) reveals the colonial-imperialist discourses which are integral to this youth's framing of why his parents may be homophobic. Gosine (2008) identifies the ways in which homophobia becomes viewed as a re-ified cultural practice, and therefore, "results in the racialized characterization of non-white people as "natural" homophobes…the privileging of white Western ways of knowing and speaking about sex and sexuality… the neutering of colonial anxieties about the reproductive potential of non-white peoples" (p.234). Moreover, because homophobia is seen to reside only within a particular family or *Other* culture, the state-sanctioned and society

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[39] I use the term homophobia, because of the historical importance of the term "homosexuality" within dominant scientific discourses, in addition to how homophobia is deployed and understood in this context, which results in all queer people being collapsed into the homo/hetero binary.

produced homophobia and heterosexism which still exists in Canada is erased from public view[40].

Earlier, I identified how the "culturalization of same-sex sexual behaviour" and cross-gender roles by Western European empires and nation-states, including Canada, served as a strategic colonial and imperialist instrument of domination by marking same-sex sexual behaviour as a deviant cultural practice of indigenous people and communities of colour. Ironically, within particular Canadian spaces, a reversed, yet hauntingly similar kind of discourse is emerging. In their article, *"Dangerous shortcuts": Media representations of sexual minority refugees in the post 9/11 Canadian press*, Jenicek et al., (2009) examine media representations of queer refugees within the Canadian urban centres of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, and found that because of the dominant media imagining Canada to be a "haven" for queer people, they "contend that these articles participate in the "culturalization of homophobia", whereby this particular form of oppression becomes a specific and racialised practice attached solely to *Other* cultures, thus erasing or belittling the homophobic violence within Canada's borders" (in press).

Therefore, instead of *homosexuality* being seen as a marker of a cultural practice that is inferior, some Canadian institutions are now framing *homophobia* as a cultural practice that is inferior. Both of these mechanisms serve to re-inforce the *Otherness* of communities of colour, while continually maintaining the innocence and superiority of Western "values". This innocence is further challenged, when taking into consideration the fact that over half of the 80 plus countries that still criminalize same-sex sexuality are formerly colonized countries that are continuing the use of British colonial laws created due to the imposition of Judeo-Christian values at the time (Gupta, 2009, p.5). As Neville Hoad (2007) contends, "while from a certain perspective "homophobia" may be the tip of the iceberg, the iceberg is not just iceberg all the way down" (p. xiii). Expressions of homophobia, therefore, should not simply be seen as an ahistorical static cultural practice of racialized communities, but rather a historicized and contextualized phenomena produced by interlocking systems of domination.

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[40] For more information about the ways in which homophobia and heterosexism still exist within Canadian society and state regulatory practices, see Warner (2002), Janoff (2005), and Ingram (2003)

2.7 *Structural intersectionality*

The structural form of intersectionality examines the ways in which multiply oppressed individuals experience particular oppressive practices embedded within social structures (Brotman & Ryan, 2003; Crenshaw, 1991; Van der Meide, 2002). These social structures could be, for example, social welfare institutions, such as hospitals, health care centres, child welfare services, and welfare systems. These institutional sites are possible spaces where queer people of colour could go to seek assistance and face particular barriers.

In the literature review chapter, I reveal the paucity of empirical literature related to the health care and social service experiences of queer people of colour. The main features from this section include discrimination from service providers, systemic barriers and issues related to coming out in a health care setting. While Ryan et al., (2008) focus on queer people of colour and access to health care and Ristock (2008) discusses the experiences of domestic violence for queer women of colour, both use an intersectional approach in their critical analysis.

Ryan et al., (2008) identify specific burdens for queer people of colour due to the complex intersecting of multiple identities, in particular, their race, gender, and sexuality which result in unique barriers in accessing health care. For example, in order for health care professionals to remove barriers to health care access, Ryan et al., (2008) found that "this would require transformations in the current state of training of health care professionals as to the needs of queer people of colour… a lack of training has a substantial negative impact on the potential to locate supportive practitioners in the mainstream health care system" (p.330).

When examining the particular structural burdens which queer people of colour face when accessing health care, it is of critical importance to understand the present day implications of the socio-historical context of how scientific discourses related to race, gender and sexuality served to re-inforce racist and queerphobic ideologies (Ahmad & Bradley, 2007; Jiwani,2006;Warner, 2002). Of course, it is important to acknowledge, as Fellows & Razack (1998) rightly warn, "we must be wary of positing a straightforward correspondence between the hierarchical arrangements of the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth" (p.350). However, Fellows & Razack (1998), citing Anita Levy

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(1991), describe the task in the present is to uncover the ways in which nineteenth century middle-class respectability is now embedded into dominant values, assumptions and norms about self and identity.

For example, the primary instrument through which scientific discourses have been disseminated has been through the employment of the medical model, and in particular, the creation and use of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, otherwise known as the DSM[41] (Kutchins & Kirk, 1997). Kutchins & Kirk (1997) describe the DSM as a result of "science and politics", and contend that it was constructed due to the desire of medical professionals to *gain respectability* (p.89). Valocchi (1999) describe the professionalization of doctors during this time as a mechanism through which they could use "their 'expertise' in the service of social control" (p.210). In fact, the racist and queerphobic discourses embedded within scientific knowledge were developing at roughly the same time as the first methods of scientific classification which led to the creation of the first DSM in 1952 (Kutchins & Kirk, 1997). Furthermore, this first DSM included the pathologizing of homosexuality (Warner, 2002) and racial or cultural difference[42] (Ahmad & Bradley, 2007; Jiwani, 2006).

All of these factors indicate the particular ways in which the DSM, and the medical model served as another instrument for the white, middle-class ruling power to assert their dominance and superiority over the "degenerate" groups. Puar (2007), citing Chow (2006), describes this management of *Othered* bodies through scientific observation and classification as an "ascendancy of whiteness" (p.25). Ironically, it is the location of a mental disorder "as a phenomenon that occurs "in the individual"" (p.31), which results in the disproportionate medicalized pathologizing and stereotyping of women, people of colour and queer people; the effects of which are still being felt today[43] (Ahmad & Bradley, 2007; Jiwani, 2006; Warner, 2002; Namaste, 2000).

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[41] For a more detailed critical genealogy of how the DSM was constructed, see Kutchins & Kirk (1997) *Making us crazy : DSM : The psychiatric bible and the creation of mental disorders.*
[42] This scientific essentialising of "visible" physical characteristics onto racialisd bodies have been linked to contemporary ways in which medical discourse "others" racialised groups and re-ifies cultural differences (Ahmad & Bradby, 2007)
[43] A clear example of this is how gender dysmorphia is still considered a mental disorder by the DSM, although it is important to note, whether or not to de-list this category as a disorder is contested. See Viviane Namaste (2005) *Sex change, social change: reflections of identity, institutions and imperialism.*

2.8 *Queer sexuality and trans-nationality*

As Gosine (2008) has done, a growing number of critical theorists are beginning to examine the complex relationship between sexuality, gender, migration and globalization (Cantu, 2009; Gopinath, 1997; Manalansan, 2003; Puar, 1996, 2007). By examining how identity formation of Filipino gay immigrants is informed by the processes of globalization and transnationalism, Manalansan (2003), examines how queer trans-national identities[44] are created, while mobility is contained through social, historical, economic and political processes which link globalisation with histories of colonialism. Furthermore, Manalansan (2003) identifies the dangers in prioritising a monolithic international lesbian and gay movement or culture as this could result in the imposition of "a white gay male gaze – namely an omniscient, unreflexive observer whose erotic and practical politics are based on an imagined level playing field for all queers" (p.6).

By acknowledging the hierarchies and social inequalities that are embedded into trans-national queer identities, Puar (1996) cautions that "one must interrogate not only how the nation disallows certain queers but, perhaps more urgently, how nations produce and may in fact sanction certain queer subjectivities over others" (Puar, 1996, p.419). Furthermore, Lionel Cantu (2009) explains his desire to conceptualize "the sexuality of migration" through a theoretical lens which engages "a queer political economy of migration, by which the social, political, economic, historical, and spatial dimensions of sexuality and migration could be brought to the fore and analyzed" (p.163).

2.9 *Conclusion*

This AOP theoretical framework aims to provide a pathway for critical theorizing about the lived experiences of queer people of colour that is historicized and contextualized. Canada's colonial history as a white settler society whereby mutually

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[44] Labelle (2004) describes trans-national identity as created by the linkage between some racialized communities with their country of origin. This linkage can at-times be co-ercive, as Dua et al., (2005) goes further to identify colonialism, imperialism and "whiteness" as central to trans-national processes which shape the diasporic and trans-national identity of racialized communities in Canada. In this context, the trans-national identities of queer people of colour in Canada are also influenced by Western and globalized understandings of queer sexuality.

constitutive discourses of scientific racism and heterosexual hegemony served to consolidate 19th Century white middle class heterosexual respectability must be acknowledged in order to begin to trace how these discourses are embedded into the dominant values, assumptions and norms within contemporary urban Canada. Furthermore, tracing the historical marking of same-sex sexual behaviour and cross-gender roles as a cultural practice of racialized *Others* renders visible a troubling linkage to the media's contemporary employment of the *culturalization of homophobia,* both serving to re-inforce Canadian superiority while erasing *Western complicity* with the perpetuation of *discourses of homophobia* within communities of colour.

By maintaining a focus on dominance and the complex workings of interlocking systems of domination, accountability is extended to Western nations for addressing globalized expressions of homophobia. This kind of theorizing can be difficult to un-ravel, as Razack (2008) explains how conceptualizing simultaneously operating systems "requires that we keep several balls in the air at once, striving to overcome the successive process forced upon us by language and focusing on the ways in which bodies express social hierarchies of power" (p.63). Further historical empirical research that is site-specific within Canadian urban geographies (such as Toronto or Montreal) will serve to critically re-frame Canadian history and allow us to better understand the contemporary lives of queer people of colour.

While intersectionality serves as a powerful theoretical tool for this study, it can not on its own fully capture the experiences of queer people of colour living in Canada. Intersectional theorizing must also be contextualized and historicized by examining the impact of inter-generational histories of displacement on the development of trans-national identities of queer people of colour. Through the engagement of these critical pathways of theorizing, this study seeks to contribute to what Dua et al., (2005) identify as "the importance of analyzing racialized identities through disaporic and transnational process" (p.3), in particular as it relates to contextualizing the findings of this research project in order to produce new knowledge about queer communities of colour in Canada.

Chapter III

Methodology

3.1 *Research questions*

Through the use of photovoice methodology, this study explores how queer people of colour visualize, describe, and conceptualize their life experiences. In particular, the central research question for this research project asks – what are the ways in which queer people of colour conceptualize their intersecting identities and resist interlocking systems of domination?

The following sub-questions examine how intersecting identities and interlocking systems of domination function in the lives of queer people of colour at individual, familial, community, and institutional levels. How do queer people of colour historicize their identities? How do queer people of colour respond to marginalizing experiences? How do queer people of colour conceptualize their relationships with their families and communities? How do queer people of colour access institutional "support systems"[45]?

3.2 *Photovoice research design*

Photovoice is an innovative, community-based, and visual Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology first implemented by development researchers Caroline C. Wang and Mary Anne Burris (1996) with women villagers in rural China. Their inspiration for actualizing this particular methodology came primarily from what Jo Spence (1995) describes as "community photography" – a way in which ordinary people photograph each other and their social environment. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2008) has additionally identified the work of community-involved photographers Jim Hubbard[46], Alex Harris[47] and Wendy Ewald[48] as formative to the development of their

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[45] The reason why I place quotations around "support systems" is to acknowledge the fact that while institutions are meant to serve as systems of support, they do not necessarily adhere to this purpose.

[46] A photographer for the Washington Post and Newsweek, Jim Hubbard founded the "shooting back" program in 1989 for homeless children in Washington to learn photography skills and document their realities (Blackman, 2007; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

[47] Alex Harris co-founded Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

[48] Currently the director for the Literacy Through Photography program at Duke University, Wendy Ewald has taught 'collaborative photography' with children all over the world (Blackman, 2007).

photovoice methodology. De Lange & Mitchell (2007) position photovoice within the broader category of *'visual methodologies for social change',* and describe the transformative possibilities of "engaging community members in producing their own visual images through taking photographs, video-making and drawing" (p.1). Furthermore, Mitchell et al., (2005) identify photo-therapy (Spence, 1995; Weiser, 1999) and photo elicitation (Walker, 1993) as additional ways in which photography has been used in research and/or therapeutic contexts.

Concurrently, Blackman (2007) traces the historical origins of participatory forms of photography as coming from participatory video and documentary filmmaking, notably, the work of Su Braden[49], Sol Worth and John Adair[50], and Don Snowden[51]. While crediting Wang and Burris (1996) with the creation of photovoice, Blackman consequently differentiates their specific focal points on academic and policy research arenas from that of a UK-based organisation called *PhotoVoice*[52], created a decade ago, with its focus on community-oriented photojournalism and "income-generating opportunities with the photographic and media industry and establishing partnership projects with other international and community organisations" (2007, p. 10). Moveover, the number of Canadian social work researchers deciding to engage with photovoice has increased significantly in the past decade, mainly in the areas of youth, health promotion, social services and international HIV/AIDS work[53]. In the first photovoice project to be published with queer people of colour, Kevin J. Graziano (2004) conducted a study with black gay men and lesbians in South Africa.

While acknowledging the socio-economic potential and media industry-related benefits of engaging in this particular version of *PhotoVoice*, the primary methodological orientation for this research project will be centred around Wang and Burris' (1995;

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[49] Su Braden used participatory video with villagers in Vietnam (Blackman, 2007).
[50] Through Navajo Eyes is a book by Sol Worth and John Adair, about their training of Navajo Indians to film their social world (Blackman, 2007).
[51] Don Snowden worked with a small fishing village community in Newfoundland and developed the 'Fogo Process' an early form of participatory video in 1967 (Blackman 2007).
[52] More information about the UK organisation of PhotoVoice can be found at www.photovoice.org
[53] See Laughlin et al., (2004) Women's perspective on poverty: photos and stories by women on low-income in Calgary, Hurlock et al., (2008) Do you know what I mean? A photovoice exhibit that explores the issues of the sex trade through women's photographs and stories, Khalema et al., (2009). The untitled: a stand against racial discrimination and De Lange & Mitchell (2007) Putting People in the Picture: Visual Methodologies for Social Change.

2006) conceptualisation of photovoice, mostly because of its potential in informing social work practices and policies within a North American context. This photovoice research process includes a four workshop model (Wang, 2006), whereby participants undergo a co-authored process with the researcher of learning photography, taking photos, storytelling through photos, developing shared meanings for experiences, and identifying collective themes (Wang, 2006). Furthermore, I intend to employ methodological insights from Naydene de Lange & Claudia Mitchell's (2007) *Putting People in the Picture: Visual Methodologies for Social Change*, particularly in relation to employing photovoice (Larkin, J. et al., 2007; Mitchell, C. et al., 2007; Olivier, T. et al., 2007; Taylor, M. et al., 2007), the interpretation of visual images (Moletsane & Mitchell, 2007), and ensuring a commitment to social change (De Lange & Mitchell, 2007; Walsh, S., 2007).

       Enabling research participants to visualise and describe their everyday realities through photography, photovoice promotes collective knowledge production through critical dialogue (Wang, 2006). Upon conceptualizing their personal and community strengths and concerns, the community engages in dialogue with community leaders, social service providers and key policymakers through the auspices of a community advisory committee and public community photo exhibit (Wang, 2006). Both the community photo exhibit and community advisory committee serve as mechanisms for the knowledge produced from a photovoice project to then be translated into specific policy recommendations and inform the work of social service providers in order to improve the lives of the community. The specific details related to my employment of these photovoice research processes will be further elaborated upon in the *data collection and analysis* section of this methodology chapter.

       Furthermore, Moletsane et al., (2007) argue that photovoice is a critical "vehicle for voices that are traditionally silent on issues of policy and programming" (p.20). One of the benefits of engaging in this kind of approach is the value gained from providing individuals from historically marginalized communities an opportunity to be co-knowledge producers within an arts-based, community-building process. Although some may view the use of photovoice as a research method to be new, Moletsane et al. (2007), argues this and other participatory methodologies "with their inbuilt research-as-social-change orientation in a variety of research contexts, is increasing" (p.21).

3.2.1 *Photovoice as a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology*

In addition to community-based approaches to photography, Wang and Redwood-Jones (2008) locate the epistemological origins of photovoice within the critical consciousness theorizing of Paulo Freire[54], and feminist theorizing. Furthermore, McIntyre (2008) identifies critical theories as key contributors to the scholarly development of photovoice, and other PAR-related methodologies. While Wang & Burris (1995; 2006) identify photovoice as a PAR methodology, it is important to clarify that photovoice and PAR are not fully inter-changeable.

A central distinction serving to demarcate PAR from photovoice is its broader methodological scope and its capacity to be structured in a variety of ways. Therefore, photovoice serves as one of many possible forms of PAR. In addition, there are specific structural features of photovoice which limits its ability to fully engage with all PAR principles and processes. While having this structured model is immensely helpful in guiding the research process, it also serves to limit the ways in which research participants can make decisions around how the methodology should be ultimately be organized and implemented. Furthermore, of particular importance will be identifying the specific ways in which aspects of PAR can and can not be incorporated into this particular research project.

Ultimately, PAR engages in a research process that "represents a philosophical approach that is rooted in social justice…brings together several elements of research – inquiry, learning, critical analysis, community building and social change" (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 155). Moreover, PAR is distinguishable from the similar, but differently oriented research practices of action research and participatory research (Potts, 1997).

PAR recognizes the socio-historical origins of "scientific" and "neutral" research practices as driven by fundamentally unequal social relations, whereby the research participant was *Othered*, while the researcher was seen as the creator of universal wisdom and knowledge (Ryan et al., 2008, Strega, 2005; Rutman et al., 2005). At its core, PAR

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[54] In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2008) describes critical consciousness building as *conscientizaçao* which "refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p.35).

aims to de-stabilize these dominant, positivist Western and Eurocentric research epistemologies and ontologies.

A primary way in which PAR challenges and re-formulates dominant research practices is through the creation of a mutually beneficial and collaborative relationship forged between researcher and research participants throughout the research process. This collaboration leads to the active participation of research participants in the sharing of decision-making power through the co-construction of the research design and knowledge produced. Therefore, Photovoice research participants become the "researchers" of themselves and their social environment, thereby altering the power relations between researcher and participants.

Another crucial feature of PAR is its prioritizing of engaging in research which promotes critical self-awareness and leads to social change (McIntryre, 2008). Because of this social justice orientation to research practice, PAR methodologies explicitly identify three pathways to change (Rutman et al., 2005). One pathway is the development of critical consciousness for both the researcher and research participants (Rutman et al., 2005). Within the parameters of photovoice, the collective nature of the group process, along with critical questions that the researcher and research participants ask and respond to result in this development of critical consciousness.

The second pathway is the improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process (Rutman et al., 2005). This pathway is qualitatively more difficult to measure, but can be linked with the learning of critical thinking and photography skill building leading to improvement in the lives of research participants. Therefore, improvement can be measured in a psychological or material way. The third pathway is the transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships (Rutman et al., 2005). This is arguably the most difficult, if not impossible to achieve during the time frame of a single photovoice project. Therefore, rather than thinking of "achieving" this objective, it may be more useful to ask whether or not this particular photovoice project has *worked towards* systemic transformation. The incorporation of the community advisory committee is a way in which photovoice tackles this pathway, in addition to the community photo exhibit. These pathways will also serve as a critical way to measure the credibility and trustworthiness, and action-ability of this particular research project.

3.3 *Reflexivity and Social Location*

A critical strategy to avoid positioning ourselves in a prescriptive way within a research project is to engage in the feminist process of reflexivity (Parker, 1992; Reinharz, 1992; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Reflexivity within a research context refers to the researcher constantly re-considering how their own values, beliefs and world view may impact their interaction with research participants. As the researcher, being reflexive means that I must continually engage in a process of critical self-reflection, and challenge myself to un-earth assumptions and oppressive social practices that I may be unconsciously re-producing during the research process. This means persistently asking myself critical questions, assessing and re-assessing my positioning in relation to those of the research participants - who is a part of constructing the questions for this study? How are research participants or the community involved in creating knowledge? Who is benefiting from this project? This constant interweaving of a reflexive process allows me to continuously position and re-position myself throughout the life of the research project (Cresswell, 2007).

Because of my decision as a self-identified queer person of colour to do a research project with and about queer people of colour, the intimate space from where I come to my research topic means standing in the murky waters of being "the researcher" while simultaneously being identified with "the object of study". By making explicit my social location[55], I can better understand and be transparent in describing where my power and privilege is and isn't in relation to the research participants. Rather than prescriptively describing my social location, it is crucial to continually examine my intersecting identities and roles as insider (identifying as a queer person of colour), outsider (as academic researcher), and positions of dominance (as male, educated, middle class) and the ways in which these shifting locations influence decision making processes and social relations throughout the research process.

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[55] Baines (2007) describes social location as "a person's affiliation or categorization within webs of oppression and privilege…people are shaped, but not determined by their social location" (p.24).

Therefore, engaging with what Adrienne Rich (1984) describes as a *politics of location* ensures that power relations between myself and the research participants are continuously being accounted for by positioning and re-positioning my insider/outsider status (Herising, 2005; Strega, 2007)[56]. Negotiating the unstable and constantly shifting insider/outsider relations within research practices can be challenging, and can sometimes result in tensions between those involved in the research process (Potts & Brown, 2005). Potts & Brown (2005) further describes this relational positioning as "seldom as simple as declaring which position we hold…we may think we are insiders only to find that others involved in the project (especially those providing data) see us as set apart, as outsiders." (p. 265).

At the same time, Potts & Brown (2005) argue that researchers with insider status should be afforded a degree of epistemic privilege, "since they have lived experience of the issue under study" (p.264). Certainly for this research project, my insider status as a queer person of colour gave me a particular vantage point and influenced my approach. My considerable investment of time and energy as a volunteer and activist within and across queer and/or racialised communities before beginning this study gave me a certain degree of credibility and authenticity within these spaces. This resulted in gaining access to potential participants in ways that would be more difficult for those with outsider status.   For example, the first potential research participant (who ended up participating in the project) that contacted me to declare her interest in this project found out about the project from a fellow activist colleague that I had previously worked with. These kinds of connections would not have been made had I not developed a level of respect and trust within my communities.

While this kind of *insider* status can result in having a greater level of insight into a given research project, it can also lead to an unawareness of the ways in which an insider researcher can also re-inscribe dominant-subordinate power relations in their decision making processes and interactions with research participants. Simply being a queer person of colour doing a research project about queer people of colour does not

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[56] According to Smith (1998), insiders are seen as those immediately affected by the particular set of circumstances, while outsiders are seen as those external to that particular setting.

preclude me from re-inforcing "power-over" principles[57] (Bishop, 2001; Smith, 1998; Starhawk, 1987). Therefore, I had to continually struggle to be reflexive and engage in research practices that engendered "power-with"[58] principles (Bishop, 2001), while at the same time being explicit with the participants when decisions could not be made collaboratively.

Rendering explicit this contradictory and at times contentious relationship between power and privilege is certainly not an easy task, but absolutely necessary. An example would be when I had to acknowledge to the participants the power that I had to maintain in determining the timeline for the project as it could not surpass a certain time period, otherwise jeopardizing the completion of my thesis within a pre-determined deadline. One way in which I negotiated this was to acknowledge these limitations, but to clarify with the participants that even though I had these hard deadlines, that I wanted to be as open and flexible as possible in responding to their needs within this timeline. This resulted in the changing of workshop dates and times, or meeting with participants in between workshops as I did with one particular participant who was having a difficult time in managing her personal life outside of the parameters of the project.

The challenges of incorporating PAR principles into the research process as an *outsider,* means finding ways to de-stabilize traditional, positivist research practices of studying "others" (Potts & Brown, 2005). Therefore, researchers must "pay attention to the ways a research topic is produced, and pose various questions to ascertain what is happening and uncover assumptions" (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 265). Incorporating PAR research practices means the researcher must be able to contextualize, identify and reflexively re-position their social location and therefore *insider/outsider* status and transition this analysis into what Razack (1998) describes as a *politics of accountability* (p.159). Researchers must be held accountable and hold themselves accountable to navigating this unsteady terrain in a way that does not re-produce oppressive practices while at the same time explicitly acknowledging their complicity in at times unavoidable oppressive social relations. Within the parameters of this research project, it was crucial

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[57] Susan E. Smith (1998), citing Starhawk, defines "power-over" as social relations predicated on domination and authority between individuals and/or groups at personal, cultural or institutional levels.
[58] Susan E. Smith (1998), citing Starhawk, defines "power-with" as a form of social power, whereby people engage in equitable relationships and interactions.

for me to develop specific strategies in order to be accountable for the ways in which inter-locking systems of oppression (Razack, 1998) came alive in the particular structuring of dominance through my own social location as middle-class, educated and male with Canadian citizenship status.

For example, as much as I may attempt to de-construct oppressive ways of conducting research and re-frame my research design to reduce "power-over" (Bishop, 2001) research practices, it was important that I acknowledge explicitly to the participants the power that I have as a researcher, and the privileges that I retain because of my university/educational status. As a student researcher conducting research within an academic setting, I must, in many ways, conform to at-times restrictive policies, which prioritizes efficiency, and enforces rigid mechanisms for career advancement (Rutman et al., 2005). The ways in which graduate studies are embedded into university institutions, result in dominance ultimately being *structured into* institutional policies and practices whereby it becomes nearly impossible for a graduate student to not benefit in very material ways, significantly more in comparison to their research participants (i.e., academic prestige, higher salary, etc). This means engaging in any form of resistance to maintaining this dominant position difficult, and fraught with contradictions.

The *politics of accountability* within a photovoice methodology which I am conceptualising here also advocates for a multi-directional model for taking responsibility. Not only must I adhere to the academic standards of my particular faculty and ethical requirements of my university institution, but I must also find meaningful ways to be accountable to the research participants and their communities. Therefore, the "ethics" which I seek to consider must also include holding myself *ethically accountable* to the participants and their communities, as I will examine in the following section.

3.4 *Ethical Considerations*

Wang & Redwood-Jones (2001) describe photovoice as grounded by the fundamental ethical principles of "respect for autonomy, promotion of social justice, active promotion of good, and avoidance of harm" (p. 560). Therefore, the primary ethical questions raised from this research project centred around issues of ownership, confidentiality, and consent to photograph.

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3.4.1 *Consent*

Similar to most qualitative research projects, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix C). This consent form outlined the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits and conditions of participation. Because of the possibility of participants taking photos of human subjects, a second consent form titled *Acknowledgement and Release* was provided and thoroughly explained (see Appendix D). It was the responsibility of the research participants to give this form to their human subject and explain the photovoice process, purpose of the project and the fact that the photos would be presented at a public exhibition. One participant chose to have a human subject in their photos (that wasn't herself) and therefore used this consent form.

As I will further elaborate during the workshop process, there was specific space during the second workshop to directly engage with the participants about the usage of their digital cameras. This portion of the second workshop was devoted to engaging in a dialogue with the participants about the ethical issues that came with the power to take photographs of people (Wang, 2006; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Interestingly, participants went from signing consent forms to be a part of a research project, to being the ones who had to get someone else to sign a consent form. Therefore, this transition of power and ethical responsibility facilitated a wealth of critical discussion and learning for myself, as researcher, and the participants. Moreover, this process provided the participants with not only an intellectual understanding of the ethics related to research and photography, but an experiential one. Participants were asked to envision the possible benefits and harms that come with taking someone's photograph, and critical ethical questions around privacy and disclosure (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Having said this, I was also explicit with the participants that the process of anyone that was recognizable in their photograph having to sign an acknowledgement and release form was non-negotiable and had to be communicated to me prior to the final developing of photos. This perhaps is another example of a structured difficulty within photovoice to fully enact PAR. As the researcher, it would have been more in the spirit of PAR to sit down with the participants and co-construct an acknowledgement and release form and then submit it to the university ethics board. However, the time that is needed to

construct a consent form may not have been the best use of time for participants, especially given the fact that they were not being paid for this work. As Rutman et al., (2005) explain, having a limited budget can result in a minimal level of financial compensation for participants in relation to the amount of work being asked of them.

Because of particular ethical concerns that came with the public community photo exhibit, a second consent form was created for the participants to sign (see Appendix E). This consent form described the nature of the exhibition and ensured that the participants agreed to have their photos and narrative displayed in a public manner. There were also specific YES/NO questions around whether or not participants wanted to use a pseudonym for their part of the photo and narrative exhibit. This leads into some ethical issues that arose around confidentiality and the need to re-frame this concept for this particular project.

3.4.2 *Confidentiality*

Unlike more conventional research practices, the photovoice methodology requires a re-framing around the parameters of confidentiality. This re-framing had to be addressed at multiple points throughout the research process with the participants, including before the first workshop, during the workshops, between workshops and for the community exhibit. For example, during the recruitment process, all of the participants initially contacted me via e-mail. After setting up an initial meeting with each participant individually, in order to provide them with information about the project, each participant subsequently gave me their phone number. I had to ask each participant whether they preferred that I contact them via telephone or e-mail throughout the life of the project. For those who wanted me to call them, I made sure that if I got their voice mail, I would only leave my name and number, therefore respecting their confidentiality.

Throughout the research process, I made sure to have explicit conversations about confidentiality and how the project could maintain anonymity and how it could not. For example, during the first workshop, I co-constructed with the participants a set of group agreements for how we would treat each other throughout the research process. Not only was there a discussion about how each participant conceptualised privacy and confidentiality, I also informed the participants of the ethical requirement set by

university research standards to respect their fellow participants' confidentiality. Therefore, confidentiality in this context meant that all of the experiences and perspectives shared by the participants during our group workshops would have to remain within the group. No one could reveal a story that was shared during any of these workshops with anyone outside of this group process. Of course, I also set some limitations to this level of confidentiality. I informed the participants that if they spoke of harming themselves or someone else at any point during the group process, that it was my ethical duty to have a private conversation with this individual and follow up appropriately. At one point, a participant did in fact disclose suicidal feelings and so I met with that person privately and then had a discussion with my supervisor in order to proceed appropriately.

In addition, I informed participants that while their verbal comments given during the entire research process would remain anonymous for the purposes of writing this thesis, there would be constraints to confidentiality for other aspects of the project. For example, for the community photo exhibit some participants chose to reveal photos and stories related to their personal experiences. For this particular context, participants were explicitly agreeing to make this specific aspect of their sharing within the confidential workshop space into a public display. Instrumental to their sharing was the critical importance of each participant defining their own parameters around what and how much they chose to disclose publically. This is key, as it was equally important to remind participants that they had to respect the privacy of their fellow participants by not sharing stories told in the workshops. This re-formulation of confidentiality was therefore done in a structured and limited way.

3.4.3 *Ownership*

Because in photovoice the research participants are engaging in a process of producing their own knowledge, important ethical questions arise – who owns the photos taken? Who owns this production of knowledge? This would have to be another space in which I must explicitly acknowledge some of the limitations in truly executing all of the PAR elements of photovoice. While I did not own the photos that the participants took, the first consent form (see Appendix C) included the participant agreeing to have their

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photos and narrative be included in my thesis. Moreover, the first consent form also included the participants agreeing to their photos and narratives to be included in future publications, workshops and presentations. Otherwise, the participants retained ownership of their own photos and narrative.

Taking into consideration the importance of engaging in a *politics of accountability*, and more specifically, being accountable to not only the university institution, but also to the research participants and their communities, photovoice researchers should consider integrating in their research design a re-formulated OCAP principles[59]. While the OCAP principles were initially created as a mechanism to protect First Nations communities through the engagement of research practices where ownership, control, access and possession of the knowledge produced is shared equally, there is potential for this powerful set of principles to be re-formulated to fit the needs of additional marginalized communities, such as queer communities of colour.

3.5 *Community advisory committee*

One of the components of a Photovoice project is the creation of a community advisory committee comprising of key stakeholders including community leaders, service providers, and policy makers, in order to share research findings, and advocate for adapted policies and services (Wang, 2006). University policies and procedures for master's students directly attributed to a particular structuring of this research project, particularly noticeable within the parameters set for its timeline. Even though I purposely lengthened my timeline for completion, it would have been extremely difficult for me to select and recruit the necessary policy makers in order to have constructed a relevant and accountable advisory committee within the time frame that I had to complete this study. The way in which my particular graduate studies program was structured encouraged students to complete their studies (including their thesis) in three semesters. While this structure proved to be beneficial to students who had the desire to complete their studies as soon as possible, for myself, this was a systemic barrier that I had to address and

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[59] OCAP stands for Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, and are the 4 pillars by which ethical research practices are regulated by First Nations communities in Canada. See First Nations Centre (2007). OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession. Sanctioned by the First Nations Information Governance Committee, Assembly of First Nations. Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization.

mitigate. Another difficulty in establishing an advisory committee was due to just recently having moved to Montreal, and therefore, not having had enough time to meet and develop the necessary relationships with potential policy makers, service providers and community leaders who would have been able to commit to this project.

I fully acknowledge that a lack of a community advisory committee created material obstacles for my research design and will limit the ability of this project to adapt social policies and service provision to queer people of colour. However, there are two ways in which I have addressed not having an advisory committee. First, I decided to foster a relationship and collaborate with the Ste. Emilie Skillshare collective[60], an artist and activist space for queer people and people of colour in Montreal, through the use of their space, for the workshops and the final community photovoice exhibit. Because of their target communities, anti-oppressive mission statement and creative arts-based skill sharing, the collective was a key stakeholder for this project. Not only has this research project benefited from being situated within an anti-oppressive environment, but also gained access to an artist-run, skill sharing space.

Developing a collaborative working relationship with a key Ste Emilie collective member a few months before recruiting for this research project allowed me to form an agreement with Ste Emilie to use their space for the workshops and the community photo exhibit. During the recruitment process, a Ste Emilie collective member stated their interest in participating in the project, and this further solidified this collective as a community group that I was to be accountable to.

Specifically inviting queer and racialised community leaders, service providers and policy makers to the community photo exhibit also enhanced my level of accountability to the queer and racialised communities in Montreal. While not having an official advisory committee admittedly reduced the degree of accountability of these potential stakeholders from actually agreeing to make any substantive policy or procedural adaptations to their respective organisations or institutions, they were able to become exposed to the photos, stories, and themes created by participants of this project.

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[60] The Ste. Emilie SkillShare is a group of artists and activists, primarily people of colour and queer people, committed to promoting artistic expression and self-representation in their communities. Ste Emilie maintains an art studio for people to learn new skills, share their skills, and create art in the spirit of revolution and anti-oppression. www.steemilieskillshare.com

The collective themes and policy recommendations will also be provided to a variety of community groups, organisations, service providers and policy makers upon completion of this master's thesis.

Ideally, research participants would engage in "a declaration of their ownership of the data, their right to a transparent research process, and their right to as much involvement or control as they choose" (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 269). While these objectives should be strived for, they are sometimes not fully achievable, and must therefore be subject to continual critical re-formulation. For this project to have been completely PAR-oriented, it would have been ideal for the research participants from the very beginning of the research process to have had the power to decide to use the photovoice methodology. Because of my restricted timeline, limited financial resources, and lack of community advisory committee, I decided at the beginning of my research process, to declare this to be a *limited* PAR design by choosing to use the photovoice methodology and decided to implement a basic structure that was pre-defined before participant recruitment occurred.

3.6 *Participant Recruitment Strategy*

For a photovoice research project, Wang (2006) defines a reasonable group size as being 7-10 research participants, due to the time-consuming and collective nature of this methodology. While I engaged with snowball and purposive recruitment strategies, my rationale for whom I recruited was altered because of my particular research methodology. For PAR projects, Potts & Brown (2005) argue that community building and empowerment are prioritized over representativeness and validity as sampling is seldom randomized, as it is instead viewed as "a power-laden decision and seen as one of many political acts in research" (p.269). Therefore, I chose to include up to ten participants for this project in addition to prioritizing community building and empowerment over the desire for representativeness.

Once I received university ethics approval to begin the research component of my study for January 2009, I began the recruitment stage. For example, I translated my information flyer and information sheet into French and asked a Francophone person I knew to correct any mistakes. Due to the terms *queer* and *people of colour* being

historically understood within a particular, Anglophone, North American setting, I was attentive to the ways in which I used language in describing my research project in my information flyer and letter by consulting with Francophone queer people of colour in order to identify words that were more commonly used within Francophone spaces[61].

In addition, while the terms *queer* and *people of colour* are concepts which I have come to re-claim and employ for political purposes, this is also language that is not always accessible or understood within low income immigrant and refugee communities. Not all recruited research participants will have had the socio-economic privileges that come with speaking fluent English, having a university degree and having had the money, time and space to engage in critical consciousness-raising. Therefore, while I employ these terms for my thesis, I explicitly chose to use multiple words, in French and English, to describe racialized, sexual and gender identities for my recruitment flyer[62]. Admittedly, even after doing this, there are certainly queer people of colour who may be unfamiliar with these additional terms, for example, queer refugee claimants whose English or French is a second language.

Once I completed the translations for my flyer and information sheet, I had a recruitment window of approximately 6 weeks, whereby I e-mailed the recruitment poster (see Appendix H), in French and English, to a variety of Francophone, Anglophone and Allophone spaces. In addition to a broader sending of e-mails, I chose to target specific spaces in Montreal, including queer people of colour-specific, racialised, queer, and women-centred/gender advocacy spaces[63]. During my 6 week recruitment period, a total of ten potential participants contacted me with their interest in the project, with eight meeting the eligibility requirements. Two potential participants did not meet the criteria as written on the flyer and information sheet as they identified as heterosexual. My insider status, and involvement in various queer and/or racialised activist and community groups, increased my ability to confirm all of the research participants within this six week long period in addition to organizing one-on-one information meetings with

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[61] Terms more often used within Francophone spaces were LGBT, allosexuelle, racialisé, and ethno-racial. 'Queer' is a word that is beginning to make its way into Francophone discourse.
[62] I used the following words in my flyer and information sheet - racialised, people of colour, ethno-racial, immigrant, refugee, visible minority, queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and transsexual.
[63] Coalition Multi-Mundo, Ethnoculture, GLAM, Helem, Third Space Playback, IWC, Alterhéros, CAEO, Gaie Écoute, Centre 2110, GDM, L'Arc en Ciel d'Afrique, Project Genesis.

each potential participant (see Appendix G). These in person meetings were provided for seven out of eight of the participants recruited, in order to explicitly define the objectives and parameters of the research process and fully explain the photovoice process by going through the information letter (see Appendix B) and consent forms (see Appendix C and E). There was one participant with whom I didn't conduct a face-to-face meeting because he didn't have time to meet, but I made sure to provide all of the necessary information to him prior to the first workshop via mutually agreed upon private e-mail and phone conversations.

While I hoped to be able to recruit participants who reflected a diversity of ethno-racial and linguistic backgrounds in Montreal, I aimed to do this for community-building and empowerment purposes, and not for reasons of representativeness or validity. There was a diversity of participants who identified as male, female and gender non conforming, although, no participant explicitly identified as transgendered or transsexual.

Table 2: Participant demographics

Heritage	East Asian	South Asian	South East Asian	African
(out of 8)	4	2	1	1
Country of Origin	Canadian-Born	Immigrant (and Canadian citizen)	International Student	Non-status
(out of 8)	5	1	1	1
Linguistic Background	Anglophone	Francophone	Allophone	
(out of 8)	5	2	1	
Linguistic Ability	Bilingual	Anglophone w/ Basic French		
(out of 8)	6	2		

Each participant was given a $50 honorarium. From the beginning of the recruitment process until the very last workshop, the length of involvement for the research participants for this project was approximately fifteen weeks. During this time, I was searching for a facilitator for a Photography workshop that was to be included during the second workshop. When one potential participant who was also a multi-disciplinary artist decided to take part in the project, I asked if this person would be interested in facilitating a photography workshop. She agreed to do this, and was given a $75 honorarium.

This person's role throughout the photovoice process became that of "mentor". She assisted participants in developing their photos, including meeting individually with two participants in order to share with them her photoshop skills. Because of her expertise in organizing art exhibits, she also significantly contributed to the organizing and implementation of the community photo exhibit. She designed the promotional poster for the event, and assisted me in developing the photos and narratives to be presented. Her expertise, experiences and skills were invaluable to this process, and future photovoice research designs should consider structuring into their projects one or two "mentor-participants" who agree to be participants, but also have specific photography, leadership or organizing skills.

3.7 *Data Collection and Analysis*

For the purposes of data collection and analysis, Wang (2006) encourages a four workshop model culminating with a community photo exhibition. While I engaged with this particular model as a starting point, it was important that I be receptive to having a dialogue with the participants in order to put into action during this process the photovoice principles of collaboration and cooperation. This resulted in specific alterations throughout the workshop process, especially in regards to the re-formulation of research questions and the shared decision to add a fifth workshop. Furthermore, the complex and iterative processes for data collection and analysis for this particular research project resulted in a re-formulated, yet comprehensive framework for describing how the collective themes were produced.

3.7.1 *Re-formulation of research questions*

One example which demonstrates a PAR approach is my decision to co-construct the research questions with the research participants. In the first workshop, I presented my initial research question: *How do queer people of colour experience and negotiate "helping systems"[64]?* This central research question was a starting point that was

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[64] I loosely defined health care systems, social service systems, educational institutions, and community organisations/groups as *helping systems*. I made an explicit choice of using the construct of *helping systems* in my research question, versus the more traditional notion of "social welfare services", because of my

adapted, based on the direction given by the research participants. Over the course of five workshops, we engaged in a collaborative effort in re-formulating this primary line of inquiry. Going through this process of shared decision making and re-visioning the lines of critical inquiry which provide the direction for the entire research project was daunting, but crucial to disrupting the traditional ways in which power and privilege operate within qualitative research. Therefore, I re-conceptualized the central research question in order to fully capture the objectives of the research participants. Because some of the participants identified a desire to explore their individual experiences, as a result, I constructed a central research question which included the concept of "intersecting identities". Furthermore, I added the concept of "interlocking systems of domination" in order to provide space within the central research question for participants to reflect on their histories, and the effects of dominance and oppression on their lives.

While many of the participants declared during the first workshop that they did not want to be restricted to taking photos solely related to *helping systems*, some did choose to explore their experiences of various *support systems* and accessing help. Therefore, this previously central research question was re-formulated and became a sub-question. Moreover, because of a suggestion by one participant to replace the concept of *helping systems* with *support systems*, the wording for that particular sub-question was altered.

3.7.2 *Iterative nature of data collection and analysis*

Aspects of each workshop engaged in both data collection and collective analysis in varying degrees, thereby representing a deeply integrative and iterative process. The collective themes that were developed and produced for both the community photo exhibit and this thesis could be described as a cumulative building of critical consciousness within a process O. Fals-Borda and M. Rahman (1991) identify as the praxiology framework. Smith (1998) describes this non-linear, multi-dimensional process as consisting of *spiralling moments* whereby "each present moment incorporates the past and circles around into the future" (p.197). In addition, Bishop (2002) suggests the

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desire for the research participants to construct their own shared meaning of what *helping systems* are for them.

engagement of a *spiral model of learning* by describing how the spiralling first begins with placing ourselves, leading to reflection, analysis, strategy building and action.

In order to further complexify and integrate these models, I propose to combine the two inter-related *spiralling motions* that Smith (1998) and Bishop (2002) astutely describe and conceptualize a mutually constitutive "spiral staircase" model of learning, reflection and action that is circular, cumulative, multi-directional, and disruptive of space-time continuum. By using the analogy of a *spiral staircase*, one can visualize this model by beginning with the first platform, whereby, a circular movement generating the *spiral model of learning* (Bishop, 2002) sparks critical dialogue about previous experiences, present reflections and future thinking producing simultaneous, and mutually constituted knowledge. An intensification of critical consciousness builds and then propels this horizontal spiral upwards into a vertical spiral of *action*, therefore resulting in "walking up" the spiral staircase to another platform, which re-engages the horizontal and circular *spiral model of learning*.

For this particular research project, this *spiral staircase* model of critical consciousness building and action is reflected in the processes whereby the collective themes were produced for the community photo exhibit and for this thesis. The first platform in which the circular *spiral model of learning* took place was during the critical dialogue created by the first creative arts activity during the first workshop. This is where the *making meaning* process began (Potts & Brown, 2005). Between the first and second workshop, participants metaphorically "walked up" the spiral staircase, as they engaged in the *action* of individually reflecting on the themes they wanted to tackle for their photos and narratives. The second platform was created during the second workshop, when the participants were sharing the specific questions they wanted to address in their respective photos and narratives, therefore altering the central and sub lines of knowledge inquiry. This critical self-reflection led to another "walking up" of the spiral staircase through the *action* of taking photographs, as all of the participants took photos to be presented at the following workshop.

During the third workshop, when the participants were sharing the visuals and the stories behind their photos, there was a constant *going back to* the collective themes as participants responded to each other's photos and stories and critically reflected back to

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the group the similarities and differences of their stories. This building of critical consciousness can be therefore be seen as the third platform during this photovoice process whereby the participants are engaging in the *spiral model of learning*.

Between the third and fourth workshop, participants continued to engage in the *action* of "walking up" the spiral staircase, by refining their photos and creating their narratives. The fourth workshop served to generate the fourth platform, whereby each participant continued to share their photos, and related narratives. This constant re-visiting of the collective themes served to add further layers of continuity and complexity into the themes that were eventually presented at the community photo exhibit (see Appendix K). While I took primary responsibility for the coding and organizing of these themes, the collaboration between myself and the participants in the coding process for these themes went beyond traditional notions of "member checking". Throughout the process, participants played an integral role in analysis by providing feedback and re-formulating or even at-times re-structuring particular themes.

Between the fourth and the fifth workshop, the action that allowed for the "walking up" of the spiral staircase was the community photo exhibit, a public space for participants to engage with their communities and be recognized and acknowledged for their work. The fifth workshop continued to engage the participants by the deepening of the collective themes and the development of policy recommendations. This time, the participants were re-visiting the themes that were co-developed for the community photo exhibit, by critically reflecting upon direct participant quotes that I had chosen and extracted from the transcripts of our previous workshops. This allowed participants to critically reflect upon the experiences they previously shared by re-visiting them in *their own words,* and resulted in the re-framing or further solidifying of the particular theme related to that quote. While the policy recommendations (translated from the collective themes) came from the direct reflections of the participants, because of time constraints, I was responsible for the coding and synthesizing of these recommendations.

Therefore, this multi-dimensional and iterative approach to the development of collective themes is a complex process of critical dialogue and praxis that I would define as the *spiral staircase model of knowledge production*. Furthermore, examining this process at the micro-level reveals what I would describe as *knowledge generating*

interactions, produced through the critical consciousness building effects of dialectical interactions being employed at multiple levels. These interactions are defined in the following table.

Table 3: Knowledge generating interactions

Interaction #	Direction (from – to)	How?
Interaction A	researcher – research participant	critical question – reflection
Interaction B	participant – participant	reflection – reflection
Interaction C	participant – group	reflection – reflection
Interaction D	participant - theme	reflection – reflection *(practice-theory)*
Interaction E	group – theme	reflection – reflection *(practice – theory)*
Interaction F	theme - researcher	reflection – reflection *(practice – theory)*

Interaction A describes the *researcher – research participant* dialectical relationship between myself and the research participant. The knowledge generated from this interaction would begin with a critical question that I would ask all of the participants, with one of the participants responding. For example, I asked participants to describe their photos and narratives by asking the following series of critical questions - *What do you see here? What is really happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist? What can we do about it?* This dialectic would at times occur in a question and answer format (myself asking a question and the participant reflecting and then answering the question), or from critical dialogue (myself and the participant engaging in multiple interactions).

Interaction B describes another crucial dialectical relationship - that between participants. During a *participant - participant* interaction, for example, a participant could share a life experience and another participant would then critically reflect on this and then share their own related (whether similar or different) life experience. Interaction C, the *participant – group* dialectic, takes this interaction a step further, when this interaction becomes one between an individual participant and the entire group. After an accumulation of participant – participant interactions, sometimes, a participant would

critically reflect upon a *grouping of reflections* made by a number of different participants about a particular theme, and then make a critical intervention based on what the group had been saying. These dialectical interactions, researcher – participant, participant – participant and participant – group, at times happening in isolation and at times occurring simultaneously, were constant features throughout all of the workshops.

Another dialectical relationship was between the participants and explicitly identified collective themes. As each workshop progressed, the themes that were being developed became more and more complex. It was important for me to be responsible for continuously reflecting back to the participants the main themes that were emerging, in order for the participants to reflect upon these developments and then engage further, sharing more stories or experiences that further deepened or clarified these themes. As described in Interaction D, this dialectic showed itself at times as *participant – theme*, when an individual participant would engage with a theme and further complicate it. At other times, such as in Interaction E, this dialectic presented itself more as *group – theme*, when one participant would respond to a grouping of reflections by a number of participants and then synthesize them into a reflection which represented a collective experience of that particular theme.

A final dialectical relationship that can be described is Interaction F, between the collective themes and myself, as the researcher. These interactions occurred throughout the research process – after, during and before each workshop and/or community photo exhibit. During the workshops, this was identified as when I engaged in a process of listening to the participants and reflecting back to them possible directions for the developing collective themes. After the end of each workshop, there entailed a process of critical self-reflection about the themes developed during the workshops in order to contextualize the findings and prepare for the next workshop. My status as a queer person of colour, and therefore, an insider, provided me with a critical eye towards coding and preparing the themes to the participants in particular ways. At the same time, acknowledging this important dialectical relationship allows for the researcher to be explicit about their role in the research process, and therefore being held accountable for how they may or may not have influenced the data collection and analysis process.

Furthermore, the continual deepening and maturing of the collective themes ultimately resulted in the materializing of what Smith (1997) defines as the *practice -theory* dialectic. The following are a description of what happened during each workshop and the community photo exhibit, including my particular coding procedures.

3.7.3 *Workshops and community photo exhibit*

Firstly, it was important to use the power that I had as facilitator and researcher, to take the responsibility of creating a space that was conducive to critical consciousness building. Therefore, the first two hour workshop included introductory community building activities, introduction to the photovoice methodology, and the establishment of group guidelines (see Appendix F). These community guidelines were created with the cooperation of the participants, in their own words. In addition, I made sure to include some non-negotiable guidelines that were related to the ethical requirements of the research project (i.e. confidentiality, anonymity, etc). Participants were also given a degree of input and decision making power into how best to proceed with each workshop, ensuring that they always had the choice to participate, or remain silent.

One activity that I developed for the dual purposes of community building, and data collection and analysis, was an arts-based activity. I asked the participants to write down their hopes and goals for this project, how they identified themselves, and how they felt society identified them. I then asked the participants to draw or write a creative poem about their "migration path". Participants then had the choice to share their reflections and drawings or not. Everyone chose to engage with all aspects of this activity (the drawing and answering of questions), and voluntarily shared this with their fellow participants. This activity served multiple purposes. Firstly, this gave participants an opportunity to get to know each other in an artistic way. This would allow for a level of creative thinking that would serve them well when taking photos and creating narratives.

Furthermore, by each participant sharing their hopes and goals for the project, this allowed all of them as a community to get a better understanding of their individuality while at the same time allowing them to begin to see their strands of connections as a collective group. For example, one participant identified herself as a "mental health survivor", and several participants subsequently identified aspects of mental health, such

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as depression, suicide, and anxiety as barriers to their mental health. Moreover, this activity served as an entry point for participants to begin to think about what they wanted to photograph.

As participants began to share their experiences and respond to their fellow participants, knowledge generating interactions were occurring and resulted in the initial identifying of potential collective themes. Because I had asked each participant to write and draw the answers to my questions, I was able to re-look at these reflections and drawings in preparation for the second workshop.

The second workshop included an energizer activity, review of previously established group guidelines, re-formulation of the project objectives and research questions, discussion about cameras, power and ethics, and a photography basic skills workshop (see Appendix F). The main purpose of this workshop was to provide a space for participants to collaboratively construct their artistic vision and thematic for their photos and narrative, while also providing the necessary skills and ethical parameters under which the photographing would take place. It was during the discussion about the project objectives where the research questions were reflected upon and re-formulated in order to accommodate the lines of inquiry for each participant.

Exploration of the university ethics board approved acknowledgement and release form served as the entryway into the discussion about the power and ethics involved with taking photographs of human subjects for this research project. Discussions centred around issues such as the right to full information, right to privacy, and right to accuracy in depiction. Although the procedures and protocol provided by the university ethics board were clearly identified as non-negotiable, because of our discussion, participants did ask specific questions that I did not initially know the answer to. For example, one participant asked about whether we needed to get a consent form signed if we were going to take a photo in more private spaces, like community organisations. Because of this question, I had to e-mail the research ethics officer and ask a clarifying question. The research ethics officer responded by stating that spaces such as community organisations did not need to sign an acknowledgement and release form, but they did need to be given a revised information letter about the project prior to taking photos in their space.

We concluded the second workshop with one of the participants providing a workshop on photography. This included a lecture on a brief socio-historical history of photography, photographing techniques, and time to practice photographing with digital cameras. Participants were then given *two weeks* before the third workshop in order to take their photos. Seven out of eight participants had their own digital cameras that they used, while one person used my personal digital camera.

The third workshop included a re-visiting of the research questions, collective themes, and the sharing of photos and narratives (see Appendix F). This was a process whereby the participants shared selected photographs and contextualized them with storytelling. In order to facilitate this process, I rented a projector from the McGill library, so that we could project each photo onto a white wall in the room we were using at Ste Emilie. By employing a series of critical questions identified by Wang (2006) in order to elicit stories related to each photograph, I engaged the participants in critical reflection and dialogue. As the researcher, this required me to be aware of the group's processes of interpretation, critical reflection and construction of meaning (Potts & Brown, 2005).

I began by asking participants to share their photos and stories by asking the first two critical questions – *What do you see here? What is really happening here?* After the participant shared their photos and related stories, I asked the group to reflect on the shared photos and narrative and how it was or wasn't connected to their lives. *How does this relate to our lives? Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist? What are the issues/themes?* These discussions were fundamental to the critical consciousness building process and served as a platform for the deepening of the collective themes. During this process, I began to informally code the reflections of the participants. This coding was iterative, as I would reflect the themes that were being identified by the participants and they would either add onto my observations, or they would re-frame the themes.

This workshop ended with a collective decision about the structure and date for the upcoming community photo exhibition to be held at Ste Emilie sometime after the fourth workshop. An exact date for this vernissage was decided upon by the participants (approximately three weeks after the fourth workshop). Due to financial limitations (my

capacity to pay for frames and developing the photos) and available exhibition space at Ste Emilie, participants were asked to develop up to two photos for the exhibit.

After the third workshop, some participants re-formatted and refined their photos in preparation for the fourth workshop. Prior to the workshop, I re-examined the rough notes that I had prepared with the coded themes had been developed and agreed upon up to that point. This workshop continued with the iterative process of developing the collective themes, asking participants to share their photos and narratives, and then asking their fellow participants to reflect on these photos and narratives. Throughout this workshop, I reflected back the continually developing themes to the participants, at the same time as the sharing of photos and stories. While I was responsible for the writing of these coded themes, all of the participants contributed to its development.

Afterwards, there was a discussion about the community photo exhibit to be held at Ste Emilie Skillshare in three weeks time. There was certain degree of collaboration between myself and the participants regarding the content and structure of the exhibition, as it was imperative to engage in a process of critical self-reflection to ensure that there was a *just and equitable* distribution of tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, it was crucial to un-earth and examine the tension between fostering full participant involvement and agency, while at the same time acknowledging the disparate amount of power and resources afforded to myself versus the participants (Rutman et al., 2005). Therefore, I made sure to give space for participants to be involved in the organizing, but only to the degree that they chose - I did not expect them to take on any extra organizing. They were, after all, essentially volunteering their time. All of the participants took on the task of polishing their photos and working on their narratives, while I took on the responsibility for co-ordinating the event (with the assistance of the "mentor" participant). As the researcher, I was ultimately the primary person who had to take responsibility and therefore be accountable.

By the end of the fourth workshop, it was clear that we needed more time to crystallize the collective themes and begin to ask the question of how to translate these into policy recommendations. I asked the participants if they would be willing to have an additional workshop after the community photo exhibition in order to complete this

aspect of the project, as well as reflecting on the entire process. Fortunately, they all agreed to take on this supplementary task.

The organizing of the community photo exhibit included many aspects. First and foremost, I was in constant e-mail and phone communication with all of the participants to ensure that they had completed versions of their photos and a narrative they were happy with. Once the participants completed this task, along with the "mentor" participant, I co-ordinated the developing of photos, printing off of the themes/narratives, and purchasing of the background frames. The "mentor" participant took the initiative to create a poster and mini zine in preparation for the vernissage and was given an honorarium of $75 for this work.

Leading up to the promotion of the event, I created a facebook page, and an invitation e-mail in French and English. All of the participants committed to raising awareness of the event via their friends and networks. One participant identified that he could not make the event because he would not be in Montreal, but still made sure to promote the event to his friends and networks. In the lead up to the exhibit, one participant assisted in setting up the photos before the event, but decided not to attend. Prior to the exhibit, I edited the collective themes that had been coded and developed thus far into an artistic format (see Appendix K). I had to find a balance between ensuring that my words accurately reflected the coded themes that had been developed up to that point, while also respecting each participants' confidentiality.

The vernissage was held on the evening of Friday, April 24th, 2009 and remained on display at Ste Emilie for two weeks. While not being able to keep a completely accurate count of people who came to visit the event, I was able to approximate roughly 100 people in attendance throughout the evening. There was a diverse mix of people from queer and/or racialised communities, some policy makers and those within academic institutions. Some organisations and institutions represented included: GRIS Montreal, CAEO, McGill University, Concordia University, Fondation Emergence, Zaafaran, GLAM, Coalition Multi-Mundo, Ethnoculture, L'Arc-en-Ciel D'Afrique, Ste Emilie Skillshare, MARC,GDM, Kataabang, etc. In large part due to the diverse linguistic make up of the participants, there were attendees who were Anglophone, Francophone, and Allophone (and spoke either primarily French or English as a second language).

One of the unique obstacles to community building with queer communities of colour in Montreal is the language barrier. Due to histories of French and British colonization across the globe and in Canada[65], the Quebec government's desire to recruit Francophone immigrants[66], and Montreal's unique geography and history of migration[67] has resulted in particular patterns of migration whereby queer people of colour are located across the linguistic spectrum. Thus, while many queer immigrants and refugees in Montreal are Allophone and speak both French and English, some speak only English *OR* French. For those queer people of colour who are multi-generational Canadian, the majority are bilingual, but some prefer to be in either Francophone or Anglophone spaces.

While this fracturing of queer communities of colour is a contemporary reality, this photovoice event allowed for the convergence of Anglophone, Francophone and Allophone communities. One particular example of this was when an Allophone Latino gay artist whose primary second language was French (he did not understand English) asked a Ste Emilie collective member (some Ste Emilie collective members are bilingual, but it is a mainly Anglophone space) if it was possible to use their space in order to have an artist exhibition of his work.

One month after the vernissage, a fifth and final workshop took place which included participant reflections on the exhibit, an overall evaluation of the research process, a revision of the collective themes and the creation of policy recommendations. Firstly, I was able to provide an opportunity for the participants to reflect upon and share with each other their experiences of the vernissage and the process as a whole, therefore allowing for a degree of closure to the research process (for further details go to findings chapter). The reflections that were shared also gave me the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding into the complexities of how differently participants reacted to the exhibition and how they perceived their experiences of the process.

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[65] See Ania Loomba (2005) Colonialism/Postcolonialism, and Bonita Lawrence (2002) Rewriting histories of the land: Colonization and indigenous resistance in Eastern Canada.
[66] See D. Allen (2006). "Who's in and Who's out? Language and the integration of new immigrant youth in Quebec, Micheline Labelle (2002) 'Re-reading citizenship and the transnational practices of immigrants', and Micheline Labelle et al., (2001). Incorporation citoyenne et/ou exclusion? La deuxième generation issue de l'immigration haïtienne et jamaïcaine.
[67] See Azzeddine Marhraoui (2005) La lutte contre le racisme en l'absence de politique antiraciste: le cas du Québec (1990-2004), and Elaine Naves (1998) Putting down roots: Montreal's immigrant writers.

In preparing for this workshop, I revised the collective themes created specifically for the exhibit, in order to ensure that the content and language I used was more closely linked to the exact words of the participants from previous workshops. By examining previous workshop transcripts, I was able to re-place the words that I had initially used with specific words or phrases that the participants themselves used. For example, instead of naming one theme as "colonized sexualities", participants had used words and phrases such as "historical displacement" and "trans-national identity". Furthermore, I asked participants to critically reflect on their own quotes, related to each collective theme. These were all processes which further grounded the themes into the experiences and perspectives of the participants and significantly contributed to the development of the final themes.

Finally, participants engaged in a discussion related to creating specific policy recommendations so that the knowledge produced for this project will be shared in the future with an aim to engage key policymakers, social service workers and queer and racialised communities through a variety of contexts including academic conferences, future publications, community workshops, etc. During this process, it was important for me to ask critical questions around how the research participants wanted to use the research findings. The critical dialogue around recommended policies also led into a discussion about the viability of the project findings to be utilised for empowerment, social change and social justice initiatives. I explicitly told the participants that I was to be held accountable (by myself and them) to ensure that this occurs. Most of the participants were extremely motivated to be included in this future process of research dissemination and discussion with policy makers and service providers to hopefully advocate for the implementation of a set of recommendations with the aim of informing future policies and practices for community groups and organisations, social services and health care providers who serve queer people of colour living in Montreal. Unfortunately, there was not enough time for me to fully formulate the policy recommendations with the participants, and therefore, some of the coding and synthesis had to be completed after the workshop.

3.8 *Credibility and trustworthiness*

A photovoice process call for a critical re-formulation of value laden, traditional positivist understandings of "validity" and "reliability", by calling for researchers to measure their adherence their research principles, and give more power to the research participants in the evaluation process (Potts & Brown, 2005). Although it is essential to explicitly acknowledge the importance of having evaluative criteria and procedures, it is equally paramount that the researcher asks whether or not they are accountable to the research participants and their communities. Because of being positioned as the person with more power, and material resources (for the purposes of the project, at least), the ultimate responsibility for the project must rest on the researcher. Therefore, Potts & Brown (2005), identify the importance of evaluating credibility, trustworthiness and action-ability in anti-oppressive research.

Cresswell (2007) citing Whittlemore, Chase & Mandle (2001) defines *credibility* as questioning if the results are "an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning" (p.206). Furthermore, Potts & Brown (2005) add onto the definition of credibility by asking important critical questions: "can participants see themselves in the study? Does the analysis "ring true" to participants?" (p. 277). Certainly, having the participants take their own photos and develop their own narratives result in a higher likelihood that the findings are accurate to their lived experiences and "ring true". Furthermore, co-constructing research questions results in a higher degree of veracity in the claim that the knowledge produced by this project is accurate to the perspectives of the participants.

With regards to *trustworthiness*, Potts & Brown (2005) would describe this to be an effort in ensuring the inclusion of multiple perspectives, and the development of authentic relationships with research participants (p.277). The cumulative, iterative and multi-layered process of developing the collective themes illustrates the high degree of trustworthiness within this study. In addition, receiving feedback about this study from my supervisor and fellow queer people of colour activists and scholars contributed to its trustworthiness. Furthermore, the findings provides a "thick description" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 209) of the findings and therefore, an elevated degree of authenticity.

3.9 Action-Ability

Potts & Brown (2005) define the *action-ability* of a research project as whether or not it left the participants better off afterwards (p.277). The *action-ability* for this project can therefore be evaluated by assessing the degree to which this project moves towards the following critical pathways of social justice and social change. Was there a development of *critical consciousness* of both the researcher and participants? Was there an *improvement* in the lives of those involved in the research process? Was there a *transformation* of fundamental societal structures and relationships?

Critical consciousness building can be seen throughout the workshop process. For example, the asking of critical questions when participants shared their stories facilitated this process while the findings chapter is material evidence of this *critical consciousness*. In fact, the reflexivity demonstrated within the parameters of this thesis could also be a demonstration of how I gained a level of *critical consciousness* that I did not have prior to beginning the process.

How can I measure the degree to which this project has led to *improvement* in the lives of those involved in the research process? It is important to see improvement from a variety of perspectives. There is material *improvement,* social improvement, and emotional improvement. Has there been a material *improvement* in the lives of the participants as a direct result of this project? This is something that is extremely difficult to measure. I can say that based on the reflections given by participants and my subsequent discussions with them, that this project definitely had an impact on their lives as it continued to surface as a point of conversation. All of the participants expressed a desire to have their photos and narratives included in future presentations of the project. However, this can be interpreted in different ways and does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship between a material *improvement* in their lives and having participated in this project.

Sin (2007) extends this concept by identifying the importance of *reciprocity* of a research project in its capacity to give back to research participants (p.169). The fact that the participants gained photography skills, kept their photos, and participated in a photo exhibit are all ways in which this project ensured a high degree of *reciprocity*, and

therefore, leading to the emotional and psychological *improvement* of the lives of research participants.

Transformation as a pathway to social justice is perhaps to most difficult to measure. Transforming fundamental societal structures and relationships are indeed a tall order, if not impossible within the parameters of any research project! It is important to demonstrate that the outcomes for the project are seen to be *moving towards* transformation versus evaluating whether or not transformation has occurred. The most tangible measure of this would probably be the policy recommendations as created by the participants as they provide the potential for future challenging of dominant social structures and adaptations of policy and procedures within organisations and government structures.

Chapter IV

Findings

4.1 *Introduction*

   This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section includes the *individual photographs and narratives* of each of the participants created specifically for the community photo exhibit. The second section presents a comprehensive overview of the participant driven *collective themes*. The final section describes *participant reflections* on the overall photovoice process.

   The following photographs and individual narratives were created by each of the participants for the purposes of this research project. Between the second and third workshop, each participant took photographs of their lived experiences. During the third and fourth workshops, participants shared their photographs and developed their individual narratives in relation to these photos. Participants were asked two critical questions in relation to their photographs. *What do you see here?* and *What is really happening here?* Participants then chose up to two photographs and finalized a cohesive narrative to be presented at the community photo exhibit which occurred three weeks after the fourth workshop.

   I have chosen to present the participant photos and narratives as they were presented at the community photo exhibit. Therefore, some narratives are in French, while others are in English. The profound depth within both the photos and the narratives provides a window into the diverse experiences of queer people of colour and serves to showcase each participant in a complex yet holistic way. Furthermore, these photos and narratives demonstrate the uniqueness of each participant's conceptualisation of their historicized and intersecting identities. At the same time, this individuality will serve to contextualize the connections between and across all of the participants, as will be demonstrated by describing the collective themes in the second section of this chapter.

Sandra
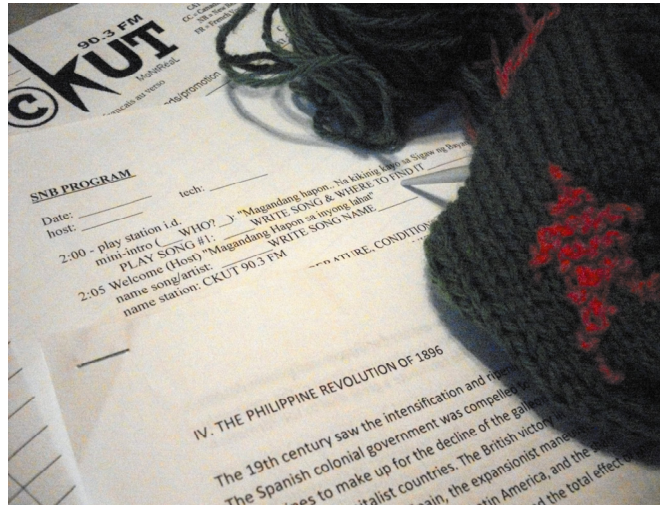
Photo 1

My Revolution

There are several elements in this photo that are very important to me. In the foreground, a printout from a book I've been studying on Philippine History told from a leftist view. Behind that, a print out of the program for the Filipino radio show I host once a week along with the log sheet of the radio station, and lying on top of it all is one of my knitting projects.

"SNB" stands for "Sigaw ng Bayan" or "Cry of the People" which is a Filipino community radio show on CKUT 90.3 FM. I am one of the main organizers of the show. In this photograph is the print out of our program template. I highlighted in yellow the Filipino greeting that we say every week. Like many Canadian-born Filipinos, many of the youth involved in the show cannot speak Filipino. I am one of those youth whose parents had decided that, since I was born in Canada, there would be no need for me to understand the language of their past life. I grew up very angry at my parents for having denied me this piece of my identity. But today, I understand more the effects of colonization that would force that mentality onto them. I am now more interested in learning Filipino on my own, with the knowledge that my parents will never be able to teach it to me themselves.

Sitting on top of these papers is one of my knitting projects. It is going to be a poncho for the daughter of some fellow organizers. Her name is "Tala", which means "Star" in Tagalog – hence, the star knitted into the project. In fact, this star is part of a larger design that will look like a piece of the Philippine flag: a sun surrounded by three stars.

 I also included a knitting project in this photo because it calls to mind a racist encounter I had with a man in a diner in the Village. A friend and I were having coffee while she showed me some knitting techniques when a man who had been interrupting us throughout our discussion said, "Is your friend Oriental?". He went further to express his surprise that my (white) friend would be teaching me how to knit: I should know because of all the "Sweatshops in Asia". He concluded, however, that Orientals don't knit – "Orientals have looms." Whenever I pick up a new knitting project, I think of "Oriental Looms" and feel the need to assert myself as one (of many!) North American-born women of Asian origin who do in fact knit.

In the foreground is a page of a document I am studying on an alternative Philippine History. Learning about Philippine history from a socialist, leftist view has been very informative for me, and has further helped me come to terms with my own identity. I've learned about the oppression of women under religious repression, and especially the persecution of queer people. In the Philippines today, alternative sexualities are somewhat accepted, but we don't have the same rights and priviledges given to hetero couples. Ironically, queer sexuality is seen as an imposition from the West, whereas if one looks more critically, the Western church was the first group to turn against queer people of the Philippines.

Photo 2

My Closet

Hanging on the hooks of my closet door are a mix of hats, ties, purses, houlder bags, and my "Scrap the LCP" banner. On March 8 of this year, the Philippine Women Centre joined other member organizations of the Kapit Bisig Filipino Community Centre during International Women's Day celebrations. We all had these "SCRAP THE LCP" banners, which we wore tied across our foreheads as we chanted and called for an end to the economic exploitation of Filipino women and their families.

I took this picture because I was amused by the collection of items hanging on my closet door – including neck ties, a newsboy hat, a nice shoulder bag, and a messenger bag. I felt like the items on this door represented several parts of my identity, especially the various ways in which I choose to present my gender identity. At the forefront is my commitment to women's liberation, and the need to liberate women of colour.

When I see this picture, I think about how grateful I am to have discovered the Philippine Women Centre of Quebec, because it was only through this organization that I was able to truly address all aspects of my identity. In the past, I had often felt that being a Filipino woman meant being a good, docile, Catholic girl. I had tried desperately to be that person, to a point of near self-destruction. My first coping mechanism after coming out of the closet was to break all my ties from the Filipino community (where I had been doing a great deal of community organizing work). After some coaxing, and because of a research project I had taken on, I participated in a conference organized by the Philippine Women Centre, which drew me in entirely. I now feel it is my responsibility to give back to the community, and especially to support other queer Filipino women who are struggling with their identities.

Laura

Photo 1
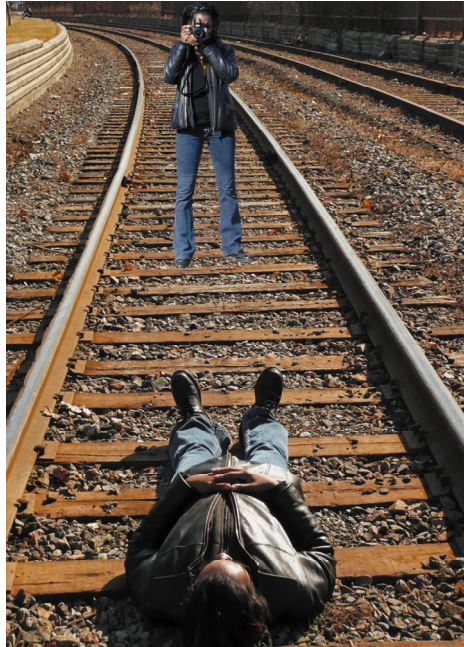
VIVRE!
VIVRE CACHÉ!
VIVRE BLESSÉ!
Un mot, parmi tant d'autre, qui ne veut rien dire quand la mort nous semble le cadre que l'on
admire et que l'on désire.
VIVRE!
VIVRE DISSIMULÉ!
VIVRE MUTILÉ!
Une existence sentie quand la froideur de la lame transperce cette carapace de chair, laissant
couler le liquide de vie pour enfin se rapprocher de la manifeste fatalité.
VIVRE!
VIVRE ABSENT!
VIVRE SEULE!
Un souffle fragile, chancelant de la fatigue de l'âme qui s'assèche sous les gouttes d'amour ou de
présence humaine. Une vitalité oscillante, entre le don de soi et le réconfort reçu. Un entrain qui
s'effrite dans cette perspective d'abandon, de délaissement, d'isolement dû à JE SUIS.
VIVRE
En regardant sa mort
Dans les yeux de sa propre rétine.

Photo 2

TENTATIVE	VIETNAMIEN	TÊTE D'AFFICHE	AMIS-ES
D'AVORTEMENT	MARIAGE	REJET	CULTURES
NAISSANCE	MORT	VIOLENCE	RELATIONS
FILLE	TANTE	GRIS	ÉCHECS
TORTURE	ALCOOLISME	ABANDON	DÉPRESSION
ABANDON	DEUIL	REJET	SOLITUDE
BRULER	AMOUR POUR UNE	DÉPRESSION	PERTE
PERTE	FEMME	PÈRE	ABANDON
RELIGION	SÉPARATION	DÉPART	FEMME
OBSESSION	DÉSORIENTER	SILENCE	MUTILATION
FANATISME	RECHERCHE	MÈRE	RECHERCHE
SAUVER	SISTERS	REJET	FALUN OU
MALADIE	RACISME		BOUDHISME
BI-POLAIRE			ESPOIR
HYPOTHYROÏDE			ATTENTE
BEAU-PÈRE			TENTATIVE DE
TENTATIVE DE SUICIDE			MORT
ABUS SEXUEL			VIE

Et si VIVRE n'est que le miroir de ce que l'on est prêt à apprendre,
découvrir des autres,
de ces moments et épisodes de vie.
Alors j'ai vécu,
Je vis
Et j'espère,
Je vivrai!
Dans la découverte
d'une autre destinée,
D'une autre famille,
D'une autre foi et religion,
D'une autre culture,
D'un autre moi,
De cette autre vie!

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Matt

Photo 1

THESE ARE MYSPACES

myspaces where I work myspaces where I learn myspaces where I sleep myspaces where I dance myspaces where I stretch myspaces where I breathe myspaces where I create myspaces where I fuck myspaces where I organize myspaces where I meet Others myspaces where I eat myspaces where I drink myspaces where I feel things myspaces where I play myspaces where I read myspaces where I teach myspaces where I speak myspaces where I laugh myspaces where grow myspaces where I network myspaces where I rest myspaces where I belong

James

Photo 1

SHADOW

Shadow depicts a paper cut-out in the shape of a human propped into a completely dark room, with a single light source illuminating the flat figure, creating a dark cast shadow on the wall. The importance and significance of this photograph lies in the flatness of the object, the shadow, and the light.

The paper-cut out
The flatness of paper conveys the meaning of our corporal envelope, the first thing people notice about us, the first layer that people are able to cast their gaze upon. It is but a shallow, paper-thin layer, but it is amazing how people can assume so much from simply looking at it.

The Shadow
I remember reading about a case about a young man who was denied refugee status in Canada and subsequently deported back to a country that criminalized his sexuality because a judge claimed his sexuality was a made-up story because he "did not look gay enough". I also remember how it struck something deep within me as I read it. "Why do we have to wear our sexuality for everybody to see? Why can't there be acceptance that such a thing exists? Why and how can we prove that homosexuality exists, that I am gay without employing stereotypes?" I have asked all these questions to myself at one point or another, but there was simply no way to answer these questions in a straight-forward manner. I see my sexuality as the shadow to all my other identities. Being gay is not an identity in itself but it is something that I consider ever-present yet barely noticeable, just like how shadows in the everyday world are a constant presence but we barely stop and think about them. Sometimes, it also feels as if being gay is a heavy burden, yet something I have drag along because it is inevitably part of my life.

The light
Just like shadows, light is ever-present, yet we never truly think about it. In *Shadow*, I am drawing a parallel between self-confession and the light that casts a shadow. If only revealing, and acknowledging what is before us was as easy as turning a flashlight on.

Shadow speaks about my own frustration towards the gaze cast by others and how often such a gaze is but a poor, shallow assessment of who I am. Sometimes, I wish people would acknowledge and accept this other aspect of me that seems to only exist in the depths of the

closet. When confronted by these situations, I would often think: "if only they would look deeper, if only they knew." Coming from a traditional Asian family, and working within the Chinese community, I found myself utterly lost and isolated because I could not speak about my sexuality because of the stigma attached to it. Therefore, it is usually a burden and a dark secret because it is something shameful. Coming out to my family, and stepping out of the darkness of the closet revealed my shadow and up to this day, I am still dragging it along with me, but I guess the weight of it all has made me stronger in the end

Photo 2

God Bless My Mess

This wonderfully ironic door-hanger was given as a birthday prank gift from one of my friend. Hung on the door of leading to my room, it is a reminder that my "mess" is mine alone and no one else's. My problems, my lifestyle, my choices are but my own responsibility. It is something powerful and reassuring, yet incredibly sad at the same time.

The word "mess" in the photograph symbolizes homosexuality as being "messed up". Growing up in a traditional, conservative Chinese family, homosexuality was viewed as a psychological problem. In fact, when I came out to my parents, they didn't believe I what I was saying. How could a model son be gay? How could they, as parents, have raised a gay son? When did things start going wrong? Needless to say, being gay completely changed the supposedly 'natural progression' of life, of what a traditional model son should do, and also the traditional evolution of a family. I think my parents spent a lot of time wondering what went wrong and where to go from there. The immediate post-coming out period was an especially difficult time, probably more for my parents than for me, because there were no outside sources they can go to for help. I also believe they are too stubborn or too afraid to lose face to actually seek help. I believe over time, the only way my parents were able to cope with the new "me" is to adopt the following philosophy: my mess is mine alone. And thus, I came out of the closet only to be kept in away my room.

Grace

Photo 1
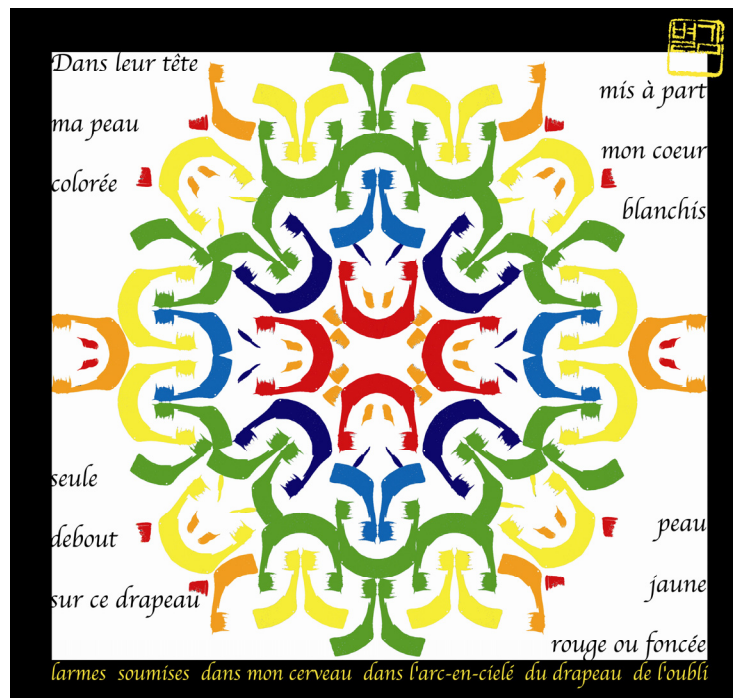
Helen

Photo 1
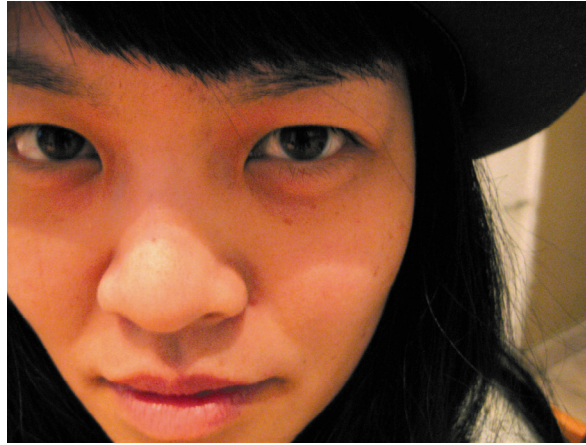
for as a long as i can remember i've learnt to avert my gaze when talking to white people. to cover my mouth with my hand when asserting my ideas.

racism works to invalidate the realities of racialized people, especially queer and trans folks of colour. on a systemic and every-day level, i am reminded that as a queer person of colour, i must second-guess my existence. colonization works to convince me that i am simply imagining my oppression and that my ideas aren't brilliant nor valid.

to make a conscious effort to look white folks in the eye, to speak without fear is to actively de-colonize my mind, body and spirit. because my very existance acts as a site for resistance and survival.

Photo 2

"when we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard nor welcomed. but when we are silent we are still afraid. so it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive" -audre lorde

Adil

Photo 1

Shift of Controls

During the journey of human civilization we made a lot of rules and regulations. The intension was to ensure the well-being of mankind. Time has passed, society has changed most importantly we have changed. But those rules and regulations have become such as concrete idea that right now it is very hard to distinguish if the rules are for us or we are for the rules. Right now all the social norms are so abstract that it is really hard to go beyond that.

Photo 2

Unfortunate Events

Sometimes some shocking things happen in our life. Then we work really hard to find a balance and in most cases as time goes by we actually can find a balance. But what if something worse happens again and negative things keeps happening? I guess after a while we just lose control over our life and we become dependant on others and their decisions. To me it is the worst that can happen to a person.

Prabir

Photo 1

Photo 2

Seeking help involves seeking a space to be vulnerable. These spaces are hard to come by when one needs to fend for oneself. But I can seek help without necessarily exposing my vulnerabilities, and I can be vulnerable without seeking help.

Distance. That concept underlies my support network. I rely on my imagination, on far-flung fictions to soothe, to seek strength. I almost deliberately choose to be drawn into emotional relationships far away, so that pixels and keyboards stand between me and my failings, so that a plane ticket is required before I break apart. Let no one here know that I am so weak, for what if they learn to take advantage of me?

Solitude. The safest way to live is to live alone. I wear a ring that I bought myself in order to underline my commitment to myself, the rocky road to maintain integrity first and foremost to myself. Do not let others shape you into a creature of their making. Do not let them feed you, for food builds ties that bind. I eat alone often, and only sometimes, only sometimes does the absence of those far away haunt me.

Power. I am invincible when I retreat into roles where I have power – the power of helping someone, rather than seeking help. This act makes me comfortable. My supervisors tell me how relaxed, calm and confident I am with patients. Because it is easy to wear this mask, it requires little from me except a quick smile and a careful nod. Power gives me solitude, a retreat, a respite from feeling myself. But it is nothing more than a shell. When I step out of it, I am raw and new.

Where do I go to seek help? I escape, I retreat, I revolt

4.3 *Collective themes*

The following themes were developed through a process of critical consciousness building over the course of sixteen weeks and five workshops. The cumulative and iterative development of these themes over the course of this time period has been conceptualized in the methodology chapter as the *spiral staircase of knowledge production*. Examining the micro-level of this multi-dimensional process reveals how participants engaged in *knowledge generating interactions*, resulting in praxis[68]. While these themes represent the collective reflections of the research participants, they are in no way static, nor set in stone. Even though they are presented in a seemingly linear fashion, they are in fact multi-directional. This means that all of the themes interact with each other, and whereas causal relationships can be sometimes be identified, some issues presented are also mutually constitutive.

These collective themes have been organized under five main headings – *Historicised Identities, Marginalizing Experiences, Emotional Responses, Relationship with Mental Health,* and *Strategies for Survival*. With each main heading, there are a number of sub-headings which articulate aspects of that particular theme. In order to identify the quotes from the participants, I have identified the participant pseudonym (i.e. Adil), the workshop number (i.e. W4), and the specific line number (i.e. L12).

4.3.1 *Historicized identities*

Throughout the workshops, the ways in which participants historicized their identities were complex and varied. Many described experiences related to *historical displacement*, and external factors which led themselves or their families to leave their country of origin. Some participants also described their identities as *trans-national* and reveal some of the contradictions which are embedded into how queer sexuality is viewed globally.

For some participants, their understanding of themselves were deeply connected to their families and the particular circumstances which led them to Canada. Their trans-generational histories of migration were identified, to a certain degree, as a material consequence of colonial and imperialist forces. Prabir, for example, described the

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[68] Smith (1998) defines praxis as movement through "reflecting, taking action, and reflecting on that action". (p.186).

influence of the "imperial economy", and post-colonial India which led his family to eventually leave India.

> its kind of like colonial or imperial economy… there was no where for an ambitious Indian man, to make a living… my father was born 2 years before independence so he was part of the new India, and its just like, this is the new India, there's no space for me, because this is what the British left us, you know?...it was like the things we have to pick up after colonisation, you know, the pieces we have to pick up (Prabir, W4 – L425)

Another participant, Matt, reflected upon the trans-generational impact of the earlier enforcement of a "head tax"[69] for Chinese immigrants to Canada. He described how this particular history of racist Canadian immigration policies has impacted his generation of Chinese Canadians, many of whom were born in Canada.

> there have been continuous waves of Chinese coming over and of course, when they got here, they were used and abused… I look at my father, and I don't know if everybody knows about the head tax issue with the Chinese, but you know, when this issue came up and you know they were granted compensation, my father had the option of signing the documents to get the compensation and he decided not to, because he said, well I chose to come here, whereas, the generation that comes after him, their kids, they're the ones that are fighting for the head tax, because they're the ones who see it as an injustice (Matt, W4 – L481)

Matt went further to describe how the historical dislocation of Chinese Canadians were not just limited to immigration policies, but also while living in Canada, as he argued that the contemporary segregation of particular ethnic groups in Canada can be traced back to histories of racism.

> Chinatowns in Canada developed because Chinese people weren't allowed in any spots, in other parts of the city, so they were forced to sort of be in these areas because of racism, and that kind of just how they blossomed in North American cities, and I think there's still sort of a little bit of a mentality that exists today with different ethnic groups, and particularly in Montreal with the language issues too (Matt, W5 – L635)

For those participants who spoke of the effects of historical displacement on their contemporary realities as queer people of colour living in Canada, there was a struggle in coming to terms with their trans-national identity. Sandra, for example, described being

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[69] For further explanation of the Chinese head tax, see Li, P. (1998). *The Chinese in Canada: Second edition*.

involved with a community-based Filipino radio show and the difficulties she encountered because of not having been taught the Tagalog language.

> we know that people listen to the show in order to hear Tagalog, but it seems like, today, the people who actually have the capacity to run that radio show, are people like me, who grew up in Canada and whose parents didn't teach us to speak our language... I'm still kind of struggle, still kind of trying to figure out that part of my identity (Sandra, W3 – L969)

Furthermore, Sandra reflected upon the direct impact of Canada's immigration policies on the lives of her family, and the Filipino community living in Canada. She went further to describe how she came to terms with how dominant society had come to falsely perceive her as a domestic worker due to her visibility as a Filipino woman.

> kind of beginning to understand also immigration policies and how it ends up that there are so many in the Filipino community as domestic workers I feel a lot more comfortable with it now, you know when someone looks at me and thinks oh, she must be Filipino… I'm not a domestic worker, but I understand, if my mom had come here today, she would have been a domestic worker, or like, if I had come to Canada, today, I probably would have been a domestic worker… a lot of these women are professionals and they have a lot of trouble coming into Canada under their professions (Sandra, W4 – L1657)

These experiences indicate the implications histories of racist immigration policies and forced segregation have on the contemporary lives of queer people of colour living in Canada. Helen, who was born in Canada, described how she came to the realisation that she had internalised some of her immigrant mother's Korean-specific ways of interacting.

> I cover my mouth and I don't look people in the eye…my friend grabbed my hand and took it away from my face was like, why are doing that, can you stop doing that? Its really annoying… I didn't even know that I was doing it. Because I always see my mom doing it… whenever we would have parent-teacher interviews, and I'd always had white teachers, and the teacher would be having a discussion with her, she would only look me in the eyes… but she'd never ever look the teacher in the eye. So its just weird how I copied her. (Helen, W4 – L1856)

Helen, therefore, identifies her own experience of being marked as different by a friend due to subtly violating Western cultural norms of inter-personal communication by unconsciously imitating the social practices of her immigrant mother. After listening to Helen's stories about her mother, this led Grace to share a related, yet different

experience. Having been adopted internationally by a European family, Grace described her struggles with coming to terms with her trans-national identity and different expectations being placed upon her from her adoptive family.

> For me it's the story of looking in the eyes, because my mother is white, I mean my adoptive mother is white… when I grew up, I never look her in the eyes, but I didn't know it was Asian before, she always say, don't do the Asian thing, and then she used to slap me, but I could never really look at her in the eyes, and its only when I was Korea, that I start to realize that I was looking at people at little bit too much in the eye, because I was reacting to what I did in Europe, I guess. It was very bad to not look in the eyes (Grace, W4 – L1881)

While their stories differ significantly in the ways that they were taught and internalized Western and Asian social practices, both serve as powerful examples of the subtle, yet direct impact of their trans-generational histories of migration on their lived experiences. Moreover, Helen, Grace and Sandra all saw themselves as outside of the dominant white culture they were born into because of being reminded of their "difference" by external forces, *regardless of whether these differences were culturally taught or not*. Sandra was stereotyped and categorized as a domestic worker because of looking Filipino while Helen was marked as inferior by her friend because of violating Western cultural norms of communication. Because of being adopted into a white family, Grace had few opportunities to learn Korean cultural practices growing up, and yet was still marked as different and seen as partaking in Asian, and therefore inferior, cultural practices. All of these stories demonstrate the profound connection between the different kinds of historical "baggage" participants carried throughout their lives and their developing of trans-national identities.

It is important to note that not all participants identified historical displacement as negatively impacting their lives. In contrast, Prabir acknowledged a positive outcome of colonialism on his life, as someone who has lived comfortably in multiple countries.

> I read this colonial lens, you know? Because to me, the reason why I can feel so at home in all these different places…I blend in so easily and people expect me to be from wherever I am, is that there's something about, the reach of empire that makes that completely possible right? (Prabir, W3- L409)

4.3.1.1 *Trans-national sexualities*

Some participants explored how queer sexuality is presently being viewed in their countries of heritage and revealed some of the contradictions which exist in some expressions of queerphobia that are currently coming from these countries. Sandra, for example, described the hypocrisy embedded within a statement made by a Catholic leader in the Philippines about same-sex marriage.

> this one cardinal or something who was really loudly speaking out about gay marriage and you know, it's a Western idea or whatever but the fact that he was a cardinal, which is like, you know, a Western religion, imposed on the Filipines (Sandra, W2 - L653)

At the same time, Sandra differentiates the construction of sexual identity for queer Filipino women in Canada versus the Philippines and describes her affinity towards towards other queer Filipinos who were also born in Canada.

> I'd rather be queer in Canada, than be queer in the Filipines… I prefer to be around queer Filipinos who were also born here, or also making a life here, but even just queer identity is very very different in the Filipines, like if I were in the Filipines right now, I wouldn't be considered a lesbian, I'd probably date a woman who was considered a lesbian, because there's a very strong gender component, and gender roles that happens in the Filipines…always sort of the butch like woman and like the more feminine woman (Sandra, W4 – L440)

An important question which arises from this reflection is how these differing sexual identities would then be understood and internalised by queer newcomer immigrants and refugees living in Canada. Prabir reflected on what he viewed as the globalized understanding of Western queer identity and the tensions which exist when trying to apply this particular way of conceptualising sexuality into specific locations in India.

> the global model of what it means to be queer nowadays is a white model, it's a North American European model…I'm speaking in India for sure, the model of queer liberation in India is a very upper, middle class elite thing, and its completely modeled on what happened in the west. And it doesn't make sense in so much of India to have that sort of model, you know? (Prabir, W5 – L834)

These reflections reveal the complexities and tensions which arise for some queer people of colour when having to integrate trans-generational histories of displacement, marginalizing experiences, and a globalized queer sexuality into their trans-national identity.

4.3.2 *Intersectional marginalizing experiences*

Throughout the workshops, participants shared experiences of marginalisation and the many stereotypes and varied assumptions that people have of them because of their social location as queer people of colour. All of the participants revealed stories of oppression they encountered in virtually all the spaces they resided. Therefore, complex and intersecting experiences of racism, sexism and queerphobia were woven into the fabric of their everyday lives, including within their communities and intimate relationships.

4.3.2.1 *Stereotypes and assumptions*

Helen explained the difficulties she faced as a queer woman of colour and how the raced and gendered stereotypes that people have about Asian women in particular have resulted in societal restrictions being placed on her queerness and her gender expression.

> I think people generally assume that I`m straight when they meet me because, or they`re shocked when they find out I`m queer because its I mean, a specific type of East Asian woman is seen as very pure and I don`t know, being queer is like living on the edge… even though I don`t identify as a lesbian, its like you have to be very masculine, or you can`t play with your gender at all (Helen, W4 - L613)

Adil spoke about the difficulties of trying to get people to see past labels and stereotypes that they have of him.

> going against these stereotypes…its really hard.whenever someone sees you… they have some thoughts already about you in their mind and its really hard to convince them, you have to go through a long process to convince them, which sometimes you don't want to go through because its really personal, sometimes its not possible to explain all those kind of stuff so like its really hard when you are going against stereotypes. The bad thing is like the media is always promoting stereotypes (Adil, W2 – L621)

When sharing one of the photos that he took to the group, James explains his motivation for his photo as being related to trying to expose the impact of stereotypes on his life (to view photo, go to page 80 of thesis).

> I tried to play with flat surfaces, and how flat surface actually gives shadows, so the flat surface actually represents, you know, flatness of gays, skin colour… I always feel that people are judging me just because based on my appearances, whether I'm too gay, not gay enough, Chinese, not Chinese enough…I feel that

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when people look at me, they just see this front, and they don't see what's behind… shadow is something that's always present, but nobody really sees it, so its like a deliberate tact of like exposing something to people that is always there, but they don't see. (James, W4 – L1518)

Upon seeing James' photo and hearing his perspective of why he shot his photo, Helen shared her reflection about the challenges with confronting assumptions.

that idea, people sort of have this expectation, or this assumption of who you are, just by looking at you, and then there's all that stuff behind it (Helen, W4 – L1554)

As a Filipino woman, Sandra described her frustrations with people who make assumptions about her.

my nephews are half white, and when I used to take them out to the park and stuff, people would automatically assume that I was their nanny and not their aunt and that used to really frustrate me, you know, because, you know, no one wants to be seen as a domestic worker, right? (Sandra, W4 – L1665)

Two participants spoke about the difficulties in processing their particular experiences growing up as a person of colour in mainly white communities, and the uneasiness and internal stress they encountered when responding to stereotypes about them.

when I'm in a room full of other Asian people, or East Asian people, I feel like I have no identity, like we're all the same. And I remember growing up, I went to an all white school…everyone knew that I was the Korean one, or the only person of colour basically…I always had to create this over the top identity because I wanted people to think that I was different from this idea of whatever an Asian person was. Like the stereotype. (Helen, W4 – L1622)

I grew up in the east end of Montreal, there's not even one percent of Filipinos live in that (area)…. I remember when I started hanging out in Cote-des-Neiges, I hated blending in... I felt people automatically knew who I was, you know, or they'd just be like oh well, she's Filipino, and Filipino people would be like… just these sort of ideas of who I was (Sandra, W4 – L1648)

These experiences demonstrate the potential impact of assimilating processes on the identity formation of people of colour growing up in mainly white geographies.

4.3.2.2 *Experiences of racism*

While some participants shared specific experiences of racism while living in Montreal, all of the participants acknowledged having had similar racist interactions. Sandra shared one particularly vivid and visceral experience of racism.

> I was at festival du village with my friend and she was teaching me how to knit. She`s white and there was this man, who like this guy who was sitting near us, this older (white) man, and he kept turning around and talking, sort of jumping into our conversation… I slowly began to notice that he was actually only talking to her, he wasn't talking to me…at one point, he looks, he says to her, he says, is your friend Oriental? And I was like, is he talking about me?...who should answer this question, you know? It was addressed to her, but you know. So I was just like, oh well, I was born here, my parents are from the Filipines and everything. And then he said, well, it just surprises me that you, pointing to my friend, are teaching her how to knit. And he's like, don't all Asians know how to knit?...he's like well you know, because of all the sweatshops in Asia (Sandra, W3 – L928)

This particular story elicited strong responses from many of the participants.

> the story actually show, I don't what words to use because I have a harsh words to say, well. I would say stupidity of human... I think it's the way that they approach you, its not the fact that he say, oh well, Orientals should know how to do that, that's maybe not quite smart, but still not so bad, but just the fact that he was not talking to you exactly, and then after that, saying (responding) to the white person, it was condescending (Laura, W3 – L1075)

> I just can't believe that still happens, when I first moved to Montreal, this boy was like, I just have a question, I was wondering if all Asian people can see less because your eyes are smaller… I just laughed because I'm like how do people still ask these questions? (Helen, W5 – L1217)

A more covert form of racism, Grace described her frustration when white people automatically ask her where she is from.

> when a white person ask you automatically, if some one of colour, oh, where are you from? Oh, where are you from really? And if you ask the same question, to them its like, I'm pur lain[70], but actually, they think, and then you ask, really, and then they say, oh maybe my origin was from France, or whatever, but, they're entitled the fact that, because they don't look different from what the mainstream is in Canada, they don't, its like, even being autochtone[71], is almost an insult, if you detect something that is autochtone (Grace, W4 – 1599)

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[70]Because of being Francophone, Grace used French words for some words. "Purlain" is the French term for someone who is "purely" of French origin living in Quebec.
[71] "Autochtone" is the French word for Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, Sandra shared her experiences of systemic and policy-related racism, particularly living in Quebec as a person of colour and the struggles she had in processing her awareness of these barriers.

> I think since having finished school for now, I just feel like I'm coming up against a lot of barriers… its kind of sad to realize that some of them are imposed by other people and some of them are created by myself and you know in a way, its good to be aware of your oppression, but sometimes, it actually oppresses you more, you know (Sandra, W1 - L1190)

> I grew up thinking like learning about multiculturalism, but then when you start to realize what it means, you know, they just care about what kind of values your parents brought from their countries, without really looking at sort of the more political issues that are involved…also in Quebec there's that idea of interculturalism, which is a little bit different from multiculturalism (Sandra, W4 – L939)

Sandra's reflections indicate the possible negative impact of the Canadian government's policies related to multiculturalism on people of colour. Furthermore, people of colour living in Montreal must negotiate and even more complex immigration policy terrain due to federal multiculturalism policies interfacing with the policies of interculturalism promoted by the Quebec government.

In addition, many of the participants shared their stories and perspectives about how racism is manifested in their interaction with the mainstream queer community. The kinds of racism participants described were overt and covert. For example, Prabir described his frustration with the "de-politicized" nature of the mainstream queer community and lack of organizing about issues related to combating racism.

> its kind of like a party space, people don't think through things… when the marriage issue was resolved, there where five men in Canada that were detained without charge for a number of years, that's a major issue and if, we were a really politicized movement, if we understood what it meant to be an ally, if we understood, what the kind of transformative revolutionary approach to society we wanted was, then we would be fighting that too, and we would be fighting the issues of racial profiling, because those are the issues that are most important to me. Because I know what its like to be me, in an airport now a days, and its not about being queer, people don't give a shit if I'm gay or not, people care about me because I'm brown, or people will screen me again because I'm brown, and if I wanted support from my partner, or even the gay community at large, I'd want them to stand up and say something about that (Prabir, W4 – L724)

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Some participants also explored experiences related to coming out, or reactions to deciding not to come out. Prabir, for example, described the tensions he encountered with older, gay white men, when he was coming out.

> when I was younger and I was going through this kind of prolonged coming out process, a lot of my people guiding me through the process were older, gay men… I think they were drawn to me because I had this appearance of being this kind of vulnerable young and kind of shy thing trying to figure out how to work through this… I'm kind of being told what to think, and told what to believe and told what to do, and my complete rebelliousness against that is just, like, no, I know what to think, I know what to feel, I know what to do, and I don`t need you to tell me (Prabir, W3 – L556)

Because of her decision not to come out to her family, Helen described the reaction she faced from the mainstream queer community, while at the same time revealing her own indecisiveness over whether she should or should not come out.

> I feel like, the queer community, sometimes judge me, I guess especially white people…they feel like they have a one up against me, and I'm not a true queer, because I don't feel the necessity to come out… I'm sure it'll be more of a struggle once I get older, because my sister is 31, and they've been like, why aren't you getting married? But for me they're just like, Helen's never been into boys (Helen, W4 – L1373)

On the other hand, Sandra described her frustration with other queer Filipinos that she knows who are not out within the Filipino community.

> I know so many queer Filipinos but they're not necessarily out and that bothers me, because I feel like in some ways, I'm the only one who's going to be like, you know, I'm queer and Filipino and that's okay! I see them out at Unity on Fridays and stuff, but then you know, in the community they're really quiet (Sandra, W4 – L2138)

These reflections indicate the complex ways in which experiences of racism within the mainstream white queer community mediate how queer people of colour negotiate the coming out process. Furthermore, a significant amount of discussion was generated about how racism plays a role in participants' struggles seeking intimate partnerships. In particular, perceptions of invisibility or exoticization were main features in the perspectives of the participants. Helen, for example, explained how she felt people of colour were exoticized.

> I think exoticization of people of colour happens on like a systemic level… I think the reason why we search so hard for this perfect relationship is that, people of

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colour often have to, we talk about this idea of like, vulnerability and relationships should be that one area of your life where its so easy to be vulnerable, and because its so hard for us to be, and I'm talking generalizations here, but I mean, because its so hard for me to be vulnerable in public, that person should be that one person (where) its like okay for me not to feel like I'm being attacked or exoticized, because that's just the area we let down because in the public sphere, you have to put on this front, and relationships are in the private sphere... whenever I date white people, I'm always constantly questioning whether they truly like me, or because they're attracted to this exotic, Korean side to me (Helen, W3 – L753)

Some participants also spoke of the difficulties in conceptualising "beauty" within mainstream queer spaces, as Prabir described his perspective related to how beauty standards are normalized as white.

one of the things about race in the queer community in North America... the beauty standard is pretty white. And we're taught to, we learn culturally that beautiful things, beautiful people have white features and look white, and so I think that's one of the things that has an impact on the way we interact with the world. (Prabir, W4 – L704)

Furthermore, Prabir expresses his frustration with the lack of awareness or reflection on the part of the mainstream queer community regarding "racial preferences".

your personal preferences are something that are learned... its one thing, if you have racial hang ups, in a racialized society, its very possibly because you've learned them... I don't care if people have personal preferences, but not to question them is something else, you know? Like I've heard people use, well, I'm gay...my personal preference is men, so why don't I just say it. Saying I don't like Asians is like saying I don't want to sleep with women... I don't know about a lot of people, but I have gone through a lot of processing about my relationships with women... I went through years and years of that, so I feel like I kind of reached a point where I understand why I'm sexually attracted to men, but do people go through that same process when they come up with these trite, racial kind of like, I'm not going to sleep with bla bla bla. I don't think they've gone through that kind of processing... they haven't questioned it (Prabir, W5 – L580)

Grace had a clear response to the discussions about having racial preferences for your intimate partner.

Its racism. That's it. (Grace, W5 – L517)

Matt spoke of the psychological effects of overt experiences of sexual racism.

you go on websites all the time and you see profiles and they say, no Asians, no Blacks, no whatever and then its like, why bother saying it, why not be polite... or

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even just say what you are, or what you do prefer, but why be so negative, basically and ruin someone's self-esteem, because when you see that over and over again, that's what happens." (Matt, W5 – L573)

Adil also acknowledged the prejudice which exists *between* queer communities of colour.

its not just white people, I mean sometimes, queer people of colour doesn't like each other, like maybe an Arabian guy saying I don't like Chinese gay people, maybe a Chinese gay person saying I don't like South Asian gay person, things like that. (Adil, W5 – L559)

These stories demonstrate the intersecting and pervasive nature of racism in the lives of queer people of colour located within dominant society, mainstream white communities and in their intimate relationships.

4.3.2.3 *Challenging racism*

Many participants spoke of the difficulties in challenging racism across a variety of contexts. When trying to address issues of racism, Laura explained facing a double binding reaction.

Well often what happens, there's 2 reactions, right? There's the one we're victimized…and then we're frustrated, and then we react and then we become confrontational. Each way, we look bad from the white perception. I don't understand that part, I mean when you react, its just like oh you're too aggressive, in your culture, you're all like this and everything is about racism, etc, and when you're victimized, they just feel like sorry for you, and we're not good enough to be with them. (Laura, W5 – L1241)

Helen expressed her frustration with having to teach white people about racism.

I understand that we have to create awareness, but its also like, why do we have to do all the work?... like white people, we have to deal with them on a systemic and everyday level. Why is it my job to teach you about racism? I know nobody will ever learn if we don't teach them but…that's also kind of draining and traumatic in other ways, you know, to teach white people about white privilege. Shouldn't it be about white people teaching other white people about white privilege?... I think people have a right to be angry and to want to not want to interact in that way. Its everyone's personal choice... but I would just rather focus my energy on building my community (Helen, W5 – L1118)

As an activist that has been involved in a variety of leadership roles within the mainstream queer community in Montreal, Laura explained her anger towards being tokenized as a queer person of colour within mostly white queer organisations.

> the last couple of years we have been trying to teach and interact with the gay community…after many years of implication…its not like we waste our time because we do have a little bit more space or visibility or presence but…now its being taken on a completely different level, I mean, we are being used for grants, we are being used for publicity, and we play the game…because our motivation behind that is that we want to be visible, we want to be with them, so that's why we're playing to game to be tokenized… but at the end, I don't know how much it is worth it, because at the end we're not building our own communities, we're not putting our energy in our community, we're putting our energy to try to be with them, to be visible with them, when actually, they don't so much care that we exist (Laura, W5 - L1147)

Instead of trying to fight racism within mainstream society or mainly white queer communities, Helen prioritized working in solidarity with other anti-racist groups.

> its not our job to change…the mainstream white mentality…but to be in solidarity with other social groups who are doing activism around anti-racism, like migrant justice, or whatever. I mean that's the thing I learned when I moved to Montreal, is there are good white people that have a solid analysis, and solid politics (Helen, W5 – L1163)

Laura added onto Helen's reflections by suggesting that queer people of colour must be able to define their own initiatives separate from the mainstream white queer community.

> we have to stop trying to please the white people, and we have to start standing up…stop let them talking for us, let them telling us if we are intelligent enough, to be public, to be able to talk. If we want to have white ally, let's go for it, I mean, ally, yes, but do we really need white people to tell us, we can do this, we can not do this, we are going to have to stop doing that….let's just decide our own fate (Laura, W5 – L1367)

4.3.2.4 *Experiences of queerphobia*

Participants also described their experiences of queerphobia across a variety of intersecting contexts, including within dominant society, their racialised communities and their biological or adoptive families. Matt described growing up knowing he was queer and how he was bullied by his peers.

I knew pretty early on that I was also not straight, or, I didn't know what that was, I mean when I was 7, you know, you don't think of those terms, but I knew I was attracted to boys… growing up, it was hard to find sort of groups of friends that you could sort of you know, really connect with?... there were people I played with and there were people I hung out with…but I was bullied a lot when I was at school, and you know I hung out a lot on my own at recess and in elementary school (Matt, W4 – L283)

While Sandra is an activist and involved in community organising within her Filipino community, she identified overt and subtle kinds of queerphobia that sometimes appeared within her community.

I do feel more comfortable there (in my cultural community), but then, every once in a while, I still have to like turn around and be like, whoa, that was kind of homophobic, what just happened there, you know? And, still have to like push for that queer identity and be comfortable (Sandra, W1 – L1159)

for the longest time I was the only queer person in the group, now there's one or two other people, but even so, but they're kind of like queer identified, but I'm like homo… you know they are totally supportive, but they don't, at the same time, they don't really get it and I used to get really frustrated…they want to get it, but you know, but they can't feel the same things that I'm feeling, they can't understand it the same way (Sandra, W4 – L247)

Helen admitted to sometimes being intimidated in mainly racialized spaces, and identified the tensions which existed in her desire and fear of these spaces.

I'm a pretty social person, but I get really emotionally exhausted from hanging out with…people of colour, it terrifies me in a way, because I feel with white people, I can, I don`t know where I get this idea, but I feel I can hide under this façade, but with people of colour…its as if they have this secret understanding of who I really am and I can`t play, and so, I don't know why it just terrifies me to hang out with people of colour, but in the opposite end of the spectrum… I'm really craving those spaces, but whenever I go into those spaces, I find myself not saying anything, and questioning whatever, because I don't want to come off as a tough shod, or a fake person of colour or something (Helen, W4 – L327)

Throughout the workshops, a significant amount of discussion was generated about the participants' relationships with their families. Most participants had relationships with their families that were complex and contradictory. For differing reasons, a number of participants identified their relationship with their families as distanced. After sharing one of his photos, Prabir reflected upon the reasons behind the

geographical distance he presently had with his family (to view photo, go to page 85 of thesis).

> those ideas of solitude and isolation are about race… I lived here along without my family, who would probably ground me in a sort of sense of cultural belonging more, and my kind of sense of culture and belonging on my own is very important to me, but there's really no sort of community here that I feel re-affirms that (Prabir, W3 – L340)

On the other hand, because of her experience as an international adoptee, Grace, had a profound sense of removal from her biological family and emotional distance from her adoptive "family", which profoundly impacted the integration of her Asian identity. She explained her perspective growing up as an adoptee after reflecting on another participants' photo which included a mirror[72].

> I mean for me, mirror is very important because when I was a kid, I always thought I was white, I was with my white parents… we were all Korean adoptees (Grace's siblings) but not related. And he said (Grace's brother), oh you are yellow and I'm white. And I said, what the heck, you look more Asian than me, and we were fighting….the mirror was the reflection of what you would like to see (Grace, W3 -L1661)

Grace described the lack of expectations placed upon her by her adoptive parents as an Asian girl, and shared her perspective about international adoption.

> my parents are white and they're not biological, so they don't have any expectations for me, its like they save me from, I mean even adoption is about religion, and post colonialism…they had to pretend to be Christian to adopt me, but they had no expectation, because I'm a girl and if, I mean my brother had more expectation, they had more expectation on him, but as an Asian girl, I had no expectation (Grace, W4 – L1287)

Sandra spoke of the conflicts which arose between herself and her parents due to growing up in an immigrant household in Canada.

> Because I grew up super super Catholic and I was you know, the perfect little daughter, and just, to the point where I was… really really internalizing my hatred, my anger… because my dad was super strict too and didn't want me to go out, and he actually, he actually threatened to kill me once. He said, you're going out too much, I will kill you before you get yourself killed, and that's when I decided to move out of the house. And I remember telling my mom once, if I can't live the life that I want to live, I don't want to be living it… and this was a

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[72] This photo is not included in this thesis because it was not chosen for the community photo exhibit.

year before I even realized I was queer, and then, yeah that was just like, holy shit, what am I going to do you know? (Sandra, W4 – L2091)

Furthermore, Helen, in reflecting on a photo shared by another participant[73] spoke of coming to an understanding with her parents, and how previous resentment led to a newfound realisation of the difficulties her parents faced when they immigrated to Canada.

> I guess this picture makes me think of my parents religious background. Because my parents weren't religious until they came to Canada, they, like most Koreans, they got really into the (Christian) Korean Church community, and I grew up resenting that when I was younger because they would force me to go on Fridays, for youth group, and Sundays and force me to join the praise group, and bible camp… but now I just, I look at it as almost as if, its such a good outlet for them, because I know how isolating it can be to be an immigrant and I don't know where they would find that kind of community, especially a Korean community that's so supportive, if they didn't have the church (Helen, W4 – L1355)

These stories and reflections reveal how the historicized and trans-national identities (and therefore histories of displacement) of these participants *and their families* mediate the coming out processes for queer people of colour. There were particular fears voiced by some participants in relation to coming out to their families. For example, Helen identified the sacrifices of her immigrant parents for her as partly why she has chosen not to come out to her parents.

> they've already sacrificed so much, so then its not that big a deal for me to tell them that I'm queer (Helen, W4 – L1504)

Sandra spoke of the desire growing up to be the "model" daughter, and her acknowledgement of the sacrifices her parents made to come to Canada.

> I think that was why it took me so long to come out… I was like the model kid in my family, I was the youngest child, and I was born 18 years after the youngest one and I was kind of like the hope for the family, kind of thing? I mean they had all kind of immigrated here and I was born here and I was the only one that went to university, and I just remember feeling like I would be disappointing them so much by coming out to them?... I tried really hard to be the ideal daughter, and eventually it just, I was kind of on the brink of destruction and I was like, okay, no, I need to be who I am (Sandra, W4 – L1252)

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[73] This photo is not included in this thesis because it was not chosen for the community photo exhibit.

Matt described the weight of being in the closet, but identified his siblings as a source of assistance to help in the coming out process with his parents.

> the burden of keeping that secret just got so much, every time my mother asked, you know, why don't you have a girlfriend yet…so, I just, it got to the point where it just became too much and I had to, even though I had my sister come out for me, you know, it was still coming out to them (Matt, W4 – L1320)

Sandra explained that in her case, using the identity label of lesbian enabled her to use a strategy in coming out in a way that would make sense for her mother.

> only once I really kind of identified as a lesbian was I more comfortable coming out to my mom because to just be like, well I'm kind of queer… even though I don`t really identify as a lesbian, I think its just kind of an easier label that I use…it's a bit easier for her to take you know (Sandra, W2 – L631)

For those participants who did end up coming out to their parents, the reactions were varied. Some responded fairly positively, while others did not. James, for example, spoke about his parents reacting negatively, and identifying Western culture as influencing his being gay.

> I think what was interesting about my coming out experience was that as soon as I came out to my parents, they were like oh no you're corrupted by western people, they see gay as a western disease so naturally, you`re just corrupted (James, W2 – L645)

After explaining one of his photos to the other participants, James further described how this photo represented his relationship with his family (to view photo, go to page 81 of thesis).

> how my family views my sexuality as a mess, how they feel that you know, I messed up. And we keep going back and forth, well, how are they messed up, because they gave birth to a gay child, and there's this whole fact of how when my parents talk, oh, how am I going to tell your grandmother this… our family basically is a mess now (James, W4 -L1235)

> they kind of lost their hope in me being this model son… how am I supposed to grow up as a model son, as maybe a future father… by coming out, I just basically broke all of that, and basically, it is a mess (James, W4 – L1264)

Matt spoke of a possible impact of coming out to parents, in cultures that are more collectivistic in nature.

> I think parents also always view their kids as sort of extensions of them...when they come out as a different sexuality than them, then they think… where did I go

wrong?... ethnic families particularly, your children take care of you, but when you don't fit the traditional, conventional kinds of family structures, you know, if your own life, then they wonder if you know, they're going to be able to take care of you in the end… so their own futures are thrown up in the air. (Matt, W4 – L1418)

when you come out as queer person, your family have to come out as a member, as someone who has a queer member, its like a coming out process for them too (Matt, W2 – L548)

Furthermore, Matt describes the longer term ramifications that coming out had for his relationship with his parents.

one of my bosses told me, oh, you know they'll get over it, you know time heals all wounds, but its still there (Matt, W4 – L1332)

Sandra also identified potential ramifications of her coming out as linked with her parents' relationship with their cultural community in Canada, and some of the fears that they may have had as a result.

in my case the Filipino community is really closeknit… when I decided to come out to my mom, I felt like for her, on the one hand, you know, she was very catholic, and I was a bit afraid of how she would react, but it was also, the thought of her having to tell her friends… that's what I felt was a bit scarier. I remember when I did come out to her, she was surprisingly really really cool about it…at the same time, she's like, I'm not telling anybody, I don't want to tell my friends, I don't want to tell your dad (Sandra, W4 – L1434)

For James, it was the shame that his parents would face in the Chinese community that made it difficult for him to come out to his parents.

with Chinese parents, its that, there's also this idea of 'losing face' to like to the outside public so being seen as having a gay son, as not fulfilling their role as a traditional parent and what not, they will lose face and they will be left out, I think that's very strong, at least, in the Chinese community (James, W4 – L1488)

Prabir explained some of the tensions that exist for queer people of colour and the possible reasons for why the consequences of coming out to their family may be too high for them to see it as a positive thing to do.

I think for a lot of people their families are their connection to their culture and their heritage, so they need to maintain that and keep that going, because especially if you're in North America…your family is really your lifeline to your past, there's really not very many other places you can go to get that. But at the same time, being queer its just, its hard. It threatens that connection right, for a lot

of people, it threatens that connection…I think there's a pressure in the white community, amongst white people, to say, well you should just come out and just tell everyone and its like, well no, people are constantly making really tough decisions about how to navigate living and surviving (Prabir, W2 – L555)

At the same time, Grace responded to this discussion about coming out to family by cautioning that not every queer person of colour had negative experiences in coming out to their parents, and that the reason for a bad response should not be simplistically tied to ethnicity or skin colour of that family.

I have French white friend and she got beaten up by her brother, and she's white, but white people when they look at her, they will not say its because she's French, or because she's white. But as soon as a person of colour gets beaten up, because he's queer, we're going to say, its because of colour. So there's a huge difference in how people find excuses in the ethnicity or the colour…Prabir, is like, he's a person of colour and his family accept very well, but they (white people) will like blind it in their mind and say oh its just one person different, but I heard many stories with (other) queer people of colour too (Grace, W4 – L1401)

While participants experienced queerphobia within a variety of contexts, including within dominant society and their racialised communities, it was the coming out processes within their families which proved to be the biggest challenge. These experiences with their parents reveal specific queerphobic responses related to queerness being identified as a white or Western concept suggesting particular obstacles facing queer people of colour in addressing queerphobia within their families. However, it is of equal importance to note that not all parents or families of queer people of colour are queerphobic.

4.3.3 *Psychological and emotional responses*

Participants critically reflected upon the profound emotional and psychological effects that historical displacement and intersectional experiences of marginalisation have had on their identity and emotional well-being. These effects are also complex and complicated, as some spoke of opportunities which opened up at the same time as they were facing difficulties. The following sub-themes of *In-Between Spaces, Solitude, Internalised Racism, Suspicion, and Safe Spaces* were identified.

A powerful emotional response identified by many of the participants, even with their varied backgrounds, was the feeling of never belonging anywhere because of their

experiences of marginalisation and historical displacement and therefore, their trans-identity as queer people of colour.

> I identity myself in between nationalities and spaces so people always, Canadians always ask me you're not Canadian where were you born, even though I was born here so I don't feel like I`m Canadian, because I`m always like, I'm Korean but then I also like I'm not Korean, because I don't look Korean, so whenever I go into a Korean supermarket or something, they`re always like, you`re Chinese so, I don't feel Korean, and I feel like I'm not Korean enough, whatever that means. And I also feel like I'm in between spaces in the queer community because I find that a lot of the queer people of colour communities are immigrants and stuff and I feel like I can't really... I want to feel like I have a place in that community, but I don't, and then the white queer community, I feel like I'm the only, the token Asian person (Helen, W1 – L977)

> That's why it's a big problem, because...people feel rejected from their community because they're not understood, and in the other community which is the queer, mostly white people don't understand them, so its like they're in-between (Grace, W5 - L623)

For some queer people of colour, their intersecting identities result in the feelings of isolation and being caught *in-between spaces*. In addition, *solitude* was another powerful psychological and emotional outcome for the participants. Their conceptualisation of solitude was very complex, as depending on the context, solitude could signify feelings of isolation, wanting to escape and facing barriers, while at the same time, it could be a space for self-affirmation. In describing his photos and narrative, Prabir goes into detail about his complex understanding of solitude (to view photo, go to page 85 of thesis). There is a tension which exists within this concept for him, of solitude being a positive thing, but a difficult thing all at once.

> I eat a lot of meals alone... when I was going through this independence, it hadn't bothered me at all...but its like a question, is this the way I really want to live my life and is this the way, like when I need help, is this really serving me any purpose? Eating meals like this alone?... There's also a kind of a softer edge to it, in the fact that I've always felt alienated from any large groups ...in the gay community for instance, I just don't, I just don't fit, I don't get along, I don't, I try to relate and its really hard, and so its become a matter of pride now, that okay, I'm going to think for myself (Prabir, W3 – L551)

In seeing Prabir's photos and listening to his stories, Grace reflected on the role that solitude has played in her life as a Korean-Japanese adoptee who moved back to Korea to live as an adult, and how this has impacted her trans-national identity.

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for me it reminds me of Korea when I was alone in Korea and you have to eat with someone, you are a loser if you eat alone. (laughs) Yeah, I really had no connections, so I was eating alone and I couldn't go in a restaurant. But in Japan you could eat at the bar, and you can eat alone, but not in Korea… especially as a woman, if you were a taxi driver, they have a special restaurant for taxi driver, even they're not alone they're with their friends (Grace, W3 – L509)

Through sharing his photos, James described his feelings of isolation and aloneness because of his strained relationship with his family because of being gay.

I also feel lonely in my own house. Because I don't know how to deal with my parents because of my sexuality. Because of conflicts with tradition, let's say. Tradition and being not so traditional, being queer is something that's not very traditional either, so the way that, how I deal with it was to stay alone. Being alone is in some sort, comfortable, yet also feels like a prison sometimes, where you have to close yourself within that space to feel good (James, W4 – L238)

Moreover, because of historical dislocation, Prabir is distanced from people and geographies that he cares for.

Solitude is like, it's not only just, its also just logistics, and practical reality, its like pragmatism. The people I probably feel the most connected to are just far away, I don't see them…and that can be the reality that (is) post-colonial dislocation for all sorts of reasons, migration and, its just the way it is (Prabir, W4 – L375)

Another facet of solitude which troubled Prabir is his acknowledgement that sometimes, he is alone because of a desire to escape the difficulties in his life.

I feel a lot of my deepest routes and connections are somewhere else…my sense of feeling safe and my sense of working through things is often and its not very healthy, but I think its about escape…my first instinct to deal with anything is like, okay, go far away. And its obviously not very healthy because your problems run after you…or you take your problems with you (Prabir, W3 – L190)

Upon seeing Prabir's photos, listening to his stories, his challenges with solitude and wanting to escape, Helen shared with the group her reflections.

I guess what stuck out to me the most was like this idea of running towards something or running away from something or just, the sense that I get from all your pictures is like, finding this place of balance …independence can sometimes be a good thing, but also is really alienating and scary so, and what stuck out to me the most is when you said as a person of colour, you can't really appear to be vulnerable because, especially living in a really racist society and as like as a

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queer man, you have to put on this front where you have it all together, especially as a doctor (Helen, W3 – L364)

Solitude for Prabir is also a source of self-affirmation, and space to re-energize, therefore reminding Prabir of the strength he gained from his individuality and singlehood.

Solitude to me is like a very, its so fundamental to my life, I experience it in so many ways, most of the time, its really enriching and nourishing for me, especially because I'm an introvert and that's where I draw my, that's how I re-cuperate, that's how I re-energize myself, that's how I get through the day (Prabir, W4 – L206)

I wear this ring on my finger, and the ring itself has a story behind it… its just like its become to symbolize part of my own, like reliance on myself, my own kind of emotional independence and as corny and cheesy as it sounds, but like my sort of, the commitment I have to myself and to my integrity and that that`s one of my fundamental alliances (Prabir, W3 – L125)

After listening to Prabir's story about his ring and using solitude as a source of strength, Grace also shared with the group a similar experience.

I did the same, I did in New York, I bought myself a ring for the same reason. But this one is a bit torture, so that's why I choose this one, because its very cheap and its yellow for me its my skin colour, but also, did it with the same purpose that I don't (want) someone to buy for me (Grace, W3 – L315)

After listening to Prabir's experiences and perspectives, it drew a different response from Sandra, as she began to think of solitude in relation to intimate partnership.

that photo in a way kind of scares me…I thought that was a great idea, you know, to buy your own ring, but that thought still kind of frightens me…I'm still not okay with being single, and that's something that I struggle with a lot…I don't know, I have this strange reaction to it (Sandra, W3 – L320)

Participants also engaged in a discussion of why it seemed to them that many queer people of colour were single, including themselves. They examined the possible role of racism within the mainstream queer community and explore their feelings of loneliness which result from being single.

whether queer people of colour, at least of our generation, were just more likely to be single and alone…I usually have this resistance to talking about relationships in that way because…I don't like the tendancy to make the politics of race and the politics of queerness to be about dating and relationships, I have a resistance to that, but then, obviously, it has an impact, and obviously it has an impact in my

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life, and I'd like to deny it, and I'd like to not have to deal with it, but its true and its there (Prabir, W4 – L223)

I was just saying before we started that I just got into a program in Ottawa, and I'm kind of like damn, I wish I had a partner that could kind of mull this over with… someone to kind of support me and my decision, you know (Sandra, W4 – L270)

I even remember this stupid quote… where Whitney Houston, you know towards the end of the film, after going through all these relationships, tells her mom, you know I have learn to love myself first…but you know, when you've gone through life this long… living on your own and trying to, you know, you feel at some point that you know you're just kind of tired of that. You're tired of trying to love yourself (Matt, W4 – L304)

I can't stop thinking about how why, why so many queer people of colour I know are like, are struggling to find, I don't know, or like, dating, and just this feeling of helplessness and being alone…where do we go from there, how do we, navigate around these feelings…where's the hope? (Helen, W3 – L2130)

Some of the participants identified being picky or suspicious of dating, due to previous negative experiences, as a contributing factor to being single.

my ideal partner would probably be a queer Korean lady or whatever gender variant person, but um but I don't really understand where that comes from. Like all my problems will dissipate if I just date a Korean person. I know that there's other levels to that (Helen, W4 – L337)

One of the things that really bugs me, is like going back with the being suspicious, it's the fact of being exoticized, I think its one of those things that really bug me, where people just aren't… oh I really like Asians, or really like Chinese, and then you start talking about all these stereotypes "oh they're so gentle"…I'm not like that so why are you doing that (James, W4 – L631)

I think that maybe queer people of colour are more picky? Because they're more concerned about certain things that white people even don't think? And so, maybe we are more picky and suspicious, and we want this kind of people, so more expectations, so as soon as the other person doesn't fill up the expectation, we just give up, or we try to find someone better…its like I date Korean adoptees, and I had so much expectation, which was wrong and I think the experience told me that. People are people…a white person will never really understand our differences and experiences, but… we don't understand them in some ways…. I date Koreans also and its always something is missing as soon as you are diasporic… maybe somebody who's not like you will accept better the differences, then someone who's like you… differences, you have to accept, I guess (Grace, W4 – L620)

Furthermore, some participants admitted to *internalizing their experiences of racism* within dominant Canadian society, and the mainstream queer community.

> going with the whole gay community…I always have this feeling of being inferior to, lets say a white person, because it always seems like its easier for them to find someone to date than for me to find someone to date, just because I'm an Asian, and you know, I'm always subjected to the fact that I'm either exoticized or they're not interested, or all sorts of other things (James, W4 – L1929)

> I was not able to talk to a lot of queer people of colour, but the few that I talked to, most of the time they told me, their first preference is a white guy, I mean if you are not happy about yourself, then how do you think other people will respect you?... I had a guy from Vietnam, we used to work together, once he told me, he never goes out with a coloured person, he likes to go out with white guy because he thinks they're smarter, and stuff like that…Do we think that they're superior to us? (Adil, W5 – L541)

> when I was a teenager, I was very resistant to liking, to be attracted to Chinese guys… or Asian guys for that matter, because I think there was sort of this, maybe it was a self loathing thing, maybe it was just, you know, kind of a rebellion against my own parents (Matt, W4 – L681)

Throughout the workshops, participants spoke about their desire for *safe spaces*. There were differences between participants in their perceptions of where they could find these safe spaces. Having the opportunity to meet each other because of this research project resulted in some participants identifying our workshops as safe spaces for them.

> this is really exciting for me because I just moved to Montreal in September and I'm finding it super hard to meet queer people of colour so that's why I'm so excited about this project (Helen, W1 – L107)

> what I first wrote was to meet interesting people, but when I thought about it what interesting really means to me is actually, find more queer people that I can identify with (Prabir, W1 – L929)

Because Matt decided to construct his photos and narratives around the theme of "myspaces", he therefore shared photos of the kinds of spaces he uses and described how important these spaces are for him.

> all these places kind of, they kind of form the narrative of my life at this moment, which is, I'm involved in a lot of things and I'm trying to improve myself and at the same time, I'm trying to balance everything (Matt, W3 – L679)

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As Matt shared his photos, and identified one particular activist space that he felt safe in, Sandra responded by voicing her perception of this particular space.

> they're kind of spaces where I don't really feel comfortable, but, yeah, I feel like they're sort of activist spaces, but they're white activist spaces, even though they're not supposed to be. But yeah, for me, my activism, I feel so much more comfortable in my own community, like in the Filipino community (Matt, W3 – L770)

When someone asked Matt about why there were no photos of a Chinese-specific space, Matt responded by stating language and geography as factors which sometimes limited his comfort within particular kinds of Chinese spaces.

> there's so many different kinds of Chinese and most of the spaces for Chinese in Montreal...are really immigrant based and aimed and I was born here, and although certainly, I come from a family, you know my parents are immigrants.... when I go to those spaces, language becomes an issue, because I don't speak Chinese fluently and my dialect is not widely spoken anymore (Matt, W3 – L777)

In addition Matt also described the importance of inter-cultural spaces and building coalitions across differences in his desire to find or create safe spaces.

> the activism I've taken on, has been really inter-cultural, and its dealt with sort of minorities in general and sort of different senses of racially, in terms of sexuality, in terms of gender...everything for me has come a way of building coalitions (Matt, W4 – L791)

These comments indicate that differences exist regarding the criteria that queer people of colour use to assess the safety of a particular space. Grace also stressed the importance of safe spaces for queer communities of colour to come together and meet each other.

> I think we need, really to be strong, because its like, oh (just) because we're Asian, we don't care about the African or because you are this, you don't care about the other one. But, I think in that space...we have a common experience, I guess in being gay. (Grace, W4 – L1080)

Matt agreed with Grace's comments about the importance of having spaces for queer people of colour and how he has incorporated this into his photos.

> I also think what Grace said about you know, having a space, earlier, is really important because, that's actually what my photo is...because I think people need to know that there's a place they can go (Matt, W4 – L1075)

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4.3.4 *Mental health survival*

A significant amount of time during the workshops was spent on participants sharing their stories, experiences and perspectives about their relationship with their own mental health, as queer people of colour. Many participants revealed histories of struggling with depression, anxiety, and suicide. For some participants, these were linked to their historicized identities, intersectional experiences of marginalisation, and coming to terms with feelings of not belonging, internalizing racism, not having safe spaces to go to, and isolation as a result of solitude. Helen, for example, described her struggles with mental health issues as one of always questioning herself and surviving.

> I struggle a lot with mental health, so I feel I'm kind of like a mental health survivor (Helen, W1 – L983)

> the one thing that I'm just struggling with the most is I feel like as a person of colour, and especially as a queer youth of colour…my existence is often, like I'm always questioning… I'm always thinking to myself, am I crazy? Am I imagining things? Am I imagining my narrative, or is this how things actually are? (Helen, W3 - L1637)

Matt described his depression as linked with feelings of isolation coming from solitude, and as someone who was previously bullied.

> when I reached my teenage years, that's when my depression started surfacing…when you're sick like that you feel even more isolated, right, because you just think about your isolation, and it creates more isolation because you're thinking about it all the time…that ultimately, is sort of self-defeating, obviously…you have a hard time keeping relationships, you, or ever even making relationships (Matt, W4 – L296)

> I've always tried to keep busy…I keep saying yes to things…that's been a link with my depression, because you know, the more time I spend doing other stuff, the less time I think about how alone I am. But at the same time, I burn myself out, after awhile, and then I have to be alone, and so it's almost like this vicious cycle that I go through where, you know, I go through these waves of, you know have to do stuff, but no, I'm too tired to do this now (Matt, W4 – L960)

Laura decided she wanted to develop her photos and narrative around the theme of suicide and described her difficulties in articulating her struggle with her mental health.

> I want to talk about something that I never talk in 18 year, suicide, and I would like to do my own acceptation to that fact without defining myself being like that,

but accept that is a big part of what I had to deal for the last 18 years… I used to write a lot, for a reason I don`t know, I stopped writing…I would like see if I feel more comfortable, to write my life for myself from pictures… and I hope to, from that, doing on my own evolution to that theme, also, black people don`t talk about suicide they put it on the list of the taboo they have, and a lot of black people either think about it…kill themselves and I think that it will be good thing to talk about it, and queer people, queer black, definitely are not going to talk about it neither (Laura, W1 – L1031)

I'm losing my friends. Slowly and surely, because they don't know how to be around…people don't like to talk about this too, and obviously, that's too much for them also. They just don't know how to handle it, so I'm losing my friends, so that's also make me want to do the photovoice more because I need something to support me and to hold on and work with (Laura, W1 – L1067)

One particular kind of mental health stressor which Sandra identified is her struggle with the concept of being a "model minority".

everyone kind of expects you to be happy and you know, that's something that used to frustrate me so much because…you kind of have to put on this façade right, and I think people see that and they think that's who you are and that used to really bug me because they'd be like oh Sandra's really fine look at her... in the meantime, I'm like thinking of jumping in the metro tracks and I'm like, what the hell, why can't you people see that (Sandra, W1 – L1181)

4.3.4.1 *Seeking help*

Some of the participants expressed a desire to explore and reflect upon their experiences and various challenges with accessing help. This includes the tension that many of the participants face in their relationship with their own mental health, and barriers to accessing health care and counselling services.

I know that I'm oppressed in all these sorts of ways, but… it's hard to understand how it happens on an every day basis, so…I'm interested in comparing the ways how I access help with how other people access help… in their every day life (Helen, W1 – L966)

this week the solitude thing has really been getting to me because I'm just like, I need help...I really don't know where to get it, you know? (Prabir, W4 – L215)

For some participants, the internet was a very important way to access the kinds of help and support that they needed.

I mean for me I did for the AQA, the Asian Queer Adoptees, but its very specific, but I think we really connected and I don't think we always have to meet in person, but internet and stuff can help and I feel that, even we're not that many,

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but its like Vietamese and Korean adoptees gathering, and I think its like the only support we can really find strong and very specific, because its very specific issues (Grace, W2 – L523)

I was trying to think about where I was going to go for help, and I realized that a lot of the people closest to me in my life are really far away and so, e-mail has been a really important part of my life about establishing, kind of, establishing a community of support and keeping myself grounded in relationships that are important to me, and so the act of typing or the act of having a keyboard was, is really really important to me (Prabir, W3 – L212)

Grace describes the fears she had identifying the possible places she could go to for support, and how, because of her intersecting identity, no place seemed accessable.

Because the(re) (is) no centre for queer of colour, for me, one day, I thought to call gayline…and I thought because my English is not good, if I call in French, I don`t understand the Québecois enough so they will make fun of me or I will not understand what, so I felt that even (thought) I'm Belgium, I will not go to the Belgium (spaces) to ask for the queer thing and I know that I can not go to Korean (spaces) because I'm not Korean enough, so its like, I think we are really in between (Grace, W2 – L511)

Matt explored how access to help is not just about your racial background or sexuality, but can also be influenced by your linguistic capacity and dis/abilities.

access can be interpreted in a lot of different ways, you can think of linguistic access, so when your first language isn't French or English…being able to you know, get to the resources you need to get to, but also, just other kinds of intersections, that go beyond just being queer and ethnic or racialised…if you actually have a physical challenge or mental challenge…being able to access the spaces that you need to access, being able to, yeah, to have resources available to you, if you read braille for example…all these things are kinda things that we kinda put in the periphery, but for people who, you know have these challenges, its not in the periphery for them (Matt, W4 - L2370)

Some of the participants explored the difficulties they encountered within a medical setting. Laura shared a recent experience that she had in trying to access health care, and revealed some of the systemic barriers she faced in receiving the assistance that she felt she needed.

a couple of weeks ago, I went to see my doctor and I said that I need to stop working, I need to take a break…I was not that depressed, I was feeling pretty okay, but I was see that I was having too much and I needed to take a break to take care of myself and to not go down. And the doctor gave me pills and refused to stop me, even though I have insurance for that and what I realized from the

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structures is that there the structures for extreme measures, like people in emergency, and you have pills for the other, and if you are in the middle, which I am at this point, in trying to you know, catch up, and well… there's nothing in the society for me. There's nothing, just nothing (Laura, W1 – L1054)

Prabir revealed the internal tension he struggled with as someone who didn't trust the medical establishment, while being in university presently to become a doctor.

I have such a difficult relationship with the medical establishment myself, like, asking anybody for help within the health care system…I can not do it. And so it's very interesting that I`ve decided to do this and become one of those people, myself…I only go places I trust and I don`t trust big structures (Prabir, W3 – L237)

Furthermore, Prabir reflected on the significance of his queerness within a hospital setting.

if I would really need help in a crisis moment, like I was being evicted or if I was on welfare and my welfare check was being cut off, or I was in crisis in a hospital…I'm probably actually feel safe being a person of colour in a hospital because I feel you know, there's a lot of staff I could relate to at a hospital, even if they're not practicing doctors, there's people I feel who would understand and be on my side, but being queer in a hospital, no way, no way (Prabir, W2 – L532)

After listening to Prabir's reflections, Grace shared her recent experience during a hospital visit with her white ex-girlfriend.

I had the experience, even not two weeks ago and I was with my ex-girlfriend and she's white…it was very cold, but I think I was thinking more about my colour, than even being queer, and she was thinking, its no problem, its no issue there…how if you are from a mixed couple, how do you deal with that (Grace, W2 – L537)

The experiences of these participants indicate there are specific obstacles facing queer people of colour in accessing medical services due to their particular social location. Furthermore, almost all of the participants spoke at length about their experiences of seeking individual counselling. They share the frustrations they experienced with counsellors who did not have the capacity to acknowledge their intersecting identities.

I've been to therapists, and I just find that it doesn't help, because I know exactly what my problem is, and I know exactly what they are…I don't have the energy to deal with them…I've gone to therapy a few times, you know, sometimes on a

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semi-regular basis, and I just, I mean it might work for some people, but its just never worked for me (Matt, W4 – L980)

because I actually burnt myself out last year, and I went through this whole big suicidal thing, and I actually had to go and talk to a counsellor at (name of university), and we were flushing out all these ideas of being gay and being Asian, and it, I just wanted to say that it actually happened to me too (James, W4 – L974)

Many of the participants expressed frustrations with the individualistic approach to therapy and simplistic interpretations by the counsellors of their relationships with their families, especially with regard to the concept of "traditional".

I think there's just this big lack of cultural understanding, that's there. Because even when I talk about my parents, well, I mean, I don't feel much response from them, oh they're very traditional and... that's it. Like, they can't recommend anything for me, and basically, I just feel like I'm sitting there and just talking. There wasn't much done (James, W4 – L1008)

But it also works the other way, because my parents are not very traditional, and they very traditional lives but…they're pretty progressive people with progressive ideas, but that's immediately the response I get, its just like well your family must mis-understand you, I'm like actually no, they're not. Because I don't fit into the box they have to deal with me, they suddenly don't know what to do with me…the formula we usually spit out don't really work with you. And then they just don't know what to do (Prabir, W4 –L1016)

I think that most social workers or therapists…they place it all on the individual, without looking at the historical significance of why, for example, I've seen alot of white therapists…the way they read it is, you have a very traditional violent dad, and he's just really messed up and they just look at it through this white lens without understanding, why is my dad angry? Was he this angry when he came, before he moved to Canada?...I don't really see that mandate happening, especially in university settings, when I've gone to see university counsellors and stuff they've just placed me in this little box (Helen, W4 – L999)

I've had really similar experiences to what you were saying with counsellors, just well, this one woman…she just didn't get why I was having communication issues, why I would have trouble talking to my parents about things. You know, I was raised in this household, where its just like, shut up…don't express yourself, just be who we want you to be, and yeah, she just didn't get it at all…I mean the second counsellor I saw…I ended up leaving crying, and I cried the entire day, I was having a really bad day, but I was just like, I can never talk to this woman again (Sandra, W4 – L1022)

Some participants identified the importance of self-reliance and being pro-active in order to successfully navigate accessing medical or mental health services.

> what I discovered from my own crisis is that, basically we have to educate ourselves, most likely and its sad, but when you seek for help, you gotta tell them what help you want and how they have to give it. Basically you become your own doctor…its sad, but it is that (Laura, W5 – L1652)

> the second time…this time I came more prepared, okay I really want someone who will understand who I am as a person of colour, and as a queer person…this next counsellor that they had was a lot better (Sandra, W4 – L1031)

Upon sharing his own experiences and listening to everyone's stories, Prabir reflected on the importance of the collective discussion and its potential benefits to social workers and counsellors gaining much needed information to better serve queer people of colour.

> I feel like if there was a bunch of social workers listening to what everybody in this room has said, they would have so much more, they'd be able to deal better, because they'd know not everybody's the same, and yet, there's common themes, but not everybody experiences them the same way. (Prabir, W4 – L1051)

4.3.5 *Strategies for survival*

Throughout the series of workshops, participants spoke of their particular strategies for surviving the effects of historical dislocation, and marginalising experiences because of their intersecting identities as queer people of colour. As critical dialogue progressed, collective thematic areas began to emerge, related to the importance of *knowing their histories,* and *individual, inter-personal,* and *collective strategies for survival.*

Some participants described one particularly salient avenue for survival was that of *knowing their histories*, particularly the histories of people of colour in Canada, and histories of sexual and gender diversity within their communities of colour or countries of origin.

> I think history is so fundamental, and it's a really really powerful motivating force, and I think there's two histories in particular that we need to know, and one is the history of our ethnic community in this country, and we need to have that down pat, and the other one is the know the history of our sexual culture in our country of origin and have that down pat, because those are the points where we

are most, that's where people attack us…oh you don't belong here, and in our countries of origin, its like, oh this doesn't belong here. (Prabir, W5 – L996)

The thing because when we meet people, especially, I think Caucasian, and we have this history of displacement… I always feel that they try to dis-balance you, to see how less you are, and so, knowing your history is something, you can talk about something that they don't know, so its like, you put back the place where they try to put you (Grace, W5 – L1016)

At the same time, Matt described his frustrations with having to defend his place in Canada as queer person of colour.

I always hate having to defend myself, you know, I always have to hate having to come up with an answer all the time, and sometimes I just want to exist and not have to worry about knowing… just having to know facts, because I don't think in the end it should really matter, you know, I exist, I am here, I'm queer, I'm not going away. (Matt, W5 - L1022)

Furthermore, *individual strategies for survival* were identified as a possible pathway to dealing with oppression. After sharing his photos, Prabir spoke of solitude as a path to self-affirmation and therefore survival for many queer people of colour.

They're all to me valid, wonderful ways to get help…nobody would say that, oh this is you, getting help when you need it, but that's exactly what it is…I think maybe you know, asking someone for help is important and I wish I could learn to do that better, but I`m not helpless, even when it comes to asking for help. I do have my strategies for surviving and navigating it all (Prabir, W3 - L277)

Discussions around how the negative impact of the suppression of anger seemed to be particularly salient for the queer women of colour in the group. Helen described the importance of acknowledging the emotion of anger as a positive pathway for surviving.

I guess the biggest thing for me is I'm just trying to be okay with being angry. For the longest time, I would always beat myself up and…view anger as like a bad emotion, and its something that I need to deal with myself, because its never going to get me anywhere, but…I think its like a starting point with something, I mean as long as it doesn't take over your life… its okay for me to exist outside this box, of being like this timid, bubbly girl. I don't know if its because that's who I am, or if that's because I feel like that's what other people think I should be. But being okay with not acting out the role that everyone else thinks I need to be (Helen, W4 – L1943)

Because its about power…if we do something we can die in peace, saying at least we have tried (Grace, W5 – L1085)

In addition, there was a discussion about *inter-personal strategies for survival.* For some participants, it was important to fight back against acts of racism or exoticization, and yet, at the same time, find a sense of balance between fighting and not.

> you can also answer…you also exoticise, that's what I say to my kind of date, as soon as I say that, its like we're put on the same level, she exoticise me in some way, and I do also (Grace, W4 – L639)

> when someone does exoticize me… I don't like it in sort of as a general fact, I don't like the idea of exoticisation, but if there's something I want from the guy, I'm not afraid to use it maybe just to get what I want…if you're going to see me that way then, hell, I think you're hot. One night, two nights, maybe not a relationship, but you know whatever, I'm willing to go with that (Matt, W4 – L698)

> if I hear something racist, I feel the need to get exasperated and emotionally drained from it and have dialogue with the person that was racist, but then I`m like…Helen, why don't you just take it for what it is and learn how to pick your battles (Helen, W3 – L391)

Some participants spoke of the importance of inter-cultural dialogue and support in their survival. Laura, for example, in reflecting on her photos and narration, spoke of the role of Asian culture in her life as a black woman growing up in a multi-ethnic area (go to page 78 of thesis to see photo).

> la culture Asiatique à toujours était très présent dans ma vie donc, de qu'il s'est assis pour me montrer, ça me fais de bien, ça m'as aussi me renforcer dans le bien-être que j'avais quand j'étais en forme. Avec le groupe Vietnamien que j'ai grandit tous ça… tous ça je trouve qu'il y a comme un connection par rapport à ça (Laura, W3 – L1339)

In addition, Prabir spoke of the importance of reaching across racial boundaries.

> one of the things I actually think helps is actually to build relationships across those boundaries, and I think building relationships with people who have no sense of politics… who have really really white lives, actually its really hard and its really kind of annoying and its really painful at times, but I think it can also be really rewarding when you get to some break throughs, I mean its not just that you're teaching them, but you're learning things as well. I get to learn what white privilege is like...I can also see the richness of that life (Prabir, W4 – L788)

Many of the participants insisted on the paramount importance of engaging with *collective modes of survival.*

it seems like a lot of the services are very individual centred, and centred on the person who's coming out, and there needs to be more support for like, the community as well (Sandra, W4 – L1738)

I find it so therapeutic almost that we like are able to share stories, like social spaces. Not spaces to like cruise or like date, you know? Its like space to talk (Helen, W5 – 1558)

I think that the fact that we share stories that sometimes we feel that we are the only one to have these kind of story, but then after he say so, she say so, you say so, and so after, we all experience the same, so its kind of an understanding, but then it also make us closer in some ways (Grace, W5 – 1361)

By identifying some of deficiencies in individual based services, alternatives were suggested. Because of feelings of isolation and being "in-between" due to historical dislocation and marginalising experiences the establishment of a *queer diasporic culture* is proposed by Grace.

I mean there is the Chinese culture, there is every kind of culture, but I think in the crossing point we are, its like we can create a new culture, the diasporic culture but also the queer diasporic culture (Grace, W4 – L1962)

why do we feel the need to assimilate with either the traditional Korean culture or Canadian culture, why can't we just make our own culture. And that's okay. Its not a bad thing to exist in this middle, like third space (Grace, W4 – L2006)

Some participants advocated for alternative support and/or services in particular for their families, suggesting that existing programs need to be adapted to fit the needs of communities of colour.

Going back to dealing with family, I think there's a lot of help dealing with individuals who are actually queer, but there are not enough, you know, help for families who are dealing with having a gay child, or lesbian child or whatever. So I think, maybe providing a space for those people might help… its not the same for Asian families, right? Especially for Chinese, like they're always, they internalize everything really, so they have no outlet to get help (James, W4 – L1705)

I can think of P-FLAG, but it's a very white organisation… they also see it as a white phenomenon too, in that, because you are being brought up in a white culture…so if you're with a group of white people talking about it…you're just confirming my suspicions (Matt, W4 – L1722)

Grace suggested expanding our ideas of where the resources for addressing queerphobia within communities of colour may come from.

> I think if you had material that there are Chinese activist gay activist, and I think if you can show them then, even the Chinese in China are gay, then in their language, they can maybe better accept that. So I think we need to find material (like) that (Grace, W4 - L1722)

However, Matt also brings up some challenges that arise in bringing different communities of colour together, especially trying to bring parents with differing cultural backgrounds together to talk about their children being queer.

> these sort of things oriented towards families and people of colour…there is also a lot of racism within individual ethnic communities against other ethnic communities…my parents are really racist against blacks and Japanese…I mean to kind of come up with this idea that they have to get into a room together to have a general kind of space for queer people of colour, or for families of colour rather, its kind of difficult to conceive my parents sort of being able to even if they are kind of marginalized in that general sense of being people of colour, being able to relate to another family that is not Chinese (Matt, W4 – L1745)

Nonetheless, the critical importance of queer people of colour from different cultural backgrounds coming together and finding ways to build community was identified.

> if we want to help ourselves, first we have to understand each other and we have to help ourselves first, if we're going out and seeking help from white people…we have to make sure that we are strong as a community, then we can go out. If we just go alone, it's not going to help us in the long run. (Helen, W5 – L627)

Matt described his years of community involvement as an activist, working towards building bridges between queer communities of colour and its potential benefits.

> we built a coalition because we felt we needed one, because we had these individual groups that were floating out there, that were ethnically based queer groups, but you know, its like, cliché, united we stand, divided we fall kind of thing…if you can find some way to find common ground, and speak as one, you can often get more things done than if you're just sort of existing in your little bubble. Especially in a place like the village for example, where you know, you are dealing against this sort of mass of white-ness, that is almost like an obstruction, it's a wall and you know, you can try and punch the wall with a finger, you can try to punch it with a fist or you can try and punch it with many fists (Matt, W5 – L1047)

When you look at like 10 years ago, when there was very little activity among us and where we`ve come to at this point, you know, I think we have a lot. (Matt, W5 - L1544)

Sandra spoke of the primacy of her specific Filipino community in her activism and pushing for these spaces to be more queer-friendly.

I prefer to be in my community organizing space, and hopefully pull other queer people into it, rather than try to find them outside. Because that's where I'm most comfortable, in that…the issues that we're looking at aren't necessarily queer, like queer specific, but it kind of, it still fits in (Sandra, W4 – L825)

In order to combat the isolation facing many queer people of colour, Grace suggested the importance of having a physical space for queer communities of colour to gather.

I think its like in the community level, we can get a centre for queer people of colour…I guess in reaction to what exists, its only for, mostly for white people, and they have their own issues, I guess, but also we have different issues, and I think we can mobilize…for people to just hang out and feel like they are not alone and different kind of people (Grace, W4 – L837)

Another way to reach out to those who may not know about the spaces which currently exist for queer communities of colour, participants suggested alternative modes of resource building and awareness raising, including creating a resource book, using the internet, and alternative social spaces.

That would be a good thing that we could do actually for the community, you know? Make a research of resources on different subjects, on different matters, adoption, refugees, of people of colour…and that book could be accessible at the cheaper price possible, maybe free (Laura, W5 - L1678)

I'm going to do an official request (make a zine), so people of colour, that want to either submit a text or painting or photography or whatever…I will do a few themes, like sortir du placard, out of the closet, and maybe daily life, stuff like remark that you have experienced, its like not just one voice, but different voice, and then do bilingual so people can't say, oh it was in English and so I don't read. (Grace, W5 – L1684)

there's a lot of movement that start on the web…it doesn`t have to be to conventional platform that we`re used to. Maybe we`ll have to start thinking differently (Laura, W5 – L1493)

in Toronto they started this queer people of colour dance party every Wednesday, I don't know if we had something like that (Helen,W5 – L1730)

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Above all, participants spoke of the significance of finding a balance between viewing queer people of colour as unique individuals, with the equal importance of identifying the ways in which they at the same time connected.

> even though we share experiences, you can't just generalize all queer people of colour, we come from varying backgrounds, the difference between a second generation person, as opposed to an immigrant or refugee. We can share experiences across the board, but there's also a lot of differences. (Helen, W5 – 415)

4.4 *Participant reflections of photovoice process*

It is clear that the participants were deeply affected by the project in complex and multiple ways. Not only was the exhibition energizing for the participants, but the process as a whole allowed a re-orientation in perspective. Furthermore, the reflections provided by the participants on the photovoice process during the fifth workshop gives us a sense of the potential emotional and social improvements in the lives of the participants because of the project.

> I was really impressed with how many people came (to the photovoice exhibit)… that kind of blew me away (Prabir, W5 – L71)

> I loved the process because everybody was really truthful, respectful. I never felt judged at any time… it was actually helpful for me, (because of) what I was going through, because I wanted to come, even though I didn't feel that good… I discovered the power of picture with words. I remember when I read the text of people I was like, wow, this is good…I discover a friend, that's first of all, and also you know, discover an artist. (Laura, W5 - L1864)

> people don't really listen ever, you know. They just like are waiting for their turn to speak, and I felt like this group, everyone listened to each other and took in what the other person was saying and actually thought about it…I always forget how strong and resourceful we are…I really got inspired. (Helen, W5 - L1888)

> I am going to take away a photograph… I'm going to take away, I guess, some thing… I hadn't thought about before that seriously, but kind of in the back of my mind, through these discussions have been kind of brought up more prominently. (Matt, W5 – L1686)

> For me, I think I will take away action. Because we talk a lot and we share stuff and now its time for action…I think that's the starting point, with this photovoice. (Grace, W5 – L 1738)

Chapter V

Discussion and conclusion

5.1 *Introduction*

The findings of this research project reveal the complex and contradictory ways in which queer people of colour visualize, describe and conceptualize their life experiences. These participants produced highly artistic and profoundly intimate photos and narratives which served to illustrate how each conceptualized their intersecting identities. By engaging with photovoice methodology, these highly personalized photos and stories served as the vehicle for identifying the complicated linkages among all of the participants through a process of critical consciousness building.

Therefore, the collaborative engagement of the *spiral staircase of knowledge production* resulted in *knowledge generating interactions* which produced intricate collective themes. These themes render visible the multi-faceted ways in which queer people of colour sometimes integrate histories of displacement into their trans-national identity. This historicized identity, along with experiences of marginalization resulted in unique emotional and psychological responses ultimately complicating their relationship with mental health. Furthermore, through this process of critical dialogue, the participants articulated individual, inter-personal and collective strategies for survival. Particular trajectories explored by the participants serve to at times affirm and sometimes deepen or contradict previous empirical research and theorizing while revealing new pathways to how queer people of colour conceptualize their lived experiences.

5.2 *Insights from findings*

The findings of this study correspond with previous empirical research affirming the importance of external forces in influencing the identity development process of queer people of colour (Parks et al, 2004; Minwalla et al., 2005; Sugano, 2006). For example, participants consistently spoke of the impact of marginalizing experiences related to racism, sexism and queerphobia as influencing their identity formation.

Furthermore, participants identified the importance of conceptualizing sexual identity formation as non-linear and non-hierarchical and contested the placing of public disclosure of sexual identity as the "highest" developmental stage (Operario et al., 2009).

Helen, for example, linked her parents' immigration process and experiences with racism with her decision to not come out to them, even though she felt comfortable with her own sexual identity. On the other hand, Sandra decided to strategically state she was a lesbian, even though she didn't personally identify as such, in order to facilitate the coming out process with her mother. Both contextualized rationales for identifying strategically as queer or not disclosing one's sexual identity are examples of the fluid and non-hierarchical nature of sexual identity formation and corresponds positively with a high degree of identity integration and what Operario et al., (2008) describes as the capacity to "reorganize and adapt one's identity to fit situational boundaries" (p.458).

5.2.1 *Historicized Identities*

Furthermore, the findings of this study deepens our conceptualization of the ways in which the identities of queer people of colour are historicized, particularly with regard to the influence of inter-generational histories of displacement and the construction of trans-national identities. Therefore, this study contributes to a growing body of knowledge related to what Manalansan (2003) would describe as the complex formation of *queer diasporic identities* and how "the processes of globalization and transnationalism have complicated, if not transformed, the ways subjects create a sense of belonging and identity" (p.13).

While the degree to which participants identified historical displacement as salient to their contemporary realities varied, the reflections of some participants reveal the potential role of colonial nation building and Canada's history as a white settler society in conceptualizing their historicized identities. By tracing the migration path of their families, many participants reflected upon the inter-generational impact of racist immigration policies and marginalizing citizenship practices on their lives. For example, Matt spoke of the impact of the Chinese "head tax" on his generation of Chinese-Canadians, while Sandra reflected on the role of the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) on how she and other Filipino women are presently viewed within dominant Canadian society. This speaks to the potential influence of socio-cultural and structural forms of racism on how queer people of colour understand themselves and formulate their trans-national identities.

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Furthermore, some participants shared stories of their parents or themselves being force-ably pushed out of their countries of origin. Prabir explained how the post-colonial imperial economy left no space for his father in India, while Grace described her removal from her country of origin because of being placed for international adoption. These kinds of experiences indicate the inter-generational influence of post/colonial and imperialist forces on the contemporary lives of queer people of colour. Sometimes, these inter-generational influences are very subtle, as was the case with Helen, and her realization that she had internalized the non-Western communication practices of her immigrant mother. As Mona Oikawa (2002) reminds us, "there is a critical connection between space and memory, a connection that refashions itself from one generation to the next" (p.74).

Rather than uphold the neo-liberal myth of meritocracy, whereby individuals are deemed to be responsible for their own success and upward mobility (Park, 2008), the experiences and perspectives of these participants reflect a more complicated and historicized reality, where "human agency on the part of non-citizens and citizens operates through a combination of individual and collective strategies within a matrix of relationships and institutional practices over space and time" (Stasiulis & Bakan, 2005, p.2). Queer people of colour are therefore *born into* these socio-political contexts, whereby trans-national processes structure and at-times constrain the pathways made available to them in Canada, and furthermore, serves as the very foundation upon which their historicized identities are formulated.

In addition to the inter-generational effects of historical displacement and forced migration, these participants describe the impact of marginalizing experiences on their trans-national identity and sense of self. For example, Sandra's particular social location as a Canadian born queer Filipino woman produced particular experiences of marginalisation. Her experiences of being stereotyped and assumed to be a domestic worker can be linked with Micheline Labelle's (2002) assertion that "government policies in host societies make up one of the fundamental determinants of community structuration and transnational practices" (p.14). In this case, it was the Canadian government's policies related to the LCP which led to Sandra being stereotyped, serving

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to re-inforce her trans-nationality due to not being able to adhere to "the normative white identity" (Dua et al., 2005, p.4).

This kind of theorizing takes into account the historical role of colonial and imperial dominance in the present maintaining of strict border controls as Stasiulis & Bakan (2005) affirm "globalization expresses and has exacerbated an imperialistic hierarchy of states on a world scale, where multinational corporate interests based in the most economically advanced regions exert extraordinary pressures on the least developed" (p.1). By complicating discourses regarding borders and trans-national citizenship, Manalansan (2003) asks critical questions about how borders are constructed, who has constructed them, for what purpose and who is and is not allowed to pass through.

A critical question to consider is how these socio-political forces impact the lives of queer people of colour whether they are Canadian-born or seeking citizenship. In Sandra's case, even as a Canadian citizen who does not endure the material or emotional consequences of being a "temporary foreign worker", she is nonetheless, at times, culturally constructed by dominant Canadian society as belonging outside of Canada's borders because of *her visibility* as a Filipino woman. This kind of racialized (and gendered, in the case of Sandra) bordering of social citizenship is experienced by virtually all of the participants, through the employment of overt or covert forms of racism, such as racial stereotyping, assumed foreign-ness or being rendered invisible.

Furthermore, Sandra's inability to speak Tagalog and sexual identity as queer meant that she did not feel comfortable living in the Philippines, nor did she fit within the mainstream Filipino community in Montreal. Furthermore, an assumption of domestic workers being heterosexually married with children, either in Canada or the Philippines works to almost completely erase the possibility of Sandra being viewed as queer. Therefore, Sandra's complex historicized identity serves as a profound example of the multiple contradictions which reside in what Jasbir Puar (1996) explains as "the impossibility of belonging to the nation, yet the impossibility of rejecting it" (p.418) and reveal the difficulties that queer people of colour encounter when integrating their trans-national identities, due to the interlocking systems of white supremacy, capitalism,

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patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony, rooted within histories of imperialism and displacement.

This complex negotiation of trans-national identity evoked intense feelings of being *in-between spaces* for many of the participants. For the most part, being *in-between spaces* were closely associated with feelings of not belonging either within dominant society or specific communities. While feelings of being in-between resulting from marginalizing experiences most often elicited a response of solitude or isolation, it was also an emancipatory site of resistance. Gopinath (1997) point to the possibilities in the "gesture towards the ways in which nation and diaspora are refigured within a queer diasporic imaginary" (p.214). This re-configuring is what Grace identified as a *third space*. Rather than responding to being in-between spaces with defeat, Grace articulated the powerful potentiality in creating a unique *queer diasporic culture* within urban Canadian geographies.

5.2.2 *Political Intersectionality*

The voices of the participants reveal the profound and intimate role of political intersectionality in constraining the contemporary realities of queer people of colour. For example, their experiences of racism within the mainly white queer community were varied and multi-faceted. Some participants identified the negative effects of covert forms of racism ingrained into the social relations between white queer people and queer people of colour. They described the de-politicized nature of mainstream white queer communities post gay-marriage rights and the degree of unawareness or lack of interest in acknowledging the powerful realities of systemic racism and racial profiling on the lives of queer people of colour. This blindness to racializing forces leads to a queer politics based solely on a universal and essentialized sexual identity, whereby Lisa Duggan (2003) warns will ultimately result in a perspective which "represents the view from the subject position 20th century Western white gay male" (p.57).

Participants also spoke at length about overt forms of racism, in particular when seeking sexual intimacy, whether it be for casual sex or to find a long-term partner. They encountered the polarized responses of either sexual racism/invisibility or exoticization from the dominant white queer community. Both fetishizing and overt rejection due to

their racial background resulted in diminished self-esteem, along with feelings of suspiciousness or dis-trust towards queer white people. In addition, Prabir connects the pervasiveness of white beauty standards within dominant society with the sexual racism that is experienced by queer people of colour within white queer communities. Participants described how these racialized interactions with the mainstream queer community led to the internalizing of their experiences of racism. These reflections affirm previous research related to how queer people of colour negotiate queer communities when "living in a white-dominant culture and the power dynamics inherent in this context" (Minwalla, 2005, p.125). When considering how race is represented through the images produced by the mainstream queer male community, Richard Fung (1996) contends that "the images of men and male beauty are still of white men and white male beauty" (p.184).

Furthermore, many of the queer women of colour in this study describe experiencing particular forms of gendered racism leading to queer invisibility. Helen, for example, describes how she is oftentimes not read as lesbian or queer because of her feminized Asianness. This experience corresponds with previous research done whereby historically traced constructions of difference produced racialized discourses related to gender expression, rendering queer Asian women invisible within the dominant white lesbian community (Lee, 1996). The stereotyping of all Asian women as submissive, yet highly sexualized converge with conceptualizations of lesbians as butch resulting in feminine appearing Asian women being erased from queer view in what JeeYeun Lee (1996) describes as "an example of how gender is always racialized; any analysis of femme/butch and gender identities must be complicated by a consideration of racial specificities" (p.121).

While experiences of racism within the broader queer community is shown to negatively impact queer people of colour, many of the participants for this project identified strategies of self-affirmation and resisting racism. Some responded to being exoticized with "racializing" the white person by exoticizing them right back. Furthermore, some participants active as leaders within their queer and racialized communities spoke of feelings of frustration when experiencing individual and systemic acts of racism within mainstream queer organisations. As a response, some stressed the

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political importance of spaces for queer communities of colour to gather in order to create a collective sense of community away from the dominant white gaze within queer spaces.

In addition to experiences of racism within mainly white queer spaces, the participants explored their experiences of subtle and overt queerphobia within their racialized community and families. This study affirms the negative effects of queerphobia from within the racialized communities of queer people of colour (Ryan et al., 2008; Gagne & Chamberland, 2008; Tremble et al., 1989). However, further research should consider the complexities related to the relationship between queer people of colour and their racialized communities. For example, rather than describing overt experiences of queerphobia, some participants spoke of subtle experiences of heterosexism within their racialized communities, while others described their comfort in and desire to remain a part of these same spaces. In fact, some participants felt significantly more comfortable within their racialized community versus within the mainstream white queer community.

In addition, most of the discussions around queerphobia within racialized communities were related to parental reactions to the coming out process. Overall, participants had varying positive and negative responses when coming out to their families which correspond with previous research (Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Tremble et al., 1989). Some participants spoke of accepting reactions from parents, while others felt it was important not to see the queerphobic responses of parents as only something that queer people of colour face. Meanwhile, those participants who did experience queerphobic responses after coming out to their parents identified these responses as partly due to the cultural beliefs and values of their parents. However, participants' reflections also revealed the complex ways in which experiences of racism within the mainstream white queer community *mediate* how queer people of colour negotiate the coming out process. For example, Helen described being inferiorized by white queer people as not a "true queer" because she had decided not to come out to her parents.

Certainly, some parents of participants responded with harsh expressions of queerphobia which resulted in feelings of shame and isolation. The potentially devastating effects of these experiences and resulting emotions should not be minimized. While research has previously examined these kinds of queerphobic reactions by parents of queer people of colour (Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Tremble et al., 1989), it has only

begun to detail how the historicized and trans-national identities of queer people of colour may influence their parental relationships (Manalansan, 2003). Some participants of this study reveal how their *and their parents'* historicized and trans-national identities mediated their coming out processes. For example, some participants identified their families' experiences of historical displacement and marginalizing experiences as framing their decision of whether or not to disclose their sexual identity to their parents. Prabir described the fear that many queer people of colour have in losing their connection with their cultural heritage as a possible consequence to coming out to their parents.

One participant described the queerphobic response of his parents in describing his gayness as a "western disease". Previous research has described this particular response as stemming from queerphobia residing within the culture of racialized communities (Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Tremble et al., 1989; Warren, 2002). At first glance, this kind of theorizing appears to "make logical sense". If communities of colour identify homosexuality as outside of their culture, then it must be because of homophobia being an intrinsic part of these communities. However, this kind of rationale has dangerous implications, as it obscures the inter-generational impact of histories of colonialism and imperialism on the "cultures" of communities of colour worldwide, nor does it take into account interlocking systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, ability and heterosexual hegemony and how they function to create particular expressions of racism, sexism and queerphobia against queer people of colour.

Therefore, historically tracing the relational processes of white heterosexual middle class respectability with mutually constitutive discourses of scientific racism and sexual perversion start to reveal discourses of homophobia[74] in a way which reveals the *complicity* of Western-European histories of colonialism and imperialism in the present day expressions of queerphobia occurring worldwide, including in the contemporary realities of queer people of colour living in Canada. Sandra provides an example of this Western complicity as she explains the hypocrisy of a Catholic cardinal in the Philippines who recently spoke out against same-sex marriage by identifying it as a Western idea, when ironically, it was Catholicism, a Western religion imposed on the Philippines

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[74] For further details about these relational processes and how discourses of homophobia are understood in this context, please see chapter 2 of this thesis.

during the colonial era, which first introduced the discourses of sexual perversion and deviancy to the country[75].

Furthermore, when contextualizing the global criminalization of same-sex sexual activity, this discriminatory and homophobic legislation still in use in approximately 40 countries came from histories of enforcing British colonial sexual mores as Gupta (2009) explains, "imperial rulers held that, as long as they sweltered through the promiscuous proximities of settler societies, "native" viciousness and "white" virtue had to be segregated: the latter praised and protected, the former policed and kept subjected" (p.5). Therefore, same-sex sexual activity was seen as a depraved practice of *Other* cultures, thereby re-inforcing white superiority in relation to the subjugation of peoples of colour.

However, there has been a troubling trend in the past decade, as Western-European countries have slowly become more open to queer sexuality, instead of culturalizing same-same sexual activity, they have employed what Jenicek et al., (2009) describe as the *culturalization of homophobia,* whereby "this particular form of oppression becomes a specific and racialized practice attached solely to Other cultures" (p.22). Gosine (2008) further examines the contradictions which exists when viewing homophobia within communities of colour as a cultural practice, as he describes queer youth immigrants experiences of heterosexism and homophobia while in Canada, that are in direct conflict with the notion of Canada as a "site of liberation" versus their country of origin as therefore a "site of repression", thus invoking "a racial hierarchy that privileges and valorizes whiteness as a marker of progress, civility and authority, and that works to colonize the articulation of sexual identities and practices" (p.235).

The purpose of this kind of theorizing is not to diminish the horrific effects of queerphobia within communities of colour on the lives of queer people of colour. There are material and psychological consequences that queer people of colour suffer due to these particular marginalizing experiences, as some of the participants described. However, this critical theorizing does attempt to fully historicize and contextualize the answer to the question of *how* this particular kind of queerphobia came to be, therefore rendering visible histories of colonialism and imperialism, along with expanding the parameters around which "cultures" and countries, including Canada, must be taken to

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[75] For more information on this topic see Manalansan (2003) Globa divas: Filipino gay men in the diaspora.

task and held accountable. Furthermore, the strategies and tactics that are employed to combat queerphobia within Canada and worldwide must be re-considered, so as not to construct an international queer human rights movement that is monolithic and hierarchical, resulting in the imposition of what Manalansan (2003) describes as "a gay white male gaze – namely an omniscient, unreflexive observer whose erotic and practical politics are based on an imagined playing field for all queers." (p.6).

5.2.3 *Structural Intersectionality*

Many participants expressed histories of struggling with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and suicide. For some participants, these were linked to their historicized, trans-national identities and intersectional experiences of marginalisation. Furthermore, the kinds of mental health obstacles which these participants faced mainly resulted from feelings of solitude, internalizing oppression, and not having access to safe spaces.

In addition to this difficult relationship with mental health, some participants also identified specific structural barriers they faced due to their particular social location as queer people of colour when accessing health and social services. Some participants, for example, expressed difficulties and a degree of dis-trust in their encounters with the medical establishment, confirming previously conducted empirical research in this area (Ryan et al., 2008; Stevens, 1999). Furthermore, most of the participants expressed frustrations when seeking individualized services with counsellors who did not have the capacity to acknowledge their intersecting identities. Ryan et al., (2008) explain the importance of addressing the oppression faced by queer people of colour holistically.

Furthermore, many of the participants were dissatisfied with the overly simplistic interpretations by the counsellors of their relationships with their families. For example, some of the participants described how counsellors would oftentimes identify the problem as their parents being "traditional", whether or not the participants themselves viewed their parents in this way. This resulted in an individual pathologizing of the parents, rather than asking critical questions which take into account the historicized and trans-national identity of both the participants *and* their parents. These kinds of contextualized therapeutic interventions will allow social service providers the ability to

critically un-ravel and map out *with* queer people of colour service users, *the degree to which* race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability intersects and mediates their lives in particular ways.

For example, some participants identified specific difficulties they encountered as queer people of colour in relation to coming out to their families, due to their trans-national identities and intersectional marginalizing experiences. This affirms previous research findings by Ryan et al., (2008), whereby the common assumption of coming out as "liberating" must be reconsidered, and instead, a more complex understanding of its particular implications for queer people of colour must be de-lineated. At the same time, it is crucial to identity that the *salience* of intersectional marginalizing experiences and historical displacement on the formation of a queer diasporic identity for each participant *varied significantly,* in addition to the impact and level of importance placed on coming out.

5.2.4 *Strategies for Survival*

The participants of this research project identified a variety of individual, inter-personal and collective strategies for surviving historical dislocation and intersectional marginalizing experiences. One particularly salient pathway to survival identified by some participants was the importance of knowing the specific histories of people of colour in Canada, and of sexual and gender diversity within their communities of colour or countries of origin. At the same time, participants also expressed frustrations with having to defend their place in Canada as a queer person of colour. Furthermore, some participants identified solitude as a path to self-affirmation, in addition to being able to express anger, especially for some of the queer women of colour within the group. Moreover, participants featured both inter-cultural dialogue between racialized communities and reaching across racial boundaries with white people as crucial strategies for survival.

Finally, the participants of this research project insisted on the paramount importance of engaging with collective modes of survival. This included spaces and resources specifically for queer communities of colour, alternative programs for their families, and ensuring inclusive space and decision-making power within both

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mainstream racialized and queer community groups and organisations. Above all, participants spoke of the significance of finding a balance between seeing queer people of colour as unique individuals, while at the same time identifying the particular ways in which they are connected.

5.3 *Implications for social work practice*

This section contains a synthesized compilation of the collectives themes produced by the research participants and has been translated into specific policy recommendations within the categories of *Belonging and Acceptance, Support and Awareness, Outreach and Visibility.* Acting as a rubric for policy-makers within the realms of community organizations, and health care or social services, these series of recommendations have been developed in order to better serve the needs of queer people of colour living in Montreal

Because of histories of displacement and experiences of marginalization, many queer people of colour in Canada have felt isolated, and without a sense of belonging. The participants of this research project have identified the critical importance of building the strength of queer communities of colour and creating safe spaces where new queer diasporic cultures can thrive. In order to create belonging and acceptance, the participants of this project have suggested the establishing of an internet website and a physical space where queer people of colour can meet, network, and support each other.

Due to intersectional marginalizing experiences which have resulted in negative health outcomes, such as struggles with mental health, internalizing racism, isolation, and difficult coming out experiences, queer people of colour in Canada must have health care and social services that will be responsive to their needs. This means the provision of counselling services which acknowledge their historicized and trans-national identities while at the same time understanding the differences between queer people of colour. An anti-oppressive approach to individual counselling means being non-judgemental yet critically aware, in order to link "individual behaviour" to larger social forces impinging on the life choices of a queer person of colour. This is where it would be useful for social workers to gain skills in being able to critically assess *with* each service user*, the degree to which* historical displacement and intersectional marginalizing experiences impact

their relationship with mental health. This results in the capacity to process difficult emotional and psychological responses such as feelings of not belonging, isolation, and internalized racism without re-producing self-blaming thoughts or attitudes. Furthermore, health care provision must include services which do not pathologize individuals, but are holistic in nature. In order to develop support and awareness, the participants of this project have suggested more collective approaches to affirming their lives, such as the integration of community organizing, group counselling, and the promotion of artistic endeavours such as creative multi-media projects.

In order to develop strategies for reaching out to more queer communities of colour, and make the lives and experiences of queer people of colour more visible, the critical importance of developing specific resources for queer communities of colour, building coalitions inter-culturally, and working across all boundaries have been identified. Therefore, the participants of this project proposed the development of a queer people of colour resource book in order to provide information and raise awareness within queer communities of colour, broader racialized communities, the mainstream queer community, and health care or social service providers.

5.4 *Implications for research*

This study highlights the transformative possibilities with employing the photovoice methodology with marginalized communities. Because of the PAR features embedded into the photovoice process, participants are given space to build critical consciousness while simultaneously building community. Furthermore, the photovoice methodology also gives the researcher an opportunity to engage with *power-with* principles and resist traditional positivist Eurocentric research practices, resulting in those from historically marginalized communities becoming the creators of knowledge, holders of expertise, and having a substantive voice in policy making.

One particular suggestion for future photovoice projects is the structured inclusion of "participant-artists" or "participant-leaders" who serve as potential mentors to their fellow participants throughout the research process. These roles are not meant to be hierarchical in nature (mentors seen as above "regular participants"), but as fluid and situational. For example, a participant-artist may mentor their fellow participants during a

photography workshop, but they will be in a position of "learner" when listening to the stories and reflections of their fellow participants. Another suggestion would be a continuing elaboration into the impact of the *knowledge generating interaction* of *researcher-themes*. Explicitly acknowledging and critically analyzing this particular component will serve to elevate the accountability and responsibility of the researcher.

This kind of research allows for the employment of what Grundy & Smith (2007) describe as the *politics of knowledge production*, whereby "evidence-based policy-making" is re-conceptualized in order to allow for "participatory, community-based research methods of social work and community development to make visible…'hidden populations'" (p.304). Furthermore, this approach allows for research to become politicized and transformative, and therefore, a crucial pathway for social change whereby researchers aim to "activate a way to write ourselves out of the story, which ultimately, may be the most liberatory pedagogy possible…writing ourselves in, then, could take the form of becoming more fully embodied participants within social movements and struggles through our own situatedness" (Walsh, 2007, p.255). This entryway allows for acknowledging the important role of social location and reflexivity within social work research practices, in addition to providing space for developing a *politics of accountability*, whereby social workers, as activist-scholars (Reece, 2008), recognize the power afforded to them because of their social location, and act by *using their privileges* in anti-oppressive ways.

When communities which are marginalized, like that of queer communities of colour, face their realities in a critical and creative way, and participate in their own emancipation, Paulo Freire (2008) has described this process as *education as the practice of freedom*. Therefore, when social workers choose to engage in a PAR methodology such as photovoice, they push the boundaries of social work practice in order to engage in *social work as a practice of freedom*. This kind of liberatory and transformative approach to social work allows for the employment of "problem-posing education", in what Freire (2008) describes as based on "creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality; thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation" (p.84). Therefore, the methodology of photovoice allows participants to not only develop skills, but more importantly, are

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able to see themselves as artists and cultural workers through the engagement of a form of cultural activism, in what Amy Jo Goddard (2007), citing Brian Wallis, describes as "the use of cultural means to try to effect social change."(p.112).

Therefore, the photos and narrative developed by these cultural workers become *acts of resistance*, and the community photo exhibition becomes a site of resistance against oppression. Furthermore, because queer people of colour are connected to so many communities due to their social location, they are uniquely positioned as a potential bridge to coalition work as Goddard (2007) explains "human connection is a fundamental component for coalition building within social justice movements" (p.103).

5.4.1 *Recommendations and limitations*

While this research project has contributed to empirical research and theorizing about queer people of colour living in Canada, there are some limitations which should be noted. As previously identified, I have employed a *limited* photovoice methodology, due to my lack of community advisory committee. Furthermore, the findings from this research project may not be representative of all queer communities of colour living in Canada. Queer people of colour come from a diverse set of backgrounds, and therefore, significant differences may come out of future findings because of differences in geographic location or social locations of the particular group of participants. For example, there were no self-identified transsexuals of colour, or refugee participants.

In addition, university ethics regulations required that I submit a complete ethics package, including all consent forms, before beginning the project began. This speaks to a tension that can sometimes occur between university ethics requirements, and engaging in participatory forms of research. The interests of the university institution to protect research participants from potential harm and ensure academic freedom can sometimes be contradictory to the primacy that PAR approaches place on the sharing of power and decision making with participants. It is important to acknowledge that even though I did share power in different ways during the life of the project, I also made sole decisions about the research process, such as selecting photovoice as my methodology, and declaring a deadline for when the workshops had to be completed.

5.5 *Implications for social policy*

The particular experiences of queer people of colour in Canada have only recently started to become recognized within provincial and federal social policy and funding programs in urban centres of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Ironically, as queer people of colour are on the precipice of being socially recognized and inscribed into Canadian social welfare policies, the neo-liberal framework of various provincial and federal governments have resulted in a clawback of funding to multiculturalism and employment equity programs and the implementation of further racialized restrictions to Canadian immigration policies (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2008). Abu-Laban & Gabriel (2008) describe the commodification and privatization of diversity and how "these neo-liberal values include the valuing of a smaller welfare state, whereby governments do less, and individuals, families, and volunteers undertake to do more in the area of social services" (p. 48). For queer people of colour living in Montreal, it is important to consider the particular policy related differences within the Quebec context, for example, the use of "intercultural" versus "multicultural" immigration policies[76].

Having acknowledged this, we must continue to find ways to write queer people of colour into Canadian social welfare policies and therefore, the following lines of inquiry warrant further investigation. First, a critical, anti-oppressive approach could be taken in re-framing our understanding of the socio-historical development of social welfare policies and practices in Canada[77]. This includes conducting research in order to examine how specific policies within a variety of institutional settings differentially impact queer people of colour in Canada. By undertaking this historical research, patterns of oppression may be un-covered or previously silenced perspectives may be rendered visible. Second, would be an examination into the degree to which contemporary bio-medical discourses within health care settings pathologize queer people of colour. How do these discursive constructions of our health care institutions impact the ways in which queer people of colour access and negotiate these systems?

When implementing policies or programs within mainstream queer and racialized community organisations, it is critical that queer people of colour are included as equal

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[76] For more about the Quebec context, see Waddell (2003) and Wong et al., (2007).
[77] See Yee & Dumbrill (2003) and Graham et al. (2000).

stakeholders regarding any initiatives that impact queer communities of colour. We must ensure that representation and decision-making power are both provided to queer people of colour in these settings. This means addressing not only overt forms of racism or queerphobia but also its more covert forms, for example, the subtle marginalisation of queer people of colour within white dominant queer organisations.

On a final note, Ryan et al., (2008) assert "the best means of advancing equity in health care to queer people of colour is to support initiatives driven by queer people of colour themselves…as well as through the advocating for the inclusion of queer people of colour's voices to be included in the already existing diversity agendas across institutions, agencies and organisations" (p.332). This empirical research project seeks to do just this, as a study by and for queer people of colour.

5.6 *Conclusion*

Participants in the current study conceptualized their historicized identities along with the emotional and psychological responses to intersectional marginalizing experiences. Furthermore, participants shared the challenges they encountered in their relationship with mental health, while identifying individual, inter-personal and collective strategies for survival. By engaging a critical and anti-oppressive theoretical framework, I have been able to contextualize these findings by integrating theories related to intersectionality, interlocking systems of oppression, trans-nationality and queer diasporic identity formation.

This research project aims to contribute to a small, but growing body of knowledge related to queer people of colour living in Canada. This study begin to reveal the ways in which queer people of colour conceptualize their intersecting identities and resist interlocking systems of domination at individual, familial, community and institutional levels. Furthermore, crucial knowledge has been produced about how queer people of colour historicize their identities and respond to intersectional marginalizing experiences. Finally, this project provided artistic space for the participants to visualize, describe and conceptualize their relationships with their families, communities and how they accessed institutional "support systems". By visualizing the margins, the stories and perspectives of queer people of colour living in Canada has been voiced.

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Appendix A: Ethics certificate

McGill

Research Ethics Board Office
McGill University
1555 Peel Street, 11th floor
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Tel: (514) 398-6831
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Ethics website: www.mcgill.ca/researchoffice/compliance/human/

Research Ethics Board II
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 18-0608

Project Title: Visualizing the margins: experiences of queer people of colour

Principal Investigator: Edward Lee   **Department:** Social Work

Status: Master's student   **Supervisor:** Prof. Brotman

Funding agency and title (if different from above)**:** SSHRC master's grant; SVR master's grant

This project was reviewed on *June 16, 2008* by   Expedited Review _____
Full Review ✓

Mark Baldwin, Ph.D.
Chair, REB II

Approval Period: *Jan. 7, 2009* to *Jan. 6, 2010*

This project was reviewed and approved in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects and with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct For Research Involving Humans.

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* All research involving human subjects requires review on an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted at least one month before the above expiry date.
* When a project has been completed or terminated a Final Report form must be submitted.
* Should any modification or other unanticipated development occur before the next required review, the REB must be informed and any modification can't be initiated until approval is received.

Appendix B: Information letter

Dear Potential Participant,

Thank you for thinking about participating in this photovoice research project which hopes to render visible the challenges and strengths of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified (queer) people of colour in accessing help. My name is Edward Lee, I am currently a master`s student at the McGill School of Social Work and I am the principal investigator for this research project, which will be my thesis. Photovoice is an innovative, community-based and visual participatory research methodology. Its purpose is to enable people in photographing and reflecting upon their everyday realities, promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about personal, and community strengths, and concerns, and engaging in dialogue and advocacy with policy makers and service providers. Therefore, the objective of this project is for the research participants to create new knowledge that will allow for participants to engage in individual and collective consciousness-raising about what it means to be a queer person of colour, and the challenges that you face when you try to access help. An additional objective for this project is to translate this new knowledge into a set of recommendations for adapted policies and services to better meet the needs of queer people of colour by presenting this at a community photovoice exhibition with invited community leaders, policy makers and service providers.

If you chose to participate in this research project, you will be asked to take part in a series of 4 photovoice workshops, at a nearby community centre. During the project, you will be asked to take photographs about the topic, and then share these photographs and your reflections with your fellow participants. There will be up to 10 participants recruited for this project. After the series of workshops, all participants will have the opportunity to present their photovoice exhibit and written narrative at a final community photovoice exhibition, with community leaders, policy makers and service providers that all participants will have a role in identifying and inviting. There will also be a final meeting after this event in order to reflect upon and provide feedback to me about the research process as a whole. Audio recordings will be transcribed for the purpose of analysis only and any identifying information will be removed from the transcriptions. Audio tapes will be destroyed after a year upon completion of the project. During this process, pseudonyms will be used for each research participant, and I will ensure that all identifying information is removed. I will be the only person with access to your identifying information and will keep your anonymity and confidentiality protected. Along with this information letter, I also have a consent form for you to read and sign. This consent form will focus on receiving consent from you to engage in the entire research process. This consent form includes the goals of the project, the number and duration of each workshop, and the nature of group meetings to discuss photographs.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any point without penalty or consequences. I will be financially covering all costs related to the photovoice process (camera usage, photo print development, exhibition costs). At any point in the research process, if you are feeling uncomfortable with something that has happened and wish to speak to someone other than myself about the situation, please feel free to connect with my faculty supervisor at the McGill School of Social Work. Shari Brotman can be contacted by e-mail at shari.brotman@mcgill.ca or phone at 514-398-7054. Thank you for taking the time to read through this information letter. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Edward Lee
Prinicipal Investigator – Master's Student
McGill School of Social Work

For more information, please contact:
McGill University - McGill School of Social Work
Edward Lee   **edward.lee3@mail.mcgill.ca**   (514) 398-7055
McGill Faculty Supervisor
Shari Brotman   shari.brotman@mcgill.ca   (514) 398-8054

Appendix C: Informed consent form

Visualizing the Margins – The Experiences of Queer People of Colour

A.   PURPOSE
I understand that this is a photovoice research project which explores the ways gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-identified people of colour experience accessing help. I understand photovoice is a way for me to photograph and write about what I do on a daily basis and how I access help. I understand that one of the goals of the research is to create a set of recommendations for how policies and services can better meet the needs of queer people of colour. I am aware that this research project is a part of Edward Lee's McGill School of Social Work Master's Thesis.

B.   PROCEDURES
I agree to participating in 4 workshops, engaging in the photovoice process. I understand that during the workshops, I will be asked to share with other participants some of the photographs that I have taken, along with my stories and reflections. I am aware that there will be up to 10 research participants who I will get to know and who will be a part of this research project. I am aware that these workshops will take place at a nearby community centre. I understand that after the workshops, participants will have the possibility of presenting their photo exhibit and written narrative at a final community photo exhibition. I agree to attending a final meeting after the photo exhibition in order to reflect upon the exhibition, the research process as a whole and to provide feedback to the researcher.

I understand that my participation in this research project is completely voluntary, and I can withdraw at any point without penalty or consequences. I understand that all costs related to the Photovoice process (camera usage, photo print development, exhibition costs) will be covered by the researcher. I am aware that all workshops will be audio recorded and that these tapes will be destroyed one year upon completion of the project. Transcripts and other written materials related to this research project will be kept in a locked cabinet for a duration of time as required by McGill University.

C.   RISKS AND BENEFITS
The information letter that I have received about the project has been explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that things that I say may be used in the researcher's thesis and future published articles, but no personal identifying information will be shared. At the end of the study, a summary report and the researcher's thesis will be available to me upon request. I am aware that I must respect the right of all participants to maintain their privacy and confidentiality. This means I will not share any personal stories or information revealed to me about other research participants to anyone else. I understand that during the 4 workshops, because I am sharing personal stories to a group of people, my confidentiality can not be fully guarantueed. Participation in this project may bring up sensitive and personal areas of my life, and so I may choose to ask for a private meeting with the researcher to discuss anything concerns that may arise during the workshops or stop my participation at any point during the process.

D.   CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

•   I understand that all photos and written narratives that I create as a part of this photovoice research project may be used in Edward Lee's master's thesis and any future presentations, workshops or written publications related to this research project.
•   I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or consequences.
•   I understand that after this project is completed, I retain ownership of only the photographs and written narratives that I create.
•   I agree to having all workshops and meetings for this research project audio recorded
   YES __   NO __

I hereby certify that I am signing this form of my own free will, with no pressure from others to do so, and that I do so after been given all the facts I need to make this choice. In witness thereof, I have signed this form on this the _____ day of _____, 2008.

_____   _____
Participant Name (or initials)   Signature

_____   _____
Researcher Name   Signature

Please keep one signed copy of this form for your records.

For more information, please contact:
McGill University - McGill School of Social Work
Edward Lee   **edward.lee3@mail.mcgill.ca**   (514) 398-7055

McGill Faculty Supervisor
Shari Brotman   shari.brotman@mcgill.ca   (514) 398-8054

*If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Research Ethics Office at **514-398-6831**.*

Appendix D: Acknowledgement and release consent form

Visualizing the Margins – The Experiences of Queer People of Colour
A. **Purpose**
I am aware that the person requesting to take my photo is a research participant, and the research project being conducted by Edward Lee for the McGill School of Social Work Master's Program. In addition to being presented at the final public photo exhibition, I understand that photos of me may end up in Edward Lee's Thesis or in subsequent journal articles written about this particular research project. I understand that along with the photo will also be included a written narrative by the research participant that will describe the photographer's personal reflections, whether they be positive or negative in nature. I understand that I will be told of the date of the final photo exhibition by either the photographer or researcher. I understand this project is a way for participants to photograph and write about what they do on a daily basis and how they access help. I understand that one of the goals of the research is to create a set of recommendations for how policies and services can better meet the needs of queer people of colour.

B. Photovoice
This is a photovoice research project which explores the ways gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-identified people of colour experience accessing help. I understand that the purpose of this photovoice project is to enable people in photographing their everyday realities, promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about personal, and community strengths and concerns, and engaging in dialogue with key policymakers about the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified people of colour. Participants will take photos of their lives, and with the support of the researcher, share their individual stories and reasons for taking their photos, develop collective themes, and present their photos and stories at a public photo exhibition.

C. **Authorization**
I hereby authorize _____ (research participant name) to take photographs of me to be used for purposes related to the "Visualizing the Margins" Photovoice Research Project and that a pseudonym will be given to me. I understand that the photographer has the right to use photographs taken of me, in whole or in part, ONLY as part of the above identified photovoice project. This agreement does NOT obligate this photographer to use photographs taken of me.

I agree to having my photo be included in a public photo exhibition. YES _____   NO _____

I agree to having my photo be included in Edward Lee's (researcher) master's thesis and future journal publications related to this research project. YES _____   NO _____

I understand that my participation as an individual being photographed for this research project is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw the photo of myself up until the date for the photo exhibition. If I wish to withdraw the photo of myself, I may contact Edward Lee at 514-398-7055, or
edward.lee3@mail.mcgill.ca.

I have read and understand all of the above.
AGREED TO AND ACCEPTED this _____ day of _____, 20__

_____   _____
Name   Signature

_____   _____
Photographer's Name   Signature

Please keep one signed copy of this form for your records.
For more information, please contact:
McGill University - McGill School of Social Work
Edward Lee   **edward.lee3@mail.mcgill.ca**   (514) 398-7055
McGill Faculty Supervisor
Shari Brotman   shari.brotman@mcgill.ca   (514) 398-8054
*If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Research Ethics Office at **514-398***

Appendix E: Photo exhibit informed consent form
Visualizing the Margins – The Experiences of Queer People of Colour

Final Community Photovoice Exhibition

I understand that after the workshops, all research participants, including myself, will be presenting their photo exhibit and written narrative at a final community photovoice exhibition. I am aware that community leaders, policy makers and service providers will be invited to this exhibition, and that I will have a role in identifying the people to be invited to this exhibition.

I agree to having the photographs and written narrative that I have created and chosen from the workshops that I have attended to be displayed in public, at the final community photovoice exhibition for this research project. I understand that my attendance of the final community photovoice exhibition is completely voluntary, and I can decide not to attend this event with no penalty or consequence.

I understand that all photos and written narratives that I have created for the purposes of this photovoice research project may be used for Edward Lee's master's thesis, and future workshops, presentation written publications. I understand that after this project is completed, I retain ownership of only the photographs that written narratives that I create.

I agree to having a pseudonym attached to my photo exhibit and written narrative for the exhibition.

YES ___   NO ____

I agree to using my actual name be attached to my photo exhibit and written narrative for the exhibition. My actual name will only be used for the purposes of this final event. I understand that by doing this, my photo exhibit and written narrative will not be anonymous at the final event. YES ____ NO____

I understand that my actual name and all identifying information will be removed for the researcher's thesis, and future workshops, presentations, and publications.

<div align="center">♦ ♦ ♦</div>

I hereby certify that I am signing this form of my own free will, with no pressure from others to do so, and that I do so after been given all the facts I need to make this choice. In witness thereof, I have signed this form on this the _____ day of _____, 2008.

_____   _____
Name (or initials)   Signature

_____   _____
Researcher Name   Signature

Please keep one signed copy of this form for your records.

For more information, please contact:
McGill University - McGill School of Social Work
Edward Lee   edward.lee3@mail.mcgill.ca   (514) 398-7055

McGill Faculty Supervisor
Shari Brotman   shari.brotman@mcgill.ca   (514) 398-8054

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 514-398-6831.

Appendix F: Workshop Guide

Photovoice Definition
The purpose of photovoice is to enable people in photographing and reflecting upon their everyday realities, promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about personal, and community strengths, and concerns, and engaging in dialogue and advocacy with policy makers and service providers.

Photovoice Research Process Overview
The photovoice research project that I propose will take place within a four workshop model (Mitchell et al., 2005; Wang, 2006), whereby participants will learn how to use a camera, share their individual experiences through their photographs, through a group process identify and codify shared themes, and the translate these themes into practical recommendations for policy makers and practitioners (Wang, 2006). Each workshop will be audio tape recorded. An introductory information session will be provided for those interested in participating, in order to fully explain the purpose of the research and the process of Photovoice, and give space to explicitly define the parameters of the research process.

Individual Meetings
I will meet with each participant individually and go through the information letter and consent forms. Meeting with the research participants on a one-to-one basis will allow for me to fully explain the information letter and consent form, while each participant will have a thorough opportunity to ask questions. This is a possible entry of dialogue at the beginning of the individual meeting.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. As you know, this research project will explore the ways in which gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-identified people of colour experience accessing help. This includes your experience as a person of colour (or visible minority, ethnocultural community member, immigrant, refugee) who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified or queer. The first thing that we will do is go over the information letter. Please feel free to ask any questions. Once you feel comfortable with the photovoice research process, we will go read through and sign the consent form. Please let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Workshop #1
The first workshop will entail an introduction to the Photovoice methodology, and a facilitated group discussion about cameras, power, and ethics. I will introduce the second consent form to the participants titled "Acknowledge and Release", which requires research participants to obtain the signatures of anyone they may be taking a photograph of (Wang, 2001). It will be important to explore the authority and responsibilities given to the participants when taking photographs.
These are some possible questions that I will ask when facilitating this workshop.
  - What is Photovoice? What kinds of stories are participants supposed to be sharing during these workshops? Is there anything wrong with taking someone's photograph without their permission? What are the possible consequences or risks involved? When would YOU not want to have your photograph taken? What is a responsible way to approach someone if you want to take their photograph? What are examples of "helping" systems?

Workshop #2
The second workshop will focus on identifying the theme for the pictures. In addition to the research participants collectively constructing the definition of "helping" systems, participants will also reflect upon and discuss personal and symbolic experiences of these systems. After this collaborative process, I will distribute a camera to each research participant, and review their usage, including any ethical issues that may arise when taking photos (Wang, 2006). In between workshop 2 and 3, the participants will be asked to take their photos.

These are some possible questions that I will ask when facilitating this workshop.
  - Where do queer people of colour go to for help? What stops you from going to get help? How do you experience "helping" systems? What are the individual burdens or barriers for you when you access help? Cultural barriers? Structural barriers? What individual strengths do you possess that

help you to navigate these systems? Community strengths? So what are the main themes that you want to address? Photography basics. What kinds of pictures can I take? (Brainstorm)

Workshop #3

The third workshop will be a facilitated group discussion with the participants in selecting a photograph, contextualizing or storytelling, and codifying issues, themes, or theories (Wang, 2006). The first aspect of this process is will be for participants to share one or two of their most significant photographs and to contextualize each photograph, or share a story of why they took this particular photograph. The next step is for participants to take a critically self-reflective stance and to answer a series of questions related to their photographs. These are some possible questions that I will ask when facilitating this workshop.
What motivated you to take this photograph?
How do others feel about this photo?
How is this an example of you experiencing a "helping" system?

After this process, participants will engage in a group discussion, in order to codify and develop shared themes that arise from all of their photographs. The analysis drawn from the development of these themes becomes much more action-oriented, resulting in practical guidelines for possible ways to shape or re-define policies (Wang, 2006).

These are some possible questions that I will ask when facilitating this workshop.
What do you see here? What's really happening here? How does this relate to your lives?
Why does this situation, concern, or strength exist? What can you do about it?

Workshop #4

The fourth and final step is to plan with the participants a format to share photographs and stories with policy makers, service providers and their communities at a local community centre. The format for this final photo exhibition is showcasing participant photos and narratives, in addition to presenting recommendations to key community leaders, service providers and policy makers in order to advocate for adapted polices and practices that will reduce barriers to support and/or services for queer people of colour.
These are some possible questions that I will ask when facilitating this workshop.
- From the themes that we have come up with, how can we translate this into recommendations for policy changes? Service provision changes? Community changes?
- What photos and narratives would you like to use for the final photovoice exhibition?
- Who would you like to invite to this presentation?
- What do you want to get out of this event?

Wrap Up Meeting

A wrap-up meeting with all of the research participants will give participants the opportunity to reflect upon and share with each other their experiences of the photo exhibition, along with providing some closure to the research process. I will also be able to gather feedback and participants' perspectives about the research process as a whole. This will also be a way to member check and any discussion brought up in this meeting could be a part of the data analysis, and help to achieve credibility of research results.

These are some possible questions that I will ask when facilitating this workshop
- How does everyone feel about the photovoice exhibition?
- Did you feel like your voice was heard? Why or why not?
- What are all of you going to do from here?
- What was your experience of the photovoice process?
- Do you think the results accurately portray your thoughts and reflections?
- Is there anything you think could have improved this experience?

Appendix G: Recruitment poster

Visualizing the Margins
The Experiences of Queer People of Colour

Photovoice research project in search of participants!

❖   Are you interested in being research participant for a Photovoice project?
❖   Do you identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified or queer?
❖   Do you identify as a person of colour, visible minority, ethno-racial community member, immigrant or refugee

What is Photovoice?

The purpose of Photovoice is to enable people in photographing and reflecting upon their everyday realities, promoting critical dialogue and knowledge about personal, and community strengths, and concerns, and engaging in dialogue and advocacy with policy makers and service providers.

What is this project all about?

This research project will which explores the ways gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-identified people of colour experience accessing help. Photovoice is a way to photograph and write about what people do on a daily basis and how they access help. One of the goals of the research is to create a set of recommendations for how policies and services can better meet the needs of queer people of colour. This research project is a part of Edward Lee's McGill School of Social Work Master's Thesis.

What is involved?

Research participants will attend 4 workshops, engaging in the photovoice process. After these workshops, participants will have the opportunity to present their photo exhibit and written narrative at a final community photovoice exhibition. Participants in this research project is COMPLETELY voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Contact Information

The principal researcher for this research project is Edward Lee, master's student at the McGill School of Social Work. If you are interested in participating in this initiative, please contact Edward Lee at 514-398-7055 or via his e-mail at edward.lee3@mail.mcgill.ca. You may also contact research supervisor Dr. Shari Brotman at 514-398-7055 or via her e-mail at shari.brotman@mcgill.ca.

Appendix H: Participant Tracking Form

Participant Name	Yes/No	First Individual Meeting	Second Meeting	Availability	Consent forms signed?	Payment
Agnes	No	Feb 10th, 2009	-------------	--------	---------	----------
Sandra	Yes (1)	Feb 12th, 2009	Mar 2nd, 2009	Eve/Wkds	Yes	Yes
Helen	Yes (2)	Feb 10th, 2009	Feb 25th, 2009	Eve/Wkds	Yes	Yes
Laura	Yes (3)	Feb 16th, 2009	Feb 27, 2009 (22)	Wkds	Yes	Yes
Adil	Yes (4)	Feb 12th, 2009	Feb 26th, 2009 (16)	Eve/Wkds	Yes	Yes
Matt	Yes (5)	Feb 15th, 2009	Feb 25th, 2009	Wkds	Yes	Yes
Prabir	Yes (6)	E-mail (Feb 26th)	-------------	Wkds	Yes	Yes
Sam	No	Feb 16th, 2009	-------------	-------------	---------	----------
Sarah	No	---------------	-------------	-------------	---------	----------
James	Yes (7)	Feb 19th, 2009	-------------	Wkds/Fri	Yes	Yes
Ted	No	---------------	-------------	-------------	---------	----------
Grace	Yes (8)	Mar 1st, 2009	Mar 3rd, 2009	Anytime	Yes	Yes

Appendix I: Community photo exhibit poster

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Appendix J: Community photo exhibit collective themes

Our Themes
Created through a process of critical dialogue within a series of Photovoice workshops, these themes are a work in progress. While they represent the collective reflections of all of us, they are in no way static, nor set in stone. They are in a sense, a "snap shot" of where we are now. As we all are, the ideas that we present to you are complex, complicated, and sometimes, even contradictory. But, there is no doubt, that we have identified in/visible strands of connections drawn out from the sharing of our seemingly individual stories.

Solitude
Solitude has played an important part in our daily lives and ultimately, in our understanding of ourselves. Solitude has been isolating, and has wreaked havoc on our health and well-being. But solitude has also been a source of strength, a path to survival and ultimately powerful defiance. The various causes for this solitude, sometimes internal and oftentimes external, interweaves into ALL of our themes. It impacts our health, and our relationship with depression, suicide and asking for help. It is what happens when we are marginalized, and it can be a result of our interactions with our families, communities, social structures, even history. In a very contradictory way, it is a space where we re-claim power, just as much as it has been a result of power being stripped from us. It represents our experiences of being "in-between".

Health
Over the course of our lifetime, we have had a stormy relationship with our health. Many of us have struggled with not "fitting in", resulting in isolating experiences, and feelings of aloneness, anger, exhaustion, depression, and suicide. They can stem from marginalizing experiences, family/community conflict, living in poverty, language barriers, systemic barriers, and histories of migration. These are not simply feelings that are on the surface, to leave us as quickly as they came, but are integral aspects of how we have grown up and come to understand and define ourselves now.
And yet, in the midst of despair, we have found sources of strength and survival. For some, we found our strength within our solitude. We realize that we are indeed powerful survivors and capable of thriving regardless of what the world has thrown at us. Some of us have become politicized, and have re-inserted ourselves into spaces that we initially thought we no longer belonged to, only to realize that our communities needs our talents and different-ness. Some of us continue to struggle in our communities, refusing to give up, striving for new possibilities. Some of us have become *the* person that others go to for help, and we embrace this possibility, albeit with some discomfort.

Our Families
Sometimes our biological families have been a source of comfort and safety. Sometimes we have felt rejected by them because of our sexuality, "cultural differences", our decisions to make a life here that they did not envision for us. And yet, we are trying to understand. We are trying to understand how our parents lives were in many ways restricted by past and present colonial relations. We realize that it can't all simply come down to cultural differences, that our parents had their own difficulties with solitude, health and marginalizing experiences that they have transferred, to some degree, to us. And on the other hand, they have also taught us to be strong, and to strive for greatness in a place where they know that neither they nor we "belong".
For some of us, partly because of histories of colonisation and imperialism, we are completely dis-connected from our families by continents, while for some, biological parents do not exist because they never have. How do we understand ourselves when we don't know ourselves in relation to our biological families? Perhaps, we turn to our communities.

Our Communities
Sometimes, our communities turn into our "chosen" families. They become our support system, our safety and pathway to thriving in our world. And still, our communities can reject us, erase our existance. They can stereotype us because of our sexuality, our gender, our class or how we are racialized. They can be the conduits to which we find our place in the world, and they can block us for full participation. They can exoticize us, therefore never truly seeing us as full, complex human beings. Because of our intersecting

identities, we don't know when we will experience racism in our queer community, or heterosexism in our cultural community, or sexism in either communities.

Social Structures
While marginalizing experiences can come in the form of interactions with other individuals it can also come in the form of social structures or systems. Systemic barriers can limit our opportunities to fully participate in the dominant society, by silently but surely stopping us in our tracks. What happens when we go in to see a counselor who doesn't understand how racism, sexism, or heterosexism has interweaved into our lives in very particular and specific ways? Sometimes, it doesn't even matter if we are queer, because having brown or black skin means that you will be de-humanized every time you go through airport security. Sometimes, we will not be hired for positions with prestige or power, and will wonder if its because of our racialized identity, gender, sexuality, or a combination, depending on the context. How come we never learnt at school about the histories of racialized people in Canada?

Colonized Sexualities
Our relationship with colonization is intimate and distanced. We acknowledge that colonizing relations have very much shaped how the world is today and has to do with why we are where we are, but it is still enigmatic. Some of us have seen how colonization has directly impacted our lives in the form of Canada's historical and present day immigration and citizenship policies. Whether it's the Chinese head tax, live-in caregiver program, "reasonable accommodation", multiculturalism, interculturalism, or international adoption we know that these policies, in varying degrees, have helped to create our reality today.
We are also trying to understand how our sexualities have been colonized. Some people in our ethnocultural communities believe that being queer is a "white" thing or is a disease. Yet, for many of us, we have to ask the question – where did this homophobia come from? Historically, some countries were accepting to varying degrees of alternative sexualities and gender expression, but then with western european colonization came homophobia, Christianizing, and the medical model. But what does this have to do with our contemporary realities?

Moving Forward
Created through the process of individual storytelling and critical dialogue, we have begun to translate these themes into specific recommendations as we start to ask ourselves how we might go about envisioning a more vibrant and opportunity filled lives for queer people of colour. Sometimes, we must be brave and have the courage to open up completely new and unchartered territories. We must not be afraid to live in the "in-between" and develop alternative cultures and new spaces organized by and for queer people of colour. We should engage in anti-oppressive training and education so that we can improve access to social services or health care, and at the same time, develop resources for queer and ethnocultural community organizations to better serve queer people of colour. We should continue to build relationships across boundaries, identities, and politics. Finally, we should look within ourselves and un-learn the internalized oppression that has chained so many of us down for so long, and to begin to re-learn our transcultural histories.

Acts of Creation – Acts of Resistance
This Photovoice process has been a pathway for us to dialogue critically about these questions and contradictions. It has been a way for us to engage with an artistic practice and open up space for creativity. This has been a site for us to re-claim some our power, both individually and collectively and is an opportunity for us to continue transforming our selves and our communities. This has resulted in the breaking of silences, the building of community, and the inspiration to continue.