

Exploring Community Outreach Initiatives for Artist-Run Centers:
A Case Study Using Anti-Racist Feminist Pedagogies to
Create Inclusive Spaces for Knowledge Exchange

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Community Outreach Initiatives for Artist-Run Centers: A Case Study Using Anti-Racist Feminist Pedagogies to Create Inclusive Spaces for Knowledge Exchange

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In a city like Montreal, where language, race and class divide the city into visible and not so visible ways and geographical patterns, it is important to analyze the often unquestioned positions of privilege held both by individuals and institutions. The need to create spaces where critical thought and reflection may take place is therefore important. Based on an anti-racist feminist framework rooted in a thorough literature review, I undertook a case study based on action research, to experiment with the possibilities of opening accessible and inclusive spaces for knowledge creation and exchange in a diverse society.

The evidence presented in this thesis brings together my personal experiences with outreach programming, and the acquired information and feedback from a two day *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop* carried out with the board of directors and staff of *articule*, an artist run community centre. Data were collected utilizing both ethnographic and auto-ethnographic approaches as well as through participant worksheets, recorded notes from the workshops including key points and decisions taken, as well as the centre's strategic plan documents.

The research questions addressed are: What changes can artist-run centres implement to be more connected to the communities in which they are located? Are notions of access and privilege being addressed on a continuous basis? How can

changes be actualized under budgetary constraints? In what way should curatorial, programming, and display practices be challenged and/or modified? And what can museums and larger civic institutions learn from community run centres?

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to my Mother and friend, Anne Davidson Cook Penelope Maule O'Brien, aka Mummy Penny. Thank you for the long phone calls and tireless editing. And thank you to both my Mum and Dad for their many forms of support through this process.

To my supervisor, Arpi Hamalian, without your encouragement I would have never applied to a Master's program. Thank you for all your help, opportunities and allowing me to envision myself as a potential scholar.

articulate, since becoming involved in such an active and engaged community numerous options have presented themselves. I thank the organization for being open to institutional critique and challenges. I thank the members and staff who participated and opened their minds and hearts to this project. Without you this thesis would not have been possible.

For my friends and family who have supported me through engaged conversation, palm tree earrings, listening, trips to California, hugs, high fives, dance practices, long nights in the computer lab, chocolate covered cookies, and love, I am lucky to have you all in my life.

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INTRODUCTION

In her book, *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*, bell hooks (1990) stresses that reflective critical discourse is needed not only to discuss a current lens, but also show an awareness of shifts that occur in our epistemological perspectives as we write and think through issues. Learning is a journey where the steps are often as important as the present stage or outcome. There can be an appreciated importance in exposing your critical development, to ground your theory in an experiential history that is an ongoing transformative process. Agreeing with hooks and putting her recommendations into practice, I will take the time here in my introduction to layout the context in which I came to write this Master's thesis: *Exploring Community Outreach Initiatives for Artist-Run Centers: A Case Study Using Anti-Racist Feminist Pedagogies to Create Inclusive Spaces for Knowledge Exchange.*

As a community researcher, I think it is important to position myself, specifically because I am researching and writing about issues of race, racism, sexism, gender, queerness, and other forms of oppression and privilege. I am a white, middle-class, educated, Anglophone that identifies as a straight female, living comfortably and in good health, in a safe, convenient neighbourhood in Montreal, Canada. I have an extremely supportive network of family and friends that give me love and respect. I identify as a feminist and continually try to incorporate anti-racist awareness and action into my everyday life. Though much of my research and theoretical development has been informed by feminist and anti-racist theory and pedagogy, I feel the term anti-oppression better encompasses and defines my educational philosophy. It is from this location that I strive to reflect on my own privilege within a global society, and my actions within it. I also understand that my whiteness and advantageous positioning can be problematic when writing and teaching about the subjects that will be discussed in my thesis, and such contentions will be explored.

Not only am I privileged with my position in society, I also feel that a certain level of privilege and responsibility comes with the fact I find passion and positive energy in addressing and pushing oppressive boundaries, as well as discussing issues that may cause a degree of discomfort in some. It is rewarding to witness and participate in an overcoming of resistance to challenging questions or situations. To work through unfamiliar and destabilizing emotional responses that are often difficult to articulate, instead of resorting to denial and avoidance, is what fuels my hope and commitment to the transformative powers of education. Although transformative learning can be painful at times, I believe for the most part the intellectual and emotional stirring brings a person to a more fulfilling level of learning and awareness. The fact that I can find joy in this process of transgression, so much so that I have committed a large part of my life and career to it, I feel bestows a degree of responsibility. As an educator it is my duty to nourish an enthusiasm in people, when possible, to reach a deeper self-conscientization around positionality, potential for meaning making and agency in creating change.

My thesis does not strive to herald new innovative theories or ideas; in fact I might even go as far as to say that none of the theories discussed and worked through in the following pages are new. Problematizing sociological issues around the intersection of oppressive and privileging forces has long been identified and discussed in various disciplines, so too have the pedagogical approaches to addressing them. The discourse around feminist, anti-racist and anti-oppression pedagogies is layered and complex, and has been investigated thoroughly through many lenses. This is not to say I do not have something important to add to the discussion, but it is more through a merging of various theories and contexts in a community action-based research approach, than a pure theoretical one. My work proposes new approaches to implementing individual and institutional change based

in a well-established theoretical base. My objective is to push critical thought while bringing my reader to an awareness of theory and context by disseminating knowledge and encouraging dialogue. As well, to provide a sociological understanding of how artists and their institutions, when paired with educational theory, can produce real change and transformation.

ISSUES AND CONTEXT

As our urban centres expand and become more diverse in the globalized world, the need to have our civic institutions reflect these changes has never been more important. Art institutions are not free from these shifting challenges, and the mainstream art world still largely lacks proper representation and inclusion of the diverse communities that populate our urban societies. My interests and research in the subject of art-based learning, and its strong links to adult education has enabled me to focus on promoting awareness and creating bridges between diverse cultures, while promoting literacy and new forms of knowledge construction (see Maule-O'Brien, 2006). A pedagogy that incorporates arts, creativity and imagination as an integral component to foster independent critical reflective thinking and learning, while encouraging group interactions, may help build stronger community connections, promote personal growth, and institutional change.

It is in this context that I work with articule, a Montreal artist-run centre. articule is located in the Mile-End: a trendy, predominantly white¹ neighbourhood of Montreal. Best known for its Jewish roots and history, more recently the neighbourhood has experienced the affects of gentrification, slowly becoming a vibrant hub of creativity with the influx of artists. Galleries, boutiques, cafés, and artist studio spaces have

¹ I will not be capitalizing words such as white and/or western in my writing. It is a personal and political choice.

filled the old factory buildings and lined the streets. articule, being one such gallery that has recently moved into the area to locate itself in a street level space with storefront window visibility. The centre now attracts a great number of people who just happen to be walking by. The move for articule has created a resurgence in membership activity and community involvement, but the fact still remains that the same pool of people are being engaged, and articule often falls short of connecting with a more diverse body of the community. It is with this recognition that articule felt the need to reflect on its own practices and policies to determine whether it was meeting its own mandate and was keeping in line with the changing realities of Montreal's cultural and political climate.

I have garnered first-hand experience and knowledge of articule through my active membership including participation on the Outreach, Window Programming and Fundraising committees, helping develop the strategic plan for 2011 to 2016, as well as a position on the board of directors. I have learned how the organization has evolved over the past thirty years, and what creative actions have been pursued to incorporate increased community involvement. It is rewarding to work with articule, as both the individual members and the institution share a history of openness to risk taking and social engagement. This combined with the desire to show a certain degree of community leadership through institutional reflection, is what assisted and strengthened my community action research with articule. Though articule faces limited financial and human resources, common of many ARCs, their continued support and commitment to the visions of their membership has been a driving force in my own educational and artistic pursuits. Working with an organization that values spontaneous and reflexive programming, and which is philosophically in line with my desire to experiment with more radical educational models in creative spaces has been undeniably enriching. It has helped validate and boost confidence around the

desire to tackle complex institutional and structural challenges in relation to anti-oppression.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis will investigate: What changes can artist-run centres implement to be more inclusive to the communities in which they are located? Are notions of access and privilege being addressed? How can changes be actualized under budgetary constraints? In what way should curatorial, programming, and display practices be challenged and/or modified? To this end, what can museums and larger civic institutions learn from community run centres?

While a large focus of my writing is on race and the critical analysis and deconstruction of white supremacy within art centres, I do not wish to diminish the complexity of the interlocking systems at play. At times I use anti-oppression as an umbrella term, which includes but is not limited to issues of white supremacy, privilege and resistance, race and queer theory, social justice, ally collaborations, equity, and gender empowerment. I strongly believe in accessible education that promotes community knowledge building, which does not ignore how race, gender, sex, sexuality, ability, socio-economic status, and other related factors, intersect and inform our identities and realities.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Consisting of three main components that work to inform each other the thesis will present: first, a literature review on what is being written about in the field of feminist anti-racist education and theory that focuses on ways to promote greater diversity in art institutions. The second component, being field research combined with a case study review, incorporates my own experience with outreach

programming in Montreal, as well as the findings of a two-day anti-oppression workshop that I conducted and participated in with the board of directors and staff of articule², a local artist-run centre (ARC). In conjunction with this I investigate and analyze specific initiatives being developed and implemented locally in other organizations, as well as the methods, philosophies and approaches that are being utilized in various spaces outside of Canada. Based on these specific models being implemented locally, nationally and internationally, I explore the outreach possibilities in Montreal where imaginative solutions and ideas may be fostered. Thus, through a comparative study, my third and final goal is to make concrete, attainable and flexible suggestions for ARCs to further diversify their membership, audience and participants, and to positively incorporate difference. An online database blog of personal research and projects has already been started and will play an important role in future research through the continuation of sharing knowledge and resources amongst educators working both locally and internationally.

² articule, though the name of an organization, has chosen to not use a capital 'A' in their name, and thus this is not a grammatical mistake.

CHAPTER 1

Literature review of art-based education and theory, focused on ways to encourage and promote diversity in art centres through anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches

Art production comes from within our imaginations and is a reflection of our experiences, environment and everyday realities. Belting (2001) writes, "Art is no longer a theme of its own. It transforms itself into a commentary or mirror of contemporary themes, such as minority issues, traumatic memories, or cultural conflicts" (76). Both art and education have the capability of promoting critical awareness through encouraged questioning and reflection, which can offer opportunities of transformation in values, beliefs and possibly even worldviews. Art-based education is a powerful and positive means of tackling difficult issues while promoting new ways of analysis, knowing and learning. As Clover (2006), argues on culture and antiracism in adult education: the imagination is a potential revolutionary force, creating for us challenges to pursue more complex selves and society. This faculty allows us to re-imagine relationships and forms of civic engagement. Cultivating the imagination can foster lifelong learning, such as meaning-making through experience and critical reflection (Norman 2000; Clover 2006). Grace and Wells (2007), and Lipson Lawrence (2005) continue this argument through their recognition of a growing emphasis of arts based learning in adult education. Lipson Lawrence (2005) writes that artistic expression expands the boundaries for knowing, learning, and comprehending culture and positionalities "holistically, naturally, and creatively, thus deepening understanding of self and the world" (3).

Art-based learning that incorporates an anti-oppression pedagogy, combining both feminist and anti-racist theory, acknowledging different sensory experiences and

visual ways of thinking while incorporating counter-narratives, can contribute immensely to constructing new ways of learning. The creation of culture can be viewed similarly to that of knowledge. Dominant ideology and culture are maintained through hegemonic participation and affirmations of power, so too are the ways of understanding and knowing that culture. In addition to learning to listen and critically reflect, Clover (2006) argues in favour of the need to continue to develop creative and diverse learning activities aimed at interracial, cross-cultural, and anti-racist dialogue and learning, while working to develop culturally appropriate approaches to education. This can uncover assumptions, but also enable peripheral communities to be creators of new cultural expressions, thus giving rise to voices and possibilities of a counter-culture that may work to decentre and undermine mainstream culture that perpetuates sexist, racist, homophobic norms. These counter-narratives need to be promoted and reinforced structurally and institutionally in places such as curriculum reform, but also require fluidity in nature. When discussing the creation of inclusive art institutions Lagerkvist (2006) argues,

“Creating an inclusive institution is *not* about finding the right model for this kind of work – a model that can be applied to all museums and all communities. The task is essentially to keep the dialogue alive, to negotiate and renegotiate and thereby to find a balance and move positions forward in each separate case of community involvement. In other words, there are not shortcuts to inclusion” (60).

Inclusive and transformative programming that is not a fixed system holds extraordinary promise. We live in a pluralistic society that has countless resources of imaginative initiatives; we need to utilize this creativity and encourage a broad level of participation in the identification and formulation of the knowledge that we expect citizens to obtain (Banks, 1991). For these actions and ideas to be attained, one

often sees best results when beginning with themselves and their communities or institutions at the local level.

The notion of starting from personal and institutional reflection and change brings to the discussion the ideas of 'studying up' versus 'studying down' (Judd 1999; Aveling 2006). By definition the field research presented in this thesis demonstrates a 'study up' approach; looking at the decision makers and the institution within which they operate, and pushing for structural change through the governing bodies, instead of focusing research on the communities of people that they are trying to reach or engage as new members. A person from an advantaged position and reality could work better at analyzing their own preconceived notions and embedded institutional policies, and the effects they have instead of further perpetuating hierarchical dynamics in research and development by 'studying down' on areas that they do not have experience with or in.

Similarly to the ideas of 'studying up' and 'studying down' (Judd 1999; Aveling 2006) discussed above, one cannot ignore the role positionality plays when addressing issues of oppression and power. bell hooks (1994) illustrates an example when she argues for shifts in focus and direction to produce a wider and more critical discourse on race that interrogates whiteness. She continues by drawing attention to the problematic nature of too many white scholars writing about race who ignore whiteness and focus their attention on people of colours' realities. To just state that an author or researcher is white is not enough (hooks 1994), as it keeps whiteness as the default norm that everything else is compared to. hooks states;

"...only a persistent, rigorous, and informed critique of whiteness could really determine what forces of denial, fear, and competition are responsible for creating fundamental gaps between professed political

commitment to eradicating racism and the participation in the construction of a discourse on race that perpetuates racial domination" (1994, 54).

It is apparent that, while discussions about white privilege and racism are still for the most part avoided due to feelings of guilt and helplessness amongst white people, I still believe the issues can and need to be addressed constructively through supportive and productive programming. Though many art institutions perpetuate oppressive practices, such institutions frequently retain an open and receptive disposition to critique, owing to their histories to confronting challenging subject matter and uncomfortable topics. A good example of this can be seen in articule's increasing level of comfort with feminist and queer dialogue and knowledge being incorporated through the membership and community involvement. Thus, my aim is to bring greater attention to race and white supremacy for articule to obtain deeper awareness and create more radical shifts to push boundaries.

In artist-run centres, it is often the membership body that makes up the programming committee. ARCs engage a specific demographic and thus end up drawing programming from a similar population that shares parallel aesthetic values. When looking at how display practices could be shifted, we have to observe the cultural climate that breeds a specific set of values. In order to promote wide spread change, the institutionalized culture would have to be shaken at its core, by introducing new aesthetic leanings, counter-voices, and community ties between organizations that are not necessarily alike. This is to be done in order to foster new knowledge construction and create opportunities for exchange, dialogue and learning. The purpose is to generate a certain degree of discomfort in both the ARC and its active membership body, thus promoting individual, institutional and

structural transformative possibilities through stimulated reflection. With regards to articule, my objective was to collectively empower the institution to take action. The idea was to break down oppressive, exclusionary systems that obscure participation in maintaining social and racial divides. By moving away from focusing solely on self-reflection amongst individual members, and instead pushing for collective reflection, I wanted articule, its board and staff to not ignore their mutual responsibility to one another or their community (Boler 1999).

Through educational community outreach and reflective, collaborative 'inreach' programming, organizations and their members would be able to work *with* rather than *for* the 'othered' creative communities (Giroux 1993, cited by Aveling 2006). It is in this vain that articule, its staff and board would be working to deconstruct sexist, racist or other oppressive norms and ideologies for the sake of themselves and the institution, not for the sake of the so called others (Yamato 2004; Aveling 2006).

Through the development and implementation of an anti-oppression workshop tailored to the needs of articule's current members, my desire was to utilize theoretical understandings I have gained in my educational research, and to ground the process in a supportive group dynamic that challenged participants and the institution. For articule to continue its current practices may be the easiest, but as a centre that has defined itself as progressive and reflective, it is necessary to analyze the often-unquestioned positions of privilege both the members and the organization hold. By ignoring that privilege and continually maintaining what could be exclusionary habits, it is ultimately damaging to all parties involved. I believe the following quote, though written by Lorde (1984) as a comment of her own anger regarding individual inaction, also speaks to the inaction of an institution.

"...if I fail to recognize them as other faces of myself, then I am contributing not only to each of their oppressions but also to my own, and the anger which stands between us then must be used for clarity and mutual empowerment, not for evasion by guilt or for further separation. I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained. Nor is any one of you" (Lorde 1984, 133).

It was my intention that by carrying out, as well as participating in this workshop we would as a group be able to disrupt, dismantle, reconfigure, redistribute, and equalize action and dynamics (Mathews, Ng, Patton, Waschuk, & Wong 2008), through the Freirean process of conscientization. This involved participants developing a critical consciousness through an understanding of their position in a social context (Rowlands 1997), by employing feminist anti-racist strategies and naming whiteness not as a colour of skin but as a space of flux that is lived and acted in. Thus, through identifying whiteness as a transparent or invisible reality through a pedagogy of whiteness, I wanted to discover a space where participants could critically examine the construction of their own identities in order to "re-think whiteness as both a discourse of critique and possibility" (Giroux 1997, 384). And like Aveling (2006), I also want to enable white participants of the articule workshop to move beyond positions of guilt and resentment to a space where they can envision themselves as agents of change.

When dealing with white resistance and guilt it is important to not mistakenly prioritize whiteness in the process. This results in continual privileging of white experience, and thus does not properly address the needs or concerns of non-white contributions. The effect of an under-theorized white resistance is to place all emphasis on whiteness and their learning of anti-racist approaches, continually re-

centering whiteness (McCarthy 2003; Marx 2003; Ringrose, 2007). In Ringrose's referencing of her own research and that of Bhopal (2002), she writes that this perpetuates

"white resistance as fixed, essentialized pathology that is ultimately untouchable represents a massive burden for non-white students that has rarely been articulated in the pedagogical literature on educating about race/whiteness..." (Ringrose 2007, 335).

In order to effectively tackle the challenge of white resistance it is important to recognize its existence and to create a supportive space where it can be moved through while making efforts to not prioritize it. This is to say,

"to move beyond simple essentialism, whiteness... (my preferred term drawn from patriarchy and hierarchy)... and whiteness need to be problematised, interrogated and separated from white people themselves. Individuals are still accountable and responsible for their actions, but it is useful to make a distinction between whiteness expressed as individual prejudice and whiteness expressed as institutionalized racism" (Housee 2008, 419).

Resistance to a deeper understanding and a possible transformative learning experience, can be due to the fear of pain and anxiety. To this Boler (1999) asks, "what helps us to develop, collectively, the courage to see things differently?" Boler (1999) continues an inquiry guided by the use of Minnie Bruce Pratt's (1984) theory of how epistemology, emotions and ethics are intertwined as a way to invite learners to 'see' and let go of their fear of emotion. Pratt stresses the necessity to let oneself move past pain and loneliness to a willingness to ask new questions, to hear, see and allow yourself to feel new fears by acknowledging the desire '[t]o understand the complexity of another's existence is not to deny the complexity of our own" (Pratt 1984 cited by Boler 1999, 178, 182). When Boler (1999) relates a pedagogy discomfort to white resistance she writes that guilt is not the only option, and instead

invites the learner to in-habit a space of ambiguity to explore the “emotional dimensions and investments – angers and fears, and the histories in which these are rooted” (198).

In determining that a certain level of fear and unease is necessary for transformative learning is where the pedagogy of discomfort was developed. In her 1999 book, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*, Boler dedicates a large portion to the explanation and discussion of the pedagogy of discomfort. In an inspiring and almost idealistic paragraph Boler explains:

“The first sign of the success of a pedagogy of discomfort is, quite simply, the ability to recognize what it is that one doesn’t want to know, and how one has developed emotional investments to protect oneself from this knowing. This process may require facing the ‘tragic loss’ inherent to educational inquiry; facing demons and a precarious sense of self. But in so doing one gains a new sense of interconnection with others. Ideally, a pedagogy of discomfort represents an engaged and mutual exchange, a historicized exploration of emotional investments. Through education we invite one another to risk ‘living at the edge of our skin,’ where we find the greatest hope of revisioning ourselves” (Boler 1999, 200).

Education is in no way uncontested or neutral, and “one’s learned emotional selectivity inevitably reflects the effects of specific cultural agendas’ (Boler 1999, 180). Given this, education is “always an ethical undertaking, any pedagogy or curricula potentially evokes resistance, fear, and anger” (183). Interestingly, in Breault’s (2003) argument regarding multicultural reform, I can draw connections to the issue of white resistance and de-centering approaches. He argues that perceptions of fear and doubt around the threat to the rights of the dominant culture cannot be ignored in multicultural education. That we must promote willingness to

point out oppression, racism, or insensitivity, and discuss openly “the fear and resentment that perpetuates injustice - even if those views are offensive to us and to human dignity” (Breault 2003, 2). It is in relation to this, another extremely important tool in the process of transformative anti-oppression reflection is the incorporation of counter-narratives; specifically voices of people of colour regarding lived experiences, as a way to expose and analyze the majoritiarian stories of racial privilege (Dixon and Rousseau 2005; Housee 2008). This is sometimes difficult in predominantly white insular spaces, where for the most part challenges to the dominant-story can easily be ignored. This is a voiced concern for articule, and hopefully the workshop will provide an opportunity to address it while enabling concrete future achievements to be planned.

An additional concern when conducting an anti-oppression workshop or teaching around issues of race and racism, is the question of race with regards to the facilitator. There is an active debate in literature around the issue of who is ‘allowed’ or ‘truly qualified’ to teach on the subject of race and racism. In her article, Housee (2008) investigates various standpoints on the problematic discourse around white persons facilitating such workshops and/or classes. As a person of colour herself, she greatly acknowledges the empowering value of black first-hand experience for all students, but argues vehemently,

“... the experience of racism should not be a necessary requirement for the teaching of ‘race’/racism. For me, the challenge was to break down these barriers and open teaching to those best qualified in terms of knowledge, skills and passion rather than ethnic background. I wanted to see white lecturers teaching ‘race’ and racism issues, and black lecturers teaching mainstream topics to white majority classes”
(Housee 2008, 417).

It is clear that the race of the facilitator does impact the dynamics of a group or class, and the interactions and discussions that may take place within it. As Housee (2008) points out through her in depth action-based research, students of colour often feel more at ease to share experiences when the educator is a person of colour, thus legitimizing their experiences and promoting confidence. This, while sometimes silencing white students, also provides them an opportunity to hear first hand accounts of race and racism. Housee (2008) continues by saying that similarly guilt and defensiveness may be easier addressed with white students when the educator is also white, but it is then students of colour who feel as though their experiences are marginalized, just as in other spaces within society. It may be often stated by students that lived experience of race and racism are necessary to teach on the subject. I agree with Housee (2008) that white educators cannot bring in personal accounts of experienced racism, but also that this is the very reason that white educators must interrogate the power relations associated with whiteness. If "white folks do not teach 'race'/racism issues, then whiteness becomes associated with mainstream sociology, and blackness with 'race' and racism" (421), thus maintaining confused perceptions of whiteness at the center and blackness at the margins (Housee 2008).

Another decentering approach is in the use of language about identity and positionality. It is for this very reason bell hooks began using the term *white supremacist capitalist patriarchy*. Hooks (1997) argues that to use the word racism keeps whiteness at the centre of the discussion and does not allow for a more complex reading. In her call to use the term white supremacy over racism hooks states that by only using the word racism it does not allow for a discourse around colonization and decolonization. The term white supremacy decentres whiteness by removing it from a default or normed position. White supremacy can be seen as a

political frame that affects everyone, not just people of colour or not just white people. To take it further, *white supremacist capitalist patriarchy*, is language that can continually remind us of the interlocking nature of domination, and how these systems function simultaneously in our lives (hooks 1997).

In the long run staying silent and not creating a space for dialogue around issues of white supremacy (capitalist patriarchy) is far more damaging than working through difficult and often awkward or hurtful conversations. As Boler (1999) points out,

"Silence and omission are by no means neutral. One of the central manifestations of racism, sexism, and homophobia is 'erasure': omissions and silences that often stem from ignorance and not necessarily from intentional desires to hurt or oppress" (184).

To bring this back into context of my own action research, I acknowledge the fact that I cannot share a personal account of what it feels like to be a person of colour, nor experiences of racism. But in line with Housee's (2008) argument that racism, as well as whiteness and white supremacy need to be scrutinized by educators of all racial backgrounds, I feel that I have the passion and empathy for human rights and social justice, and the desire to practice active listening and collaborative learning and education, in order to approach such issues. Despite the fact I can never completely understand what it feels like to be racially oppressed, I believe I have the emotional capacity and openness to devote to a practice of action, based in being aware of the realities of racial oppression.

Though empathy is not the same as first-hand experience, the process of envisioning such events can evoke a just rage. Though my anger is different than that of other persons, I feel we are all capable of using anger as a tool for social justice and mobility in a powerful way. Imagination and empathy are connected. If you have

ever experienced feelings of pain, frustration and/or disempowerment you are able to form an awareness around various contexts that may trigger such emotions.

Instead of fear, anger is an emotion that can be used in conjunction with empathetic emotions to promote transformative thinking and action towards social justice. A justified ire can be read as a form of passion – deep emotion from displeasure of a situation or reality that is needed in order to commit to liberatory action. This does not need to be interpreted as negative; in fact I believe a certain level of desire for change must be fed from vehemence. A feminist anti-racist fierceness can be a positive, invigorating flame of inspiration and momentum to construct new knowledge. This is where moving past the passion-killing guilt can reinvent mental energy and emotion into personal revolution. As Lorde argues with passion of her own in her book *Sister Outsider*:

“Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one’s own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness (Lorde 1984, 130).

By getting past the defensive anger that is often used to mask fear of change and loss of identity (Boler, 1999), true empowerment may be realized. Though “real empowerment may take unanticipated directions” (Rowlands 1997, 16), it must “involve undoing negative social constructions, so that people come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and influence decisions” (Rowlands 1997, 14). It is with this hope that I work to empower myself, the Board and staff members of articule, as well as the institution itself.

CHAPTER 2

CASE STUDY: Discussion of research methodology, and a report on the

Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop done at articule

METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction, the second section of this thesis is dedicated to the case study report of an action-research project in the form of two workshops conducted with articule. The methodological approach is grounded in the theoretical pedagogy discussed in the literature review in the first chapter. This case study brings together my personal experiences with outreach programming, and the acquired information and feedback from the two day *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop* carried out with the board of directors and staff of articule. Data were collected utilizing both ethnographic and auto-ethnographic approaches as well as through participant worksheets (see appendix II), recorded notes from the workshops including key points and decisions taken and the strategic plan (2011-2016) document that also lays out an action plan for that period.

Utilizing an anti-racist feminist theoretical framework, and incorporating anti-oppression theory, a pedagogy of discomfort, and pedagogy for the privileged my research aims to promote the rise of social awareness and responsibility through the process of transformative learning on an individual and institutional scale. “Canadian anti-racist feminist thought has been scratching the surface of Canadian society, exposing the dynamics of racism” (Dua 8). In an attempt to break that surface and bring about institutional reform, in order to dismantle sexism and racism as ‘normal’ ways of seeing (Bannerji 1995), this research works to deconstruct what she would refer to as a “passively racist aesthetic” (45). As she writes in her piece *Notes*

Towards an Anti-Racist Feminism, “it is entirely possible to be critical of racism at the level of ideology, politics and institutions” (45).

With anti-racist feminist education, my research methodology questions power relations in curriculum development as well as society as a whole (Dei 1993).

Agreeing with Dei (1993), I work to recognize the importance of personal experience and lived realities as a source of knowledge, and “draw on the interconnections among race, class and gender oppressions” (36). Though not focused on a school setting, realizing an anti-racist feminist methodology inside diverse institutions who are pedagogically engaged is essential. ARCs have their own roles and responsibilities within our community, and offer varying perspectives to our educational systems on knowledge creation and meaning-making (Norman 2000).

Although it may not be the most conventional approach to graduate research, nevertheless, the adopted anti-racist feminist theoretical framework combined with an action based research approach requires a process based analysis. Experiences cannot be separated, as part of the purpose of the research, on top of answering specific questions, is to also try and bring about change. Through naming whiteness as a systemic problem and the employment of specific strategies for this approach, the discursive framework is not a mould, but a flexible research guide. Relying on only one anti-racist feminist model for all, will ultimately fail for “this would disallow the particular histories of various groups of people” (Dei 1993, 36).

I recognize that research, in particular action-research, is a continual process that one builds upon as more experience and knowledge are gained and exchanged. The aim is to take my past and current research to deeper levels through the incorporation of contemporary discourse, while linking innovative and relevant social

justice initiatives to provide practical resources for myself, other working educators, and institutions including art based and art focused ones.

DEVELOPING THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCING AND SETTING UP

As a member of the board of directors I proposed the idea to conduct and participate in a two-part workshop to analyze and de/re/construct the individual and institutional roles in policy-making traditions that may or may not be oppressive and exclusionary. I named it *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop*. Being as transparent and forth coming as possible about my own educational philosophy and politics around issues of privilege and oppression I first ‘sold’ the idea to the Board and staff at a board meeting in the Fall of 2009. The idea was to implement the workshops over the Spring of 2010, as this would give time to assess the needs of articule and their desire to utilize the outcomes in the new strategic plan and future programming.

It was made clear from the beginning that I would be implementing and conducting research in the process of the workshop, and that I would write on the outcomes in the case study section of my thesis. I made available copies of my thesis proposal to everyone on the Board and staff, as well as created an in-house file that would be left at the gallery and accessible for all members. A specific length of time was set aside at our February 9th, 2010 board meeting to look at the ethical implications that the workshop and research may pose. It was discussed as a group and voted on, deciding, that though it may become at times challenging, it was in the best interest of articule for the board to participate in such a workshop. A second aim was to promote community leadership towards a more reflective institutional practice

amongst our ARC friends. At this point in time, articule and everyone who was to participate in the research workshop were asked to read and sign tailor made individual and institutional consent forms.

On February 15th, 2010 my thesis proposal hearing was held with my thesis committee in the Educational Studies program of the Department of Education. The proposal was approved. I then submitted a Summary Protocol Form to the Department's Human Research Ethics Committee for approval. Then on March 11th, 2010, I received a written approval letter from the Ethics Committee informing me that I could proceed with my data collection.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

I recognize that the idea of the workshop came from a personal desire to encourage the institution to which I commit a great deal of time and energy, to toy with the idea of stepping outside of a comfort zone. I knew from being a member for three years that articule and its membership body were open to individual and institutional challenges. This was partially due to the fact that in 2009/2010, to celebrate their thirtieth anniversary, articule dedicated a great number of hours to break out of old habits and traditions through a process of re-envisioning. Furthermore, articule had recently applied for a grant to produce a strategic plan for 2011 to 2016 with a professional consultant, to keep this process of restructuring alive. As I will detail later on, the application for a Flying Squad grant from the Canada Council for the Arts was successful and articule embarked on the lengthy strategic plan journey.

It became apparent early on in the discussions that there was a strong desire for major change fueled by the decision to reassess articule's actions and programming in order to align them more closely with the centre's mandate. Doing so would

ground the centre, but also allow for a more fluid artistic vision that could be revisited yearly or as needed.

Along with working to better meet the defined mandate, another important aspect that concerned the membership was outreach activity. Outreach programming had become an integral and defining aspect of articule in the community, but there were still areas that could be developed further with new or modified approaches. As part of the workshop I recommended that to fully realize the desired outreach potential, an internal institutional analysis, or type of 'inreach' would have to be an integral objective. In turn it would help define or redefine what it is to do outreach for articule, what kind of outreach is of particular importance, and whether it is important to have a pedagogical component.

Another question that has become increasingly debated amongst the membership is that of language. It was originally thought that by defining itself as an English only ARC articule would be eligible for increased funding, but this turned out not to be the case. Over the past year after some discussion it was decided that people should speak or write in their language of choice, and articule would start to identify itself as more of a bilingual space holding its general assemblies in French as well as English. Due to the language politics that are very alive here in Quebec and Montreal, it will take some more time to iron out the specifics of being a bilingual space, for numerous reasons, one being the extremely high cost of translation. The board of 2011/2012 has been assigned the task of addressing the issue. The suggestion of bringing it to the membership to find creative solutions and opportunities to work within various languages, not just French and English, has been recommended.

As part of my workshop development I chose to not make language a key component for a number of reasons. First, my idea was to deconstruct privilege and oppression as a whole within the context of articule, its membership body and institution, without getting stuck on a language debate. The language debate is alive and well within articule, and I am not worried that it will be forgotten about or ignored. As anyone living in Quebec knows, the issue of language can be extremely charged, and thus has a reputation of taking up a lot of space and time, often shadowing other important intersecting issues. It was not my intention to diminish the importance of language in the centre, but instead force people to look deeply at issues that are not already routinely discussed at great lengths. My personal objective was to shine a brighter light on the topic of systemic racism and white privilege within the art community of Montreal as a whole and the role articule plays, because of the very fact this reality is often not talked about.

To reiterate what I mention in the introduction of my thesis, while looking at how oppression plays out through the intersection of various forms of domination and hegemony, I do not want to exclude or belittle other important issues. I did not want this workshop to be read as a hierarchy of oppression by any means, but that said my choice and research interest is more focused on that of race. This is deepened by what I believe to be a strong and relevant need for race politics to be addressed within the culture of ARCs.

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The workshop was conducted in two, four-hour sessions approximately a month apart. Each workshop took place in a different location, but maintained an open and relaxed atmosphere. By dividing the workshop into two sessions participants were given the opportunity to reflect personally and collectively, and people who may not

have shared as much during the first workshop were able to take the time to express new ideas during the second session. This also allowed the group time to delve deeper into the subjects at hand.

The objective of the workshop was to question institutional practices and traditions that are embedded in ARCs and the cultural context in which they exist. Due to the fact that much of my experience with such workshops has been limited to theoretical readings and discussions, I recognize that my role as a facilitator was solely to provide guidelines for the structure of the workshop and preliminary questions. It was important for me to be viewed as a participant engaged to learn and share knowledge. The workshop, which was guided by my action research goals, took place in an informal collaborative setting. Participants discussed various creative approaches and channels to promote more inclusive programming, language, procedures, and collaborative efforts.

With an anti-racist feminist philosophical grounding, the workshop's focus was to promote reflection on behaviour, language, practices, traditions and policymaking to look at how they affect community outreach and participation on the individual, systemic and institutional level. As the only predominantly English ARC in Montreal, articule welcomes many newcomers to the city who are comfortable with English, and thus does support quite a diverse membership body in terms of age, gender, sexuality, language, and artistic mediums. That said the fact still remains articule is mainly comprised of white, educated artists, and though some of them may see themselves as struggling artists in a society that does not offer much in the way of financial support, for the most part they do hold a degree of privilege locally and globally.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Issues around anti-oppression are slowly becoming more common topics of discussion, at least in my circles of community and research. For example, in some arts spaces, such as articule, you may find Queer theory present in non-Queer spaces. A number of creative spaces that do not necessarily identify as Queer organizations, and maybe not yet making efforts to write non-homophobic/ transphobic policies, are at least open to some Queer politics that are currently impacting communities. I would argue that the need for institutional change around issues of sexuality, sex and gender, but also language, socio-economic status, race and ability are becoming more comfortably discussed and recognized. This is definitely the case within the articule staff and membership. However, ways to implement anti-oppression strategies are still challenges many organizations are struggling with. An example of this is articule's attempts to make the gallery space wheelchair accessible as evidenced by ongoing efforts to this end for over four years now. With the growing trend around the use of the phrase anti-oppression, honest and challenging dialogues around the deeper issues are still often avoided. This is definitely the case around white supremacy in white majority spaces.

It was with my awareness of the fact that the persons participating in the workshop may be aware of language and ways to proceed in certain discussions around privilege and oppression, that I chose to look at privilege and oppression as a whole for a way to approach the issue of white privilege on a more focused level. I wanted the participants to achieve a level of comfort in discussing personal affinities with systems of oppression, in order to guide their thinking towards systems of privilege. Thus also work to normalize certain language and dialogue around whiteness and race.

It was my goal to create a reflective and supportive space for difficult conversation in hopes of fostering actual institutional shifts and transformations within articule.

Focusing mainly on the institutional practices and policies, (though it might be read as a way to avoid complete recognition of embedded racist behaviours and/or actions), was a purposeful tactic I employed in order to keep the exchange of ideas as open as possible, and allow for shifts in focus to move to a place where action and innovation could be voiced.

When embarking on a journey of transformation it is important to acknowledge that change is often difficult and painful, especially when dealing with something that is so intertwined within our society, culture, worldview and construction of our very identity. As a facilitator, particularly a white one, I feel it is a personal responsibility to seek to keep feelings of defense or guilt in check through questioning and reflection, in order to promote transformative action in ourselves and in those whom we come into contact with through teaching. I feel it is a dual responsibility of the educator and participant to enter such a learning environment with an open heart and mind and be as prepared as possible to feel and move through sadness and guilt to deeper-level learning and action. As Lorde (1984) states, "guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against which we all flounder; they served none of our futures" (124). In order to successfully move beyond white resistance, the recognition of non-intentionality is needed to take the complexities of racism away from individualism; to move the conversation outside of limiting signifiers of whiteness or blackness, in order to productively negotiate social, political and cultural impacts of racism (Ringrose 2007).

WORKSHOP SKELETON

When reading Curry-Stevens' (2007) article, *New Forms of Transformative education: Pedagogy for the Privileged*, personal affinities to educational obstacles became clear, as many of her points speak to my experiences. Much of my past programming efforts have been met with challenges around creating solidarity amongst people who cherish their individualism and position of privilege thus finding it difficult to continue on a path of change and social justice. As Curry-Stevens (2007) points out the transformation is not easy;

"Thinking of oneself as an oppressor is a very difficult task. ... It involves being willing to face that despite what "good liberals" we want ourselves to be, we must consider the possibility that we are racist, or sexist, or classist. Given how much such messages are resisted, an alternate framework, used in self-help programs, may prove helpful—that we are "recovering racists" and that we will forever be in recovery. Progress is possible, but the very nature of our social location will make the full transition to non-racists impossible. The path to becoming non-racist is through committed antiracist practice"

(Curry-Stevens 2007, 50).

When developing the workshop skeleton I again turned to Curry-Stevens (2007), as she lays out a ten step pedagogical model for the transformation of the privileged learner. The steps are divided into two processes – the first five are confidence shaking and the last five are confidence building. They are as follows³:

- Step 1: Awareness of oppression
- Step 2: Oppression as structural and thus enduring and pervasive
- Step 3: Locating oneself as oppressed
- Step 4: Locating oneself as privileged

³ Ten steps taken from Curry-Stevens 2007, p. 51. Table 1: *Proposed Model for the Transformation of Privileged Learners*

Step 5: Understanding the benefits that flow from privilege

Step 6: Understanding oneself as implicated in the oppression of others and
understanding oneself as an oppressor

Step 7: Building confidence to take action—knowing how to intervene

Step 8: Planning actions for departure

Step 9: Finding supportive connections to sustain commitments

Step 10: Declaring intentions for future action

Very similar in nature, The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB), lay out a set of *Anti-Racist Principles for Effective Organizing & Social Transformation* (2009-2011) on their website, which I utilized in combination with the above steps to develop the anti-oppression workshop for articulate. These include: undoing racism; learning from history; sharing culture; developing leadership; maintaining accountability; networking; analyzing power; gatekeeping⁴; undoing internalized racial oppression (inferiority and superiority); and identifying and analyzing the manifestations of racism (2009). Also incorporated was Rowlands' (1997) analysis of types of power (over, to, with, and from within), as well as empowerment (experienced and demonstrated) on personal, relational and collective scales. It was through such steps of deconstruction and examination that individual implications became clearer along with recognition of power to promote change, encourage unique outreach initiatives, and build collaborative community bridges.

⁴ Gatekeepers are persons in institutions who work to ensure that the institution operates with anti-racist values and networks with those who share the values. By maintaining an accountable relationship with the community, the gatekeeper becomes an agent of institutional transformation. (The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond 2009).

WORKSHOP GUIDELINES⁵

As mentioned above, the workshop created certain levels of discomfort, as troubling topics were raised. The goal of the workshop was to push such difficult issues to be confronted and worked through together in a supportive and safe space. With this in mind it was important to remember to follow some basic guidelines to provide and maintain this space of support and respect. These were as follows:

- Speak from your heart and your experience. Use "I" statements.
- We're not here to judge each other, put each other down, or compete.
- Listen to the wisdom everyone brings to the group.
- Give each person the time and space to speak
- Practice "active listening". Do not interrupt each other – raise your hand as a signal
- Prioritize voices of people of colour and quiet white folks in the group
- Challenge behaviour respectfully
- Create anti-racist and feminist language and group dynamics by using such phrases as:
 - ⇒ "When you said or did... or when... happened"
 - ⇒ "I felt/I thought"
 - ⇒ "Because I think/feel I have experienced..."
 - ⇒ "And I'd suggest that... What do you think about it?"

IMPLEMENTING THE WORKSHOP

PARTICIPANTS

In total there were ten possible participants: seven board members (including myself) and the three administrative and coordinating staff of the gallery. As

⁵ Guidelines modified from Challenging White Supremacy workshop, 2008.

previously mentioned, although I facilitated the workshop I was also there to participate in the reflection and learning process. Thus the findings that are detailed in this chapter include my input.

Three of the participants were paid staff of the gallery. The other seven are members of the board of directors of articule. Of the total ten there were seven identifying women and three identifying men. All participants were/are active in the local art community, have education and/or training, most are bilingual and some trilingual. Three participants came to Montreal from outside of Canada, nine would be considered white, and one person may identify as a person of colour. All were between the ages of the ages of 25 and 45. Please note that this information was not collected as part of the workshop, instead it is just common knowledge I have gained by working with the group.

Of the ten possible participants, one resigned from the board mid-session and another was living out of town and could not attend the first session. Eight people participated in the first workshop session, and nine in the second.

TIME FRAME

The workshop was conducted in two, four-hour sessions approximately a month apart. The first section was implemented at articule on March 13th, 2010 from ten o'clock in the morning to two o'clock in the afternoon, over a potluck brunch. When the group was discussing the date and time for the next workshop it came up that holding the workshop at the gallery during opening hours had been a little awkward and disruptive. This was particularly the case for the staff member who was in charge of welcoming the public and answering questions regarding the current exhibitions. The option of having another member come in to 'gallery sit' was

considered to allow for the full attention of all staff members, but the issue of privacy was a concern as the gallery is an open space. It turned out not to be a relevant issue as the show during April was a video screening that was taking place in the evening. Meaning the gallery would be closed during the day, and thus allowing us to use the space without disruption. But as life has it, this was done with a group of mainly volunteers that had conflicting schedules, and as the second workshop's date neared it became apparent that April 10th, 2010 was not going to work for a number of the participants. Due to the fact that the purpose of the second session was to develop an action plan where decisions for the centre were to be made, the concern of not having quorum forced the date to be changed. It was decided, over lengthy telephone and email conversations to combine the workshop with the Board Evaluation meeting scheduled for the following weekend on April 18th, 2010. This meeting was to take place at one of the Board member's home. After a debate around the timeline of the day it was agreed that the workshop would be conducted during the afternoon over light snacks, followed by a break where we as a group would prepare and cook dinner together. Then over dinner the Board Evaluation discussion would take place. I personally thought this would work well because many of the questions brought up in the workshop would relate to the Board Evaluation, and in particular, because of the upcoming strategic plan where change and action would be the focus of discussion. Although the day would be long, I felt that combining thought provoking discussion with adequate breaks and lighthearted conversation would make an enjoyable day overall. I would have to say from my own experience, this is exactly what happened. The group was able to open up fully, and people who did not share as much during the first workshop were able to express new ideas. As a group we were able to delve deeper into some of the key points.

WORKSHOP PART 1 (MARCH 13TH, 2010)

Overview & Objectives

I wanted the workshops to begin with a concentration on individual roles within institutions and systems in our society, but also to remain connected to my overarching research questions. I found Curry-Stevens' (2007) ten-step process to be an excellent theoretical starting point for creating a curriculum of activities around how privilege and oppression are embodied on an individual scale. Using this as a point of departure enabled me to keep in mind the larger workshop objectives at hand. Those being: what possible changes could articulate implement to be more inclusive to the communities in which they are located; are notions of access and privilege being addressed on a institutional scale; as well, keeping within the budgetary reality of the centre, in what way should or could programming methods be modified?

Borrowing from Curry-Stevens', *Pedagogy for the Privileged* framework (2007), concentrating firstly on her initial six steps, my objective was to introduce the participants to ideas of how privilege and oppression may play out and affect our daily lives through individual action. However, these individual relationships also effect institutional spaces, and vice versa. These steps again are as follows: step 1: awareness of oppression, 2: oppression as structural and thus enduring and pervasive, 3: locating oneself as oppressed, 4: locating oneself as privileged, 5: understanding the benefits that flow from privilege, 6: understanding oneself as implicated in the oppression of others and understanding oneself as an oppressor (Curry-Stevens 2007). Using these steps as a base to build upon allowed me to also easily incorporate The PISAB's anti-racist principle of working to undo racism (2009-2011), as well as an analysis of power and empowerment as discussed by Rowlands' (1997).

Another important objective to begin with, was to stress the importance of creating an open and supportive dynamic within the group so that discussions could remain honest and even vulnerable at times.

Activities & Discussion

I started off the workshop with a brief introduction reminding the group what the main objectives of the workshops were, as mentioned above. I then took the opportunity to thank the participants for being open to the challenge, thereby giving me the opportunity to put some of the theoretical knowledge I have gained into practice, as well as allowing me to conduct action research with their collaboration.

I dedicated a fair amount of time to the introduction of the workshop because from the needs assessment I knew that few people in the group had participated in similar workshops, and I was aware from my own transformative learning experiences that without first establishing a supportive and constructive space, walls would go up quickly. I reiterated the purpose of the workshop was to create positive change for articulate and its members, not to produce guilt or shame, however experiencing such feelings would be normal while doing the activities. The point in discussing ground rules, of which most people would already be aware of in theory, such as respect, was more of a reminder so that they could remain as present as possible with regards to their language and behaviour. It was at this time we went over the workshop guidelines together (see page 32 or appendix I). These were not fully agreed upon by everyone, but I asked that we try to respect the guidelines as much as possible for the purpose of our workshops.

My desire was to keep the workshops as casual as possible while still tackling serious issues. This included allowing people the freedom to step outside or go to the

washroom, if and when needed. A method I employed to set a tone of openness was to begin with sharing some of the challenges I have faced personally in my education around privilege and oppression. I made it clear that although I was the facilitator I was also there as a learner and participant who wanted to share experiences and knowledge with everyone.

Once the introduction was complete and we all felt ready to start, we moved into our first activity that I call *Triggers*. The point of the exercise is to think about language, topics, or behaviour that may be personal emotional triggers: such as causing anger, distress, sadness, fear, etc. These are emotional spaces someone may find difficult to move through, or will cause that person to shut down. *Triggers* can be a difficult activity to start with as it forces people to jump into a personal reflection process right off the bat, but I felt that it was an appropriate step to bring focus inwards, as the first day was centered around the individual. People were not forced to share, but it did allow for a moment of thought around challenging emotions that could be difficult to work through logically. From there people were invited to share their triggers if they wanted the group to be aware of them before we started on larger scale discussions. The purpose was not to silence people; instead its use was to promote a level of collective awareness and respect.

Next, using a light icebreaker activity, participants were asked to '*describe yourself in 3 words*'. We had about five minutes to write down whatever came to our minds. Most of the words that people wrote down were connected to what they perceive their personality to be, such as: energetic, daydreamer, optimistic, impulsive, talkative and reflective. Descriptive words around personality were relevant and important, however, I was expecting a greater variety of words to be connected to identity, and this is something I will expand upon in my reflection of the first day.

The round table discussion that followed was facilitated by the question of why we had chosen our three words, and the challenge of only being allowed three. Each person had the opportunity to explain their words' importance to how they view themselves and the role they may or may not have in their identity construction. This was coupled with whether we believe this is how we are read or viewed by others. It was through this dialogue I introduced the notion of 'othering'. I asked the group if they define themselves against what they perceive they are not like in comparison to other people. The purpose of this activity was to provoke initial thought around the subject, and not to spend a great deal of time on the issues of 'othering' as the next activity would be a continuation of these thoughts.

The description icebreaker flowed nicely into the *Flower of Power* activity (see appendix II) that we did afterwards. Here participants used two different coloured markers to shade in the petals of the flower according to their position in society associated with the words on each petal. This binary exercise furthered the discussion around 'othering', as well as the strict and unrealistic uses of binaries or categories in society, which eternalizes power and privilege dynamics. An example used was the gender binary of male and female, where the male category holds greater amounts of power. Though a large portion of our society does identify with one or the other, this certainly is not the case for everyone. The needs of members, staff and the public who identify as gender neutral, gender queer or trans persons is something articulate is having to address currently in much more concrete ways.

The *Flower of Power* allowed for an analysis of how power, oppression, and privilege are fluid interlocking systems that inform each other depending on the individual and their interactions with institutions and systems. Some specific questions we looked at were: does this effect how you view yourself, your life, or how you engage with other

people? How do your positions in society inform your position within articule?

Participants also took the time to share their own experiences of oppression and how they felt, which led into recognizing affinities that may or may not exist between forms of oppression.

A point of reflection that appeared to be of importance to certain people in the group was our relationship with the environment. A number of the petals were related such as: human/non-human, geographic region (origin), geographic region (current), and relationship to the natural world. The meanings of these petals were discussed as well as locality, such as urban or rural and people's experiences or belief systems with their environment. This moved the group into consideration of the role of artists in our civic culture and society, asking what it means for rural artists, non-traditional artists, or artists new to cities. Many creative occupations are associated with financial and resource access struggles.

The language petal received some attention with both first language English and French speakers in the group seeing themselves as in disadvantaged positions within society. No argument was sparked, but a few Anglophones saw themselves as marginalized in predominantly French speaking Montreal and Quebec, whereas Francophones viewed their position within Canada or a more global scale. Analyzing one's position locally versus globally came up quite often, as with religion and ethnic group. One of the flower petals was left blank on the worksheet to allow for other areas of marginalization or privilege to come up, some of which were: emotional, physical characteristics, social and communication skills.

The tone of the workshop by this point had turned quite serious. The exchange over the *Flower of Power* had formed some tension, but no one stopped participating.

People still seemed very comfortable sharing their opinions in relation to the petals and some went so far as to tell detailed stories of personal experiences.

The last activity of the day was the first part of the section I entitled *Recognizing Privilege*. Here we took Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack Checklist*, and started going over it together. The goal was to do a good portion of the checklist as a group and then take the rest home to permit time for personal reflection on the day's activities. As the four hours of the workshop were coming to an end it became apparent that we were not going to be able to get through very much of the checklist together. We took a few minutes to read through approximately the first fifteen and discuss their relevance to our lives. I asked people to share their feelings around some of the points; if they thought they were pertinent or if they reflected anyone's experiences. This subject was pushed a little further by asking how it made people feel to think of themselves as privileged in certain areas as compared to our earlier observations around oppression.

As hoped, McIntosh caused visible and vocal reactions within the group, as there was difficulty shifting from seeing oneself as oppressed to being an oppressor. Unfortunately because of time constraints our wrap-up felt rushed. My desire to get certain material out conflicted with the need to close the workshop.

In coming to the end of the workshop I made it clear that emotional instability during such a discussion is normal and that defensive thinking could be expected. As a group it was decided we would come back to McIntosh's checklist at the beginning of our next workshop as it was closely related to the video we were to watch as 'homework' – Tim Wise's lecture, *The Pathology of Privilege: Racism, White Denial & the Costs of Inequality*. Before we said our goodbyes, I made the point of asking if

everyone was feeling ok with the day's activities, to which people said they did. It was difficult for me to read them because of some of the tension that had formed; as well people were becoming tired. We collectively set the following workshop date for April 10th, 2010 (which was later changed), and I told everyone I'd be sending out an email to recap the workshop and to detail what was to be expected next session.

THE MONTH BETWEEN

In attempt to follow up on the first session while also keeping the participants engaged in the material for the second session I sent an email (see appendix III) to the group the following Monday (two days after our initial meeting). The email was to provide support as well as keep communication open around some of the discomfort that was felt at the end of our first session. As mentioned above the first workshop ended in a bit of a rush, and I though that some people left feeling somewhat frustrated. In my email I made it clear that emotional responses to the types of activities that we were doing was to be expected. A person may try to prepare themselves to 'get ready to feel', but once a highly emotional space has been entered it may be extremely challenging to think through it. Although I had stated this in the introduction of the workshop, I felt it necessary to repeat that feelings of anger, frustration or defensiveness are normal, particularly when the whole purpose of the exercises was to confront our positionality and how we view our lived realities. Furthermore, the email was to help participants avoid moving into a headspace of guilt that may shut down future discussions and a deeper analysis of the institution. I encouraged the group to write down any feelings, thoughts or reflections they were having around the activities so that we could address them as a group at the next workshop. While I felt that most, if not all were dealing fairly positively with the first workshop, I also made it known that if anyone was

uncomfortable sharing with the group or had a pressing matter that came up around the topics, they could email or call me.

In my email, I also provided the link to the Tim Wise video lecture, which I asked the group to watch or listen to before the next meeting. I also included the complete PDF document of Peggy McIntosh's article where I obtained the fifty point checklist.

Because one of the members of the board missed the first workshop I included the first workshop's agenda for them to look over, as well as the activity sheet we had all used.

WORKSHOP PART 2 (APRIL 18TH, 2010)

Overview & Objectives

At the start of the second session I wanted to go over some of the objectives we had set out in the first part to refresh people's memories and ground the workshop, and update the person who did not make it to the initial workshop. I restated that the purpose of these sessions was to promote positive change with both the members of articule and the institution itself, not to create guilt or shame. These steps were meant to be empowering through support but also allow for constructive opinions.

The intention of the second session was to move away from an individual focus and towards an institutional one. The goal was to set objectives for articule including a timeline for implementation. At this point I also wanted to remind the group of my research questions that informed the development of the two-part workshop, and that would be incorporated into our second session. These were: what changes can artist-run centres implement to be more inclusive to the communities in which they are located? Are notions of access and privilege being addressed? How can changes

be actualized under budgetary constraints? In what way should curatorial, programming, and display practices be challenged and/or modified?

Again taking from Curry-Stevens' (2007) ten-step process, I looked at the last four steps in preparation of the second part of the workshop. They are: step 7: building confidence to take action—knowing how to intervene, step 8: planning actions for departure, step 9: finding supportive connections to sustain commitments, and step 10: declaring intentions for future action. Even more so, I adapted the PISAB's set of *Anti-Racist Principles for Effective Organizing & Social Transformation* (2009-2011), as guides in our brainstorming and discussion of the day. This was a way to prioritize issues and keep discourse concentrated on a solid plan of action. These points included: learning from history, sharing culture, developing leadership, maintaining accountability, networking, analyzing power, and gatekeeping.

Activities & Discussion

The workshop began where we had left off with Peggy McIntosh's, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack Checklist*. It had been an additional homework request for the group to finish reading the list of privileges McIntosh writes in her article so that the group could have some time to reflect on it. As mentioned in the previous section, I had addressed some of my concerns about having to end the first workshop abruptly through an email I sent out afterwards. That said, I felt it was important to return to the discussion in order to address some of the concerns people were having. It was clear for some persons in the group that it was easier and more comfortable for them to see oppression rather than privilege. Recognizing oneself and an institution as a possible agent of oppression can help in identifying privilege in our society that is often ignored. A person with certain privileges may not

even be aware of some of these issues because privilege allows you to be oblivious to other's realities.

Similarly, the video lecture by Tim Wise entitled The Pathology of Privilege: Racism, White Denial & the Costs of Inequality, stresses how seeing oneself as a possible agent of oppression, can actually reveal false benefits of privilege, though it may be difficult. Highlighting the connection with hegemony, I pointed out that people unconsciously may participate in the oppression of others and ourselves because it has been framed to be the norm by our society.

I had chosen this lecture as homework for a number of reasons; first, I knew if I gave a list of readings they would most likely not be read by the whole group. This is not to say that the group was not committed to the workshop and the learning that we embarked on as a team, but everyone who is a member or on the board at articule is there as a volunteer, and all the staff members are there on a part-time basis, therefore all of them either have other jobs and/or projects on the go, taking up time in their busy lives. Thus, to ask the group to commit more of their time to reading theory on the subject of oppression and privilege I believe would not have been as beneficial as the video text that they could either watch, or listen to while doing something else. Pedagogically, I view radio and video lectures to be excellent tools as they take into account the possibility that people do have different learning styles.

For the most part Wise's lecture was well received, and people thought his words reiterated some of the issues we had already talked about as a group. His expressive and well-informed address clearly illustrates how white denial is promoted and reproduced through cultural systems, individuals and institutions, thus enabling

participants to reflect on their personal privilege and oppression and how that may impact articule.

An issue that was brought up in the discussion on Tim Wise's video was his style of speaking. For some it came across as being very 'white' and seemingly rooted in a patriarchal, aggressive religious preaching approach. It was such an issue for one member of the group that they had difficulty finishing the video as it reminded them too much of their own past history and relationship to religious and fundamentalist thinking. Another critique brought up in the workshop, was that Wise works in an American context; still I think many parallels can be drawn between the issues he raises and Canadian circumstances. The systemic problems Wise discusses are relevant and can be seen in Canadian society to a similar degree. American society may be more blatantly racist or race may be more of a public debate, but the culture of politeness here in Canada often masks the racist, sexist and homophobic structures that this society is also built upon and preserves. Though everyone did not relate to Tim Wise's video lecture, I still feel that it is a helpful and passionate piece to use as he articulates the urgency of social justice and the interconnectedness that racism and white privilege have in social oppression and pathology.

It was after our discussion on McIntosh and Wise that we moved out of the section *Recognizing Privilege* into the group brainstorming session that would address both individual responsibility and our group or collective responsibility. I called this section *CHANGE AGENT: Seeing oneself and articule in action for positive change*. I reminded the group of something one of our board members had said at a previous meeting: that they felt that although this undertaking may have been tiring at times, it was nevertheless exciting to think of articule as a leader in the community with respect to these matters.

The purpose of the brainstorming session was not only to make tangible decisions for action, but also to deconstruct and examine our individual implications. I wanted the level of power people have to create change to become apparent, but I also wanted to encourage unique outreach initiatives, and build collaborative community bridges institutionally.

Outcomes

The workshop's brainstorming discussion resulted in a number of categorized goals that were to be connected and implemented over the next five years as part of the strategic plan. As mentioned above the workshop borrowed organizing principals from the PISAB. The action plan that we developed is as follows:

Analyze institutional power by rethinking structures as creative starting points. Ask where can change be exercised through the decision making process? How can we be more accessible (physically and ideologically)? We can assume more of our institutional power, as we have the ability to define programming, community involvement, and actions. Although we must be aware of institutional restraints and policies, inefficiency can sometimes create openness. Thus we have to remain open and seek out various funding options from the three levels of government and more. This leads to where articulate stands on language, as funding may be dependant on it. Are we an English or bilingual centre? Another institutional power is intellectualism, what is the role of an ARC, and how can alignment with academia and/or universities be beneficial?

Learn from history but look forward. Learn to accept failure, and learn from mistakes and the past. Recognize the need, and put a practice in place to support an effort to

pass on information from year to year between past and new board members, and programming members. articule is over thirty years old, there is much history to be learned.

Develop leadership in the ARC community, but learn to be more open through both internal and external critical reflection and evaluation. In the continuing effort towards better practice, develop a survey or suggestion box (either in house, or on the web), to know how the public and our membership body perceive the centre. This also connects to initiating collaborative efforts by making communities aware of articule's commitment to exchange and knowledge sharing.

Network and outreach through better advertising initiatives to the general public and not just the artist community. This could be through utilizing media, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, web presence, and publications, to promote activities, encourage public participation and awareness, while sharing resources. As a way to promote communication amongst members and committees, articule needs to create a reporting system such as an annual report, encourage members to open their studios for visits, and invite members to speak about their work at show and tell events. This should also include our past idea of making artist talks and presentations more of a dialogue that could invite various interpretations and meanings. This may involve inviting professionals that have some connection to the creative theme, but who can present different insight or opinion. For example, an exhibition that addresses urbanization or gentrification could have a civil or urban engineer, or an environmental or urban planner speak alongside the artist. Another way could be to devote energy to the reception of collaborations and educational programming that are socially engaged, with the goal of implementing at least one larger scale collaborative project per year.

Maintain accountability through clearly defining board objectives (short, middle, and long term) by writing a mandate, creating an advisory board and/or inviting non-voting community members to sit on the board. Bridge this activity with the development of the strategic plan through brainstorming and creative direction sessions to hear input from board, staff, members, other ARC, public, etc. Additionally, in relation to developing leadership, generate an evaluation process through a system of surveying both external and internal relationships.

The Gatekeeper is an “agent of institutional transformation” (PISAB 2009-2011). Gatekeeping can be viewed as another form of maintaining accountability to encourage networking with those who share similar values (PISAB 2009-2011). I took on this role for the 2010/2011 year, with the knowledge that gatekeeping will be an ongoing responsibility of the board as a whole, and different members and staff will carry on the supportive and critical task in the future.

EVALUATION

I received back evaluation forms from only five of the nine people who participated in the workshops. This fact could be explained by a few reasons. The workshops were discussed at length during the board meeting following the second workshop. That board meeting was held a month and a half after the second workshop. It was decided at that point that I would type up a digest of the outcomes and the list of the objectives on which we settled on for distribution to all participants. At the same time, I sent out the evaluation forms, almost two months after the last workshop. This combined with the fact people have busy lives and do not always have time to sit down and reflect on a workshop that they have already invested a fair amount of time in. Another reason to consider is that certain participants may have felt

uncomfortable filling out an evaluation through email because it could be traced back to them.

I purposefully chose not do the evaluation on the day of the last workshop because I wanted the participants to take some time away from the discussions that were difficult and challenging at times. The day of the second session was extremely full and I think adding a workshop evaluation on top of everything would have resulted in people writing one-word answers due to mental and physical fatigue. Allowing some time for reflection on the goals and outcomes before filling in the evaluation forms may have been a good decision, at the time, I think. But, in the future, I will plan to send out the evaluation much sooner. I would also like to offer the option of doing it anonymously, maybe by using an online form for example.

The evaluation form that I sent out (see appendix VI) had six questions regarding the activities, materials, openness, benefits, and outcomes of the workshop. The following are highlights from the completed evaluation forms I received.

The first question was: *think back to the first workshop when we did the Flower of Power, how did you feel during the exercise/activity? Were you able to express your feeling/thoughts/ideas openly?* Participants for the most part felt that the subject at times was uncomfortable, but also posed interesting and thought-provoking questions. All evaluations said they were at ease with the group and could express themselves openly. One participant stated that the level of comfort may have led to certain assumptions being made and prevented some aspects of the flower to be addressed, and another wondered how it would have been if they did not know the other people involved in the workshop. Yet another respondent said that their

favorite part of the exercise (besides coloring) was hearing other participant's candid opinions and thoughts.

Addressing the end of the first workshop, one evaluator wrote feeling a little rushed during the final part of the day, noticing that there seemed to be a few unresolved feelings. This was not a surprise to me as I shared this opinion.

The second question asked: *did the activity help you see yourself and your position within society or articulate differently? Or did it allow you to think of any issues differently?* This question brought up varied assessments. One said what stood out most in their mind was trying to evaluate their relationship with nature; and another wrote that the human/non human binary mystified them, bringing forward the fact that they do not tend to address topics in such an existentialist fashion.

With regards to positionality, one wrote they feel that they have always been very aware of their subjectivity within such social dynamics. While another though it was a good exercise "to step away from the frame and see the whole picture," elaborating by saying it was "a positive activity where I felt that change through group discussions and actions is possible."

One participant mentioned that "it was interesting to think about the role of guilt in these dynamics," and found it "effective when we looked at what we address as non-issues (specifically with that list on privilege) and how that related to guilt."

Thirdly the evaluation asked: *do you feel the homework (the article and video) was engaging and relevant to the subject of the workshop?* Three evaluators appreciated the video and saw it as a nice transition into the second session as it was relevant

and engaging. One said "it was a good reminder that we can all get complacent." Two of the evaluations had critiques of Tim Wise's lecture style and "power of conviction". One wrote that though "the article was good... the video was over the top for me. It reminded me of religious preachers who can go to great lengths to convince their listeners that they (preachers) are right."

The fourth question was: *during the second part of the workshop, did you feel the brainstorming and discussion format was suitable and kept the flow of ideas going? Were you able to express your ideas and opinions openly?* All the evaluation forms stated that the participants thought the workshop format was beneficial, one saying they were "impressed at how productive this part was!" Another person thought it could have been improved if the sections were broken up further with short breaks to "absorb the information and have time to think about the issues that are raised during the group discussions."

One participant wrote very candidly about the issue of race and how it made them feel addressing the topic in our group setting.

"Oppression and privilege are always uncomfortable topics, especially for white people. The greatest point of discomfort for me was that our board at the time had only one non-white member, so I was always aware of being part of a white majority discussing issues related to race in the presence of a single person of colour. That said, I felt the discussion went rather well; members contributed to the discussion with open minds and in good faith, and I felt that the discussion covered a great many important topics. I found I was able to express my ideas openly, but that isn't generally a problem for me, in any case."

In the fifth evaluation question I asked: *How did you feel after the workshop was over? Did you feel that the workshop benefited yourself and/or articule? Or were there any issues/feelings that were left unresolved for example?* To this participants answered that they felt pleased with the outcomes and benefits. I was very pleased with the outcome, particularly with regards to creating board and outreach objectives I felt it was an interesting discussion to have as a group and it helped us further define some of our values and identify methods of action.

With regards to unresolved feelings answers differed. One stated that "I didn't expect that this workshop would resolve any issues immediately, but to start talking and recognizing the issues is the first step towards resolving the issues and I think this workshop was highly successful in this regard." While another thought "we covered a lot of ground – if there were any issues left unresolved, I can't think of them." Then someone else shared concerns: "I think that the resulting objectives were realistic and therefore easily integrated into articule's objectives. I think we might have gone a bit quick on implementation and "gate-keeping" functions but we'll see."

One participant shared the fact that this workshop brought up a great deal of associated concerns, and they hope some may be addressed in future conversations at articule. I agreed with this evaluation, and think the points brought up could be used as an effective continuation of the discussions for my own research and articule. This is the excerpt from the evaluation:

"I certainly do think that doing the workshop was beneficial for articule – as it would be, quite honestly, for most any majority-white institution. In terms of unresolved topics, one thing I feel wasn't covered... was articule's situation vis-à-vis race in the context of

Quebec politics: an officially Anglophone ARC in a Francophone society containing a variety of oppressions:

- The history of Quebec's conquest by the English and exploitation by an English/Canadian ruling class with the collusion of the Catholic Church.
- A diverse range of Aboriginal Peoples and First Nations, who have historically been and continue to be oppressed by both Quebec and Canadian society.
- A large, diverse immigrant/new Canadian population always marginalized and frequently scapegoated by both Québécois and Canadian nationalists.

The question of where articulate positions itself in this context would be a useful question to ask, and possibly a future area of policy activity for the centre."

The sixth and final question was left open for *any other thoughts or constructive criticism on the workshop...* The evaluation process brought up the concern of keeping the above issues and action plan alive or present in the minds of the incoming board members of 2011, and the ever changing membership body of the gallery came up. One evaluator wrote:

"I think the process (holding workshop) should be repeated again with the new board members. The discussions can be broadened (with new and varied perspectives) by opening it to other articulate members. It's a great way to be able to feel that you are part of a constructive group and can possibly bring a positive change in your community."

Another shared the concern by saying 'the challenge will be to keep alive the ideas that arose during this process, develop them and include them in the centre's overall plan.' And though one person felt that the "workshop was a bit too much axed on

race issues while other forms of exclusions could've been addressed," two others felt it was engaging and "very pertinent."

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Of eight people who partook in the above activities, I was only able to retrieve six of the worksheets from the first session. Two people forgot to bring their sheets to the second session and I was unable to get them at a later date. As mentioned earlier, I did not collect them at the end of the first session because we had not fully completed the last activity on the sheet. People were asked to bring them home to finish and then return them next session where we would use them to start off our second meeting. Another reason I allowed the sheets to be brought home was in attempt to invite people to write their thoughts in the reflection notes section (see appendix II), however this did not result in what I expected, as I discuss below in my reflection. Therefore, my discussions about the findings are based on my access to the six participant sheets, five evaluations, conversations, as well as my own experience and personal notes.

Initially the workshop took more of an individualistic approach and was not necessarily organized to obtain concrete findings. Opting for a holistic strategy, I wanted to begin with asking questions to assess the participants' awareness and comfort with regards to being instrumental in institutional transformations. I was trying to establish the level of openness and engagement the board and staff had, in addressing my questions concerning systemic scales of oppression. As I have learned, there is a definite need to look at the role individuals have within the makeup of the institution. If individuals are not open to change then obstacles will be encountered, and this was a scenario I wanted to prevent. Luckily for my research,

articule was an excellent choice as it is very much committed to community outreach and social engagement, if not fully in practice yet, at least in an ideological sense.

The first section of the workshop brought forward important issues to think of, putting an emphasis on how we may as people influence the institutions we interact with on a daily basis. As board members we were liable to various commitments and the workshop helped remind us of this fact in breaking perceptions of the self as separate from a community. The identity icebreaker and power exercises furthered this by inciting empathy and collective responsibility with respect to oppression and privilege.

Though there were challenges with participants turning the critical eye on themselves, I feel the first session showed great promise of personal benefit, and that continued into the second session where institutional changes were set in place. The second meeting, looking closely at my research questions, had a focus that anchored articule's location within the larger framework of the ARC community and the possible impacts change could have.

In my opinion one of the most important and exciting outcomes of the two workshops, emerging from the second one, was the objective to intentionally seek out collaborative learning projects with other organizations whether related or not related to art. Overall, the discussions pinpointed numerous areas that articule could work on and incorporate into the strategic plan. Knowing the creation of the strategic plan would be lengthy, I pushed for at least one concrete objective to be set in place for the upcoming year and which would not have to depend on the completion of the strategic document. Thus, as a group it was decided and voted on that our goal would start with at least one collaborative adventure to be implemented per year,

starting in 2010/2011. As the gatekeeper, I would be responsible for providing support around this project. As it happened there were already ideas of what the project could be, as well as a potential collaborator. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, under Future Plans: Collaborations.

An ever present challenge articule faces is continuity in policy and moving forward on long term ideas from year to year. This was expressed in our discussions, on the evaluations as well as in the development of the strategic plan. The desire to keep artistic visioning fresh, flexible and fluid welcomes creative risk taking and flourishes the imagination. It also comes with the drawback of a transient membership who need to learn the history and who have the responsibility to move forward with the projects already in progress. Another drawback is that this duty often falls on the shoulders of the already overworked staff at the gallery.

In line with these comments I would argue that there is a great need to continue workshops around anti-oppression language, policymaking, programming, etc. Space could easily be made to conduct similar learning opportunities in the form of workshops and courses on a yearly basis as the board, members and staff shift. Also, expanding access to the programming committees and membership at large would, I believe, also have powerful impacts and help better inform and ground members in the centre's mandate. The issue then would be to remember to designate a gatekeeper to insure the history is remembered.

As stated in one of the evaluation forms, important questions for articule to keep in mind for continued discussion and debate would be: a) our language policy, which is already in motion, b) the centre's recognition of First Nations' people and the large migrant and new Canadian population. These discussions have already begun.

Most members feel that an integral part of the centre is the sense of community that articulate creates and helps to build. This was expressed over the course of the workshops as well as in the evaluations and various conversations I have had with members. I feel that the workshop added to the perception of community, taking it deeper to an active, supportive level that has the ambition and openness to look at existing problematic structures affecting people's lives. While the thirtieth anniversary began the shift in articulate that senior members were longing for, I truly feel that this workshop aided in sparking the dialogue around larger societal problems in connection with artistic visioning and programming directions.

WORKSHOP REFLECTION

In this section I will look at some of the things that occurred over the two sessions that I would like to do differently if I were to do it again. Certain activities could be rethought or timing changed. I also will briefly discuss things that worked well and had desired or even surprising outcomes.

As mentioned a number of times, the end of the first session was quite hurried. This is my biggest criticism in how the workshop played out. I would have much preferred if we had had the time to take a more lengthy and relaxed break, after which we could have returned to finish the McIntosh checklist together. As this was the first time I was conducting such a workshop it was hard to know how long each activity and following discussion would take. We could have started with the more challenging checklist exercise, but I viewed the workshop as a process that aligned with Curry-Stevens' steps. For this reason, I felt that the group needed to move through a particular thought process. The activity, *describe yourself in 3 words*, and *Flower of Power* exercise highlighted the need that the board and staff had to reflect on their positions within a community. My experiences with workshops that tackle

challenging subjects have shown me that there is need to give participants ample time to go through each activity at their own pace. Rushing the pace of the exercises leaves people in emotionally heightened spaces and can create negative associations with the subjects under consideration, which unfortunately may have happened at the end of our session. And though I tried to avoid this by closing the workshop with the acknowledgement that emotions were high, I did feel that a couple of participants in the group were beginning to shut down. McIntosh's checklist sparked defensive responses around white privilege as we addressed some of our own deep-seated racist ideologies. Though I was aware it could occur, my hope was to not have barriers of shame, guilt, or resistance block ideas of responsibility and action.

In retrospect, I probably should have moved the entire Peggy McIntosh discussion to the second workshop session, but in the moment I felt that it was important to get through a part of the checklist together, instead of leaving participants in the first workshop to go over the entire list alone, and I also was cognizant of the fact that our second session would also be time sensitive.

As expected, the first session did experience a few lulls in the conversation, particularly at the start. Asking people to share things about themselves in a meaningful and reflective way can be demanding and uncomfortable; putting them on the spot in a workshop setting just increases that challenge. I believe icebreakers to be an instrumental component of such workshops, though admittedly I find it particularly hard to find ones that work well with adults under such circumstances. I struggle with wanting to choose a relevant introduction, but also not wanting to start off too seriously and running the risk of disengaging participants. This is definitely a danger when starting with the *Triggers* exercise, as I have witnessed it in another

situation. With the articulate workshop I thought it would work well due to the fact people already knew each other fairly well, and luckily this was true.

Another minor issue I had with our first meeting was the icebreaker: *describe yourself in 3 words*. In hindsight the next time I do such an exercise I will need to give clearer instructions. There is a fine balance between giving instructions and planting ideas in people's heads, and I have found this exercise particularly difficult with this regard. The idea of the activity is to bring out identity norms so that people in the group can see the patterns that evolve when persons occupy positions of privilege or who regularly experience specific forms of oppression. An example of this is that people of color will often write down their race or ethnicity as an identifying descriptor, while white people rarely do so. Because of my vague directives most words, though not all words, were related to personality traits. The discussion still was able to address my intent of bringing awareness to identity markers that are taken for granted and that can work to privilege some over others.

Despite the fact that we were rushed towards the end and the workshop at times experienced silence and unease, while at other times became heated, people stayed engaged in the subject matter and topics at hand. I appreciated participants' commitment throughout the process, and felt encouraged to know that the material held people's attention and was relevant. Even more exciting, was the fact that I felt the second session shared and maybe even surpassed the engagement of the first.

In closing the first session I tried to encourage participants to write their thoughts in the discussion notes and reflection notes sections of the worksheets, reminding the group about this part of the task at hand. Unfortunately this did not happen. I think if I were to do a similar workshop again in the future, or combine this type of

curriculum into a course I would allot specific time for guided reflection. Once people leave the group setting it seems very unlikely that they will take the time to sit down to reflect. Though in the long run thinking over material and emotional spaces can be very beneficial to the person and their work, I obviously know it can be arduous, as the process of reflection does require a fair bit of energy and time.

Initially I had planned time between the two workshops to allow for the group to finish reading the McIntosh article and watch the Tim Wise video lecture, as well as leave time for reflection on the subjects that were discussed. I now feel that too much time elapsed between the dates. Impressive discussions and decisions were made, but some of the topics covered in the first workshop were difficult to connect to the second because there were too many weeks that went by between the two sessions. I believe having the seminars one or two weeks apart would produce stronger results.

Overall I felt the second session of the workshop went smoothly, and results were produced. The beginning was a little slow, I think because many weeks had passed since we had first met and it took a little time to get people back on topic. Once we were all reminded of the key points, the group's energy increased and dynamic discussions ensued. Holding this activity outside of the gallery space and in a home also afforded a more relaxed mood.

Another point I wanted to touch on here was the mention of the workshop possibly being focused exceedingly on race, while maybe not addressing other forms of oppression that affect articulate. Perhaps this is the case, but as stated in my intentions of the workshop I wanted to focus on race because I find it to be mostly avoided by white majority spaces due to feelings of discomfort. Interestingly enough,

this concern was expressed by the person who exhibited the most discernible shift in awareness around the issues we discussed, based on my observations. Over the past year in working with this person I have been surprised at some of the reflections and input that are clearly grounded in critical thought on anti-oppression practices. I do not think this is solely because of the workshops, but I do think the seminars certainly helped nourish a culture of awareness on these matters.

As written in an evaluation and my findings above, situating articule in the ARC community of Quebec brings up new political questioning with regards to language and the further perpetuation of exclusionary behavior that impact historically marginalized communities. Some of these concerns could have been better incorporated into the workshop, and it is my hope that future workshops will include these issues. This past year has already seen movement in regards to addressing these questions as will be discussed in the following sections of this thesis.

I know that, as I participate in more workshops and gain facilitation skills in anti-oppression, anti-racist and feminist education, I will learn to better read groups and make necessary adjustments to the curriculum. Though, I also know, as a maturing educator in this field, that there will always be bumps along the road of never ending experiences, contributing to my ever expanding learning.

CHAPTER 3

Workshop outcomes, openings for new opportunities and further explorations: local and international avenues

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Now that a full year has passed since the workshops were initially conducted and the strategic action plan completed in June 2011, the impact of the workshop on fostering a certain awareness and bringing focus to particular community issues is emerging clearly. I would say that the greatest institutional outcome of the workshop can be witnessed in the development of the strategic plan. The centre, articule, has never been so energized and committed to breaking out of the gallery walls, reallocating funds and redistributing efforts into community development and outreach. A process of complete restructuring is now underway for the 2011-2012 season. Most significantly the role of outreach will no longer be the sole responsibility of the Outreach Committee as a co-ordinator position has now been allocated to focus on outreach. This came about when job descriptions were rewritten this past year in order to make sure that our Outreach Coordinator actually will have the time to do outreach, and that the Programming Coordinator will be able to deal with all the changes in programming that are anticipated for the coming year.

This past year (2010/2011) I took on the role of the gatekeeper, but as discussed above, this was with the knowledge that it would be an ongoing responsibility for the entire board and staff. In reflecting on my role as the gatekeeper, I can conclude that it was not particularly difficult for me to keep in mind specific issues we had identified in our workshop, as these were issues I often think about and am committed to. Over the year there were some specific duties I performed that I believe tied closely to my responsibility for advisory gatekeeping. One visible step

was to accept the appointment as the president of the gallery for the year. Working as the president in an organization that traditionally seeks to function as non-hierarchical was a wonderful opportunity to provide leadership and guidance but also receive support. Of course being as involved in a centre as I became also had its challenges with time commitments and reliance that at times resulted in what I might consider an unhealthy interdependence, but that conversation is for another paper.

The Human Resources sector was another area at article in which I became involved. The gallery had a number of changes with personnel, at one point having two people working part-time to fill the responsibilities of one job requiring full-time involvement. Due to the challenges this posed, part way through the year it was decided by the board that the best avenue to take, coinciding with the introduction of the strategic plan, would be to reassign certain tasks and rewrite the job descriptions. The outcome was a revamped definition of the Outreach Coordinator position and the hiring of a new coordinator. Now that my year as gatekeeper is over, I feel confident in passing this role on to articule's new Outreach Coordinator, who is extremely committed to anti-oppression at the level of personal life, of artistic practices and of work.

FUTURE PLANS: STRATEGIC PLAN

As you, the reader, already know, it was at the same time as I was developing and implementing the *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop* that the process of the strategic plan began. The initial strategic plan meeting I attended as a member of the board was held just a couple days before the second workshop, on April 15th, 2010. I think it is important to mention this fact because the topics and issues that were brought up as part of this meeting I believe affected the results of the second

workshop that focused on individual and institutional action. Then vice versa, as mentioned above, the objectives that were produced as part of the workshop were then incorporated into the strategic plan. Remarkably almost every point recorded in my notes can now be found in the strategic plan, many already being carried out and the rest with set deliverables in the action plan.

It was during the preliminary strategic plan meetings that we began the discussion on where we see articulate in the next five years and how we imagine reaching specific goals. This consultation was broken down into four categories of internal and external objectives that would be 'useful to achieve the goal' and 'detrimental to the goal'. Specifically: internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats. The following are the notes I recorded during the meeting:

Internal strengths:

- Strong communication between staff
- Diverse membership body
- Warm, welcoming, fun, dynamic space
- Creative and dynamic programming

Internal Weaknesses

- Obstacles in keeping and hiring strong staff members (low pay, no medical benefits, etc)
- Poor communication with the board – email responsibility
- Lack of resource sharing – knowledge between members
- Fear of taking risks
- Insular or incestuous artistic community

External Opportunities

- More collaborations with new and maybe not so obvious communities and spaces

- Fundraising
- Creative outreach (activities, actions, education) – provocative and challenging

External Threats

- Fear of change –Becoming stagnant because it seems easier to use the same old reliable ideas instead of taking some creative and calculated risks
- Lack of flexibility and spontaneity
- Government funding cuts

On top of this guided discussion, other things that we wanted to keep in mind when doing the *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop* and the strategic plan were:

- Our shared values, collective energy and strong sense of community
- Safe and welcoming gallery space
- Creative freedoms to take initiative and self manage
- Move art outside of the gallery space
- Connect to a larger community
- Social relevance and political engagement

Looking over the *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop* outcomes to equate the results with the action plan and timelines, I will highlight a few fundamental objectives. Over the past year, a number of the points made above have already been incorporated into the policies and procedures at articule. For example, the board invited an ex-officio (non-voting) member to join the board for a one year mandate and provide their expertise around legal matters. To give another example, there has already been talk about inviting one of the past board members, who worked closely on the strategic plan, stay on the new board in a non-voting, advisory capacity.

Another action taken by the board this year was to write their mandate. Though separate from the centre's mandate, it is still aligned and reflects the centre's orientation. A reporting system also began last year with an annual report consisting of short paragraphs from each committee summarizing the year's activities. The hope is that this will facilitate communication between committees so that collaborative efforts can be improved and resources shared.

The outreach committee produced a survey that will be administered early in the 2011-2012 season to assess perceptions of articule within its community and promote an internal reflection process. To continue in this vain a suggestion box that may be called 'suggestions and secrets' to promote playfulness, will be installed in the gallery, or just outside. This is to extend the internal and external evaluation in a less structured approach. Instead of asking specific questions people will be welcome to write things that spontaneously come to mind.

This past year also began articule's joint artist talks. As written about in the outcomes section of the case study, the presentations have taken on more of a dialogical approach, inviting counter-voices on scheduled topics. With promising results and record attendances this will become an ongoing activity as part of programming. As an extension of this, we will be asking members of articule to present their works at show and tell evenings over the next year. Far too often people work together on volunteer duties in and around the gallery but never have the time to get to know the nature of each other's artistic endeavors. Show and tell, as well as possible studio visits will give opportunities to strengthen the artistic and intellectual links in the community. To assist these efforts, the Outreach Coordinator is now in charge of all external communication done by the gallery. Steps have already begun to create a communications plan involving: better advertisement of

programming and events through varied media, and the publication of a biannual or tri-annual calendar.

Desiring to assume more power and exercise change through decision making, articule has made the adventurous and risky leap to change the entire structure of programming. To date, articule has had three streams of programming separated into committees: regular programming, long term curated and in gallery; special projects, short term spontaneous projects in and outside of the gallery; and window programming, projects that are self reliant that engage those who pass by articule when the gallery is closed during the winter and summer holidays. To be on the regular programming committee one would have to be nominated and voted in for a two year mandate, whereas the membership in the other committees is more flexible with newer members welcomed to join. The hired strategic plan consultant introduced a new way of viewing programming ventures. The 2011-2012 season will see articule's first attempt at working under one mega programming committee that will take care of both long term and short term programming with smaller ad hoc sub-committees formed where or when necessary. A key theme repeated throughout the workshops and strategic planning is the desire to prevent stale programming that is disengaged or disconnected from a community context. Risk, flux, fluidity, spontaneity, engagement, collaboration, community, outreach, were words that continually came up. Keeping with the idea that inefficiency can sometimes create openness, it is the hope that this programming experiment will create a greater emergence of people's energies, imaginations, artistic visioning, and risk taking.

The need to diversify funding sources in order to support new projects, to be expanded beyond the usual three levels of government, was another objective that was mentioned as part of the workshop. Grant writing is a long and laborious

process. It is therefore a reality that staff members do not always have time to continuously apply for more funding. This effort has to be over and above the basic operating funding renewal itself requiring a continuous application process. That said, this year saw a number of new grants applied for to expand outreach projects. One of these applications was not funded but received excellent ranking and feedback. It is the hope that articule will be able to move ahead with the project after all, this coming autumn 2011. The other applications were either successful or some results are still pending. In relation to earned income, the fundraising committee has developed an ambitious plan with the help of a fundraising specialist. It is the hope that this will be executed in the upcoming year.

articule's board has been charged with a number of tasks on the strategic action plan for 2011-2012. These tasks include putting in place a structure to transfer knowledge from the previous board, in order to minimize repetition and to maintain a timely pace for implementing the action plan. Another assignment will be to discuss the position of articule around its operating language. In recent history articule has been viewed as an English centre, should this change? Who is being excluded? Would operating bilingually be possible within the budget? These are all questions that need to be covered.

A shame on articule's record that the next board will have to resolve is the stand still around making the gallery a physically accessible space. There have been discussions and attempts made over the past four years with still no outcome on how to make the entrance accessible for persons with mobility challenges, such as wheelchairs, walking devices and strollers, to give a few examples. In fairness, numerous people have tried remedy the situation by attempting to solve the complex related problems with space limits, the City of Montreal, contractors, and the

landlord, but at the end of each year the problem has been bumped over to the next. This year an ad hoc committee was created, including a person who is an accomplished contractor. It is my hope that they will be successful, as it has continually been brought up as a major issue facing articule. The need to find a solution is becoming more urgent as greater numbers of organizations will no longer collaborate or hold events in or with spaces that are not accessible to all forms of mobility.

FUTURE PLANS: COLLABORATIONS

I want to take this opportunity to describe some of the future collaborations articule is planning. It was our goal that we would undertake to do at least one medium to large scale joint project per year with people or an organization that we would not have worked with otherwise, under our normal programming. This was born out of the effort, identified in the workshops, to broaden our outreach and learning as an organization. Though we do not want to disregard the already strong ties we have built in the Montreal ARC community, members are aware of the negative results that can happen if incestuous group behavior is not opened up and challenges from time to time.

The first of these collaboration initiatives came about from conversations articule's Project Coordinator was having with SAVAC (South Asian Visual Artist Centre) an artist-run centre in Toronto. SAVAC is a centre that works mostly in collaboration with other organizations and collectives. On their website they explain:

"SAVAC works without a gallery space, and typically in collaboration with other artist-run centres, public galleries and visual arts organizations. This collaborative process of working allows us to foster important ties with the mainstream art community, encouraging an

exchange of ideas and perspectives, and increasing our organizational reach and visibility" (SAVAC, 2011).

During the initial planning phase it was decided that articule participate, organize and host a collaborative symposium with SAVAC in Montreal. Based on this decision, articule approached two other artist-run centres in Montreal, *La Centrale*, and *Montréal, arts interculturels* (MAI), to reach a larger community for programming and planning support. An inter-organizational committee was formed, which I sit on, to layout the ideas and details of the symposium. It was decided that the three day event, called *Diasporasie*, would be filled with video screenings, moderated discussions, presentations, workshops, performances, food and even karaoke, being hosted in Montreal at each of the three local centres. Focused around issues of South and East Asian diasporas, Canadian and international curators and artists would be invited to participate. A funding proposal was submitted last Fall 2010, to implement the project at the end of April or early May 2011, but the grant was not successful. We did find out that we were first on the waiting list and if any of the other recipient's projects fell through we would get funded. At the same time we were also given positive feedback by the funding body, encouraging us to reapply. Because of the uncertainty of funding, but also the confidence in the project, the committee decided to postpone the symposium until Fall 2011. The new dates have been set for November 4th to 6th and the schedule for the event has been written.

I was disappointed at first when the funding did not come through. I felt responsible as the gatekeeper to insure at least one project per year was seen through. I felt better knowing that the other organizations were not ready to give up and it was decided to not cancel the entire effort, just reschedule instead. I was further comforted by the new Outreach Coordinator's commitment to collaborative projects,

and making articule's gallery space available to collectives that do not have permanent locations. Spring 2011 saw articule open its doors to two collaborative efforts. One was for a meeting and presentation by *Artung*, a local artistic association committed to extraordinary collaborative events that engage the general public (Artung.ch, 2011). The second, to take place a day later, is an event with the *Living Histories Theater Ensemble* in collaboration with *AGIR* and *Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique* (two LBTTQ migrant and refugee support organizations) consisting of a discussion and workshop dedicated to exploring techniques of theatre of the oppressed as a medium to share personal stories. *The Living Histories Theatre Ensemble* is a collective made up "of improvisational theatre artists, community organizers, and educators who work with *Creative Alternatives*, a community partner with Concordia University's Montreal Life Stories Project" (articule.org, 2011).

Ripple effects of anti-oppression

An exciting reality of working in the field of anti-oppression, particularly in relation to education, is the ripple effect. By that I am referring to the way word spreads within communities about discussions and workshops that are being developed and implemented. This is partially because many people active in the Montreal arts community are members of more than one ARC or do work within more than one. News also ends up spreading outside of the ARC community as people move amongst other organizations in the city and beyond. The following two sections give examples of situations where my work with articule has afforded me the opportunity to continue similar pedagogical endeavors.

La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse

With the research and ideas uncovered through working with articule, *La Centrale*, a sister artist-run centre with whom articule often works with on collaborative projects

and shares resources with, decided to contract four local artist educators to work on a pedagogical plan for the gallery. I was asked to work in partnership with activist artist, Coco Riot, to make a bilingual presentation to the members of *La Centrale* during their 'pedagogical day'. Coco Riot identifies as a queer anti-oppression immigrant artist, stating, "that art is not a tool for social change but social change itself" (cocoriot.com, 2010). The following examples are just a sample of our presentation that we created collaboratively.

The bilingual presentation that Coco and I gave on May 22nd, 2010, addressed a variety of concerns that we shared. Our purpose was to present information about and in an anti-oppression pedagogical framework with the desire to inform staff and membership about certain anti-oppression issues. Very similarly to the questions I asked during my articule workshop, we wanted *La Centrale* to be aware of institutional positioning such as:

- What changes can artist-run centres implement to be more inclusive to the communities in which they are located?
- Are notions of access and privilege being addressed?
- How may artist-run centres encourage and promote greater diversity through anti-oppression approaches?
- In what way should curatorial, programming, and display practices be challenged and/or modified?
- How can changes be actualized under budgetary constraints?

We were concerned with the role the membership should play in the implementation and continuation of the pedagogical plan. We asked people to reflect on:

- How are artists involved?
- What role can anti-oppression have within artistic practices?

- What (if any) responsibility do I have?
- Am I ready to take responsibility?
- How can I participate in positive change?

Next, we looked at the challenges we may face when taking on responsibility as individuals and an institution. These were:

- Language: politiques trans, the identities of people-of-colour
- White denial / résistance
- Confidence shaking / confidence building
- Emotionally charged (triggers)

Unfortunately due to time constraints on my part, as well as the language barrier, I found it difficult to partake as much as I wanted to with the further developments being made with *La Centrale*'s pedagogical plan. After the preliminary assessment and presentation phase, I did not continue work on any educational advancements with *La Centrale*. I am aware that my presentation partner, Coco, has continued and there have been positive movements in the centre's pedagogical approaches, as well as collaborative efforts with articule.

COCO Workshop: *Just Practice*

Another promising place I have witnessed the ripple effects of anti-oppression training and discussions is in the cultivation of a COCo (Centre for Community Organizations) program called *Just practice, c'est pratique: A learning exchange to help address and prevent oppression in community groups!* I was fortunate enough to be contacted by COCo and invited to join the learning exchange. There were two planning meetings in May to allow for networking as well as the assessment of needs and level of knowledge of the participating organizations and individuals. This was

then followed by two days of skill building workshops on June 10th and 11th, 2011. As stated on the COCo website (2011) the purpose of this exchange was to address the needs of community organizations that are interested in anti-oppression practice, and the development of skills around mediation, anti-oppression practice and/or active listening. The organizations must also be willing to participate in the "planning and delivery of workshops on these subjects within your own groups and communities" (COCo, 2011).

As it turned out I was able to facilitate a session on one of the days and be a participant in all the other workshops. Networking opportunities and knowledge sharing were both important components of the session, as the exchange brought together a wide array of non-for-profit organizations that deal with issues of social justice and oppression. Though overall I felt I benefited from the activities, my desire for deeper level inquiry around anti-oppression was not quite met. There were some inspiring sessions that definitely provoked thought and question, though for me this was more around mediation and active listening, than anti-oppression per se. I know that there are correlations between the skills, but I think I was expecting there to be a greater rigour of analysis of systemic forms of oppression. Apart from my personal experience, I believe the COCo initiative is immensely important and will have effective results throughout the Montreal communities, as the third component of the *Just Practice* exchange will be follow-up facilitations in the actual communities.

Participants were encouraged to make connections with each other in hopes that certain organizations may express similar needs and thus could work together in sharing resources for possible future anti-oppression training. I took part as a delegate of articule along with two staff members. *La Centrale* was the other ARC

involved in the exchange, and it is our hope to combine our effort for the follow-up projects to make connections with educational programming.

International Avenues

Additional objectives over the next few years at articule include maintaining and exploring connections that were made when articule attended *Supermarket: International Artist-run centre art fair*, in Stockholm, Sweden in February 2010, as well as the arrangement to participate in a 2012 Brooklyn-Montreal artist exchange project. An important objective discussed and laid out both in the workshops and the strategic plan is articule's involvement in artist exchanges and residencies. It has become apparent that artist residencies are excellent ways to incorporate new forms of visual aesthetics as well as to challenge the comfort of working with local artists. articule would like to be able to house at least one artist or researcher in residency per year, but financial and accommodation arrangements will take time to develop. It is the goal of the centre to have this as a regular part of annual programming by 2015. In the upcoming years while preparations are being ironed out it is articule's desire to participate in artist exchanges more frequently to promote national and international dialogue around socially engaged art. Involvement in international exchanges also allows articule to promote and support the artistic careers of its membership body.

The Brooklyn-Montreal Exchange

The Brooklyn-Montreal exchange, scheduled for 2012, consists of six art centres in each city pairing up for a collective and connected exhibition. articule will work with an art space from Brooklyn to present one of their artists here in Montreal, and articule member(s) will present their work in the Brooklyn gallery. The Programming Coordinator at articule has been working diligently on this inter-city project, visiting

Brooklyn to organize this exciting opportunity for our members to exhibit internationally. A call to our members interested in submitting work has already gone out, and the programming choice will be made shortly.

Supermarket Art Fair – Stockholm, Sweden

articule attended the Supermarket Art Fair in Stockholm, Sweden in February 2010. After receiving funding for travel costs, it was decided that I would join our Programming Coordinator in attending the fair as a board member involved in outreach.

The fair was extremely beneficial for articule to envision its potential on a global scale as well as a leader in pushing traditional boundaries. The governments in Canada support ARCs across the country and this was a shock to many struggling collectives from other countries. To have government financing certainly enables risk taking in many forms, and this privilege can sometimes be forgotten in Canada. This was an important reminder for articule. ARCs in Canada have a greater opportunity in some ways to step out of a comfort zone. Exploring new forms of programming or policies can sometimes be easier in a supportive space, though having to respect granting body guidelines can also be restrictive at times. Overall I felt articule took away a particular pride and gained respect from the community at Supermarket.

My personal experience at the fair was considerably different. It was at Supermarket, where I became aware of the lack of critical reflection on anti-oppression as a European issue in the white majority artist community that I encountered. Of course I also connected with some wonderfully critical artists at the fair, many of whom were genuinely interested in articule, and its socially engaged practices. I still keep

in fairly regular contact with a number of these artists around the world, to share with them information and resources.

My time at Supermarket was by no means a wasted opportunity to network for the gallery or myself. However, from my position it became apparent ample work needs to be done to start a dialogue of awareness around issues of racial oppression throughout many European nations. The predominantly white body of delegates and attendees at the fair mostly assumed that I was an artist, and a producer of some type of tangible art product. This not being the case was the first part of confusion for many. I do understand that my role within ARC culture is not that common; but it is not so rare to have educators or administrators involved in the community who do not identify as art producers. When I spoke of my role with articule, it became evident that uncomfortable subjects such as institutional racism were for the most being ignored. During my five days I was met with polite smiles, blank stares, uncomfortable giggles, and a couple of 'that sounds important and interesting,' when asked about my work with ARCs. This lack of mindfulness towards such conversations definitely struck me as a surprise.

Overall, the Supermarket experience was enlightening for both articule and me, for different reasons. It allowed articule to conceptualize working on an international scale and provided an opportunity to promote themselves and their membership. In my case, my understanding of ARC culture was broadened, while the need for conversations grounded in anti-oppression was confirmed. This was through both disappointment in the lack of critical discourse at the fair, but also encouraged by the sincerity of the reception manifested by some participants.

New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

In September 2010, I visited New Orleans, Louisiana. This trip had a dual-purpose: One was to present my case study findings at a conference, and the other to make connections on behalf of articule with new artist collectives and organizations. Many such spaces and initiatives are opening in the once vibrant but now badly hurricane-damaged area of the Ninth Ward. The region has become well known since Katrina because of the immense destruction it experienced along with the fact Brad Pitt has set up a sustainable home building project in the area to help support past residents in their slow return. The last time I was in New Orleans, in 2002, I had spent some time in the Ninth Ward and I had heard recently that quite a few new artist collectives and centres had begun popping up due to the extremely low housing costs. I was particularly interested in the chance to speak with the people opening up these new art spaces to ask them about community engagement in the neighbourhood. I imagined this would be an excellent context to open up new socially engaged art spaces where people could be inspired to build an even more vibrant and strong neighbourhood after the hurricane. To my disappointment the two places I visited seemed to be classic cases of the beginnings of gentrification and a self-fulfilling action, which in turn is excluding the indigenous population of the Ninth Ward. The Ninth Ward is a predominantly working class African-American community that is not being engaged with or included by the new predominately white art scene that has migrated to New Orleans since the storm to capitalize on the low cost of living.

Though I did not feel it was my place as a visitor to the centres to outwardly criticize them, it did give me the opportunity to ask questions and spark an awkward dialogue with the two white male gallery workers around issues of inclusion /exclusion, privilege/oppression and racism. As it was my goal to promote articule's

community work, make possible connections for collaboration, as well as to discuss my own interests, I felt that the conversations and questions were for the most part positively received. We were able to exchange information about our centres and programming initiative, and it is hopeful that over the next few years there may be opportunities for collaboration.

During my time in New Orleans, I was also able to visit the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB). This is an organization I have referenced at length in the development of the *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression Workshop*. The "collective of anti-racist, multicultural community organizers and educators dedicated to building an effective movement for social transformation" (PISAB 2009), welcomed me for an impromptu meeting for which I am grateful. While there, I met with their staff to share with them how their powerful community work has inspired and helped me in my own life. I learned of some of the challenges and issues affecting people working in the anti-racist education field in New Orleans, and though the needs of the community and context were different than those in Montreal, I could still draw certain parallels. To hear their stories and feelings firsthand was both moving and also surprisingly challenging for my academic and theoretical approach to anti-oppression. Similar to Canada, a major issue identified by the institute is the invisibility of white privilege that prevents many white people from recognizing how racism affects people of colour on a daily basis. These conditions are difficult to change without hearing the stories and voices of people of colour, since race often intersects with socio-economic status to perpetuate a racial divide in many of our civic spaces.

I believe that new art centres need to be in contact with such institutes as the PISAB. New Orleans is a great example of a city in transformation. As

neighbourhoods are being rebuilt, the divides preventing the emergence of shared communities should not be embraced. Though I know each context has its challenges, I feel the current potential to create strong links across social, economic, racial and experiential lines is very promising in this city, one whose history has been plagued with preserving segregation. A city that is changing in such drastic ways, though more through force of circumstance, still has the capacity to utilize a difficult time for positive experimentation, and thus becoming a community leader on a global scale.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

I originally proposed that I would be investigating programming being conducted in the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, but as my research progressed, it created shifts in my focus. It is important for me to say that this change in concentration is due to the fact my research interests have slowly become narrowed on the exploration of racial politics within a social justice framework in a context of creative communities. After the trip to the Supermarket Art Fair in Stockholm, and as my groundwork deepened, it became apparent that the race lens that I was doing research analysis through aligned more with centres I learned about in South Africa and the United States. It is not that important projects are not being done in the United Kingdom or parts of Europe; instead this progression was in some ways more about timing and circumstance. My inquiries that were met with understanding and support were the ones I pursued as I was looking to learn from alternative programming, not only for facilitating the discussion.

This certainly does not suggest that the need to address racism and white privilege are not imperative in a European context, or that no one is doing this. However, as a new scholar trying to find avenues of support in my research, I have found difficulty

moving through political spaces to find that needed assistance. The ever-present language barrier I face of course hinders efforts in some places, but more so, it is mandates of ARCs or artist collectives that pose the real challenge. If centres have no specific objectives to foster an awareness of social justice, it will be very difficult for me to become involved, simply because they are not viewing the interaction as a priority. My action based community research is a process to initiate individual and institutional transformative thinking through education. If an organization does not welcome these ideas then it will be almost impossible to conduct such research.

It may be that there is more openness towards work that addresses the deconstruction of white supremacy in action research and community activism in the United States and South Africa, in comparison to the United Kingdom, Europe or even Canada. Yet, I do not think this is the case. It is more likely that I only came across organizations engaged in a current experimental aesthetic focus. This concentration coupled with white male privilege, instead of anti-oppression, could be accused of being stuck in an ego stroking narcissistic feedback loop. Encountering such spaces, I unsurprisingly found little around race and racism being questioned or interrogated with the seriousness I was looking for. That said, I think this would be the case in all mentioned parts of the world where white supremacy dictates the art scene. I know that Europe is not void of intensely politically committed artistic communities, many of which I am sure are working within an anti-racist feminist framework. It is just that I have not been fortunate enough to engage with them yet. Organizations that challenge the exclusionary consequences that unrecognized privilege creates, are working in these same cities, they are just fewer and farther apart. Often being considered alternative spaces, they themselves are struggling financially and suffering marginalization along with the communities they are representing.

These criticisms aside, I did come across art associations, particularly at the international Supermarket, that shared a passion for critically engaged contemporary art practices, and who were extremely open to ideas of exchange possibilities with articule. My complaints above are purely from my anti-racist feminist research orientation. As some people are just trying to work around multiculturalism in their cities and work places, conversations of racialization and white privilege may seem bewildering. The more comfortable multiculturalism model that many institutions are looking at, to devise individualistic holistic approaches to issues of diversity, do not always blend smoothly with anti-racist approaches. The more critical concepts of anti-racism, or anti-oppression, attempt to foster awareness and combat institutional, structural and systemic problems. This context has its own set of challenges and obstacles that can be hard to tackle without suitable resources.

Two examples of organizations I have been in touch with over my research, which have devoted their mandates and programming to sharing knowledge creation, are SPARCK Space for Panafrican Research, Creation and Knowledge (SPARCK) and Art Research Education Activism (AREA). These organizations are using art as a vehicle not to just explore media, texture and aesthetics, but also to create dynamic bridges between communities. Critical voices are being made accessible on a global scale by addressing diasporic realties and exploring the impact of counter narratives.

I approached SPARCK as an interested researcher/art-theoretician/educator and received engaged feedback and conversation grounded in both theory and experience from the two organizers. Located in Cape Town, South Africa, SPARCK is a “programme of experimental multi-disciplinary arts residencies, workshops, symposia, exhibitions, publications and performances centred on innovative, ethically driven approaches to urban space” (SPARCK 2010). Working in three year

programming cycles, SPARCK poses particular themed questions to collaboratively develop projects around these questions. The first cycle which just ended, entitled *NET/WORKS: Trans-Local Cultures in the Making of African Worlds*, saw artists from cities across the world participate in the complex and layered discourse. The provoking thematic as described on the SPARCK (2010) website ‘actively rejects notions of centre and periphery” and works in a “de-centered approach to collaboration and production” as it questions the workings of African networks on local and global scales of creation, economy and exchange.

The second of these centres, working in the United States, is AREA Chicago which produces a collectively run magazine through the work of contributors. AREA also holds various events to further strengthen social justice practices and radical movements. Immigration, migration, border crossing, local food networks, solidarity and peace, money, and education, are just some of the topics their programming addresses. In their words they support

“the work of people and organizations building a socially just city. AREA actively gathers, produces, and shares knowledge about local culture and politics. Its newspaper, website, and events create relationships and sustain community through art, research, education, and activism”
(AREA 2010).

These two organizations provide inspiring examples of project initiatives that are taking risks by embarking upon challenging programming and asking questions that do not have simple answers. Though over my conversations with both spaces problems around funding have come up, it is my hope that as their efforts continue to spread, greater financial support opportunities will become available.

CHAPTER 4

Answering research questions, reflections and future research avenues

ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although guiding research questions were used in preparing and implementing the workshop, it was not the purpose of the workshop to answer these questions. The workshops were to evaluate one institution, and examine how articule may relocate itself in relation to specific issues raised. I used my experiences with articule, but also interactions with other artist spaces and research explorations to think about these questions on a larger scale.

My thesis purpose was to investigate the following set of questions in relation to transformations and challenges artist-run centres face in attempting to widen and improve community outreach initiatives. In closing this action research undertaking I will summarize my findings by attempting to answer these questions that I carried with me throughout this whole process. They are as follows:

Realistic changes to be implemented: *What changes can artist-run centres implement to be more inclusive to the communities in which they are located? Are notions of access and privilege being addressed?*

My travels to Stockholm and New Orleans gave me the opportunity to witness and imagine future action research avenues, and these travels also validated the importance of my research in diverse urban spaces. My dissatisfaction with the lack of criticality around issues of privilege and oppression, or marginalized communities in ARCs is not one of pessimism. In fact, I truly believe that the inspiring artistic drive and ambition I have witnessed, combined with strong social support for artists,

their projects, spaces and institutions, are reasons to be extremely optimistic. The openness to artistic expression and the respect it holds in society in fact gives it great power and potential for reaching numerous communities and for actualizing social impacts. Taking into account the political history and current landscape, it may just take time for this awareness and passion to grow in ARCs. As challenging questions are confronted, denial and guilt will hopefully be moved through. From there, as already discussed, further ripple effects of anti-oppression programming and language will hopefully take hold and spread.

The impressive changes I have been fortunate to witness and participate in with articulate, have strengthened this optimism. The willingness to have these difficult conversations is invigorating; I feel the obstacles stem only from a lack of learning opportunities around the subjects and a lack of awareness of how to approach the issues or what changes might be actually required. Many ARCs are born out of the history of challenging the commercialization of art and a devotion to the building of supportive communities; it is understandable that a criticism of exclusion would be taken seriously. The question, many are asking, is what anti-oppressive strategies can ARCs adopt which will reflect their needs in maintaining exceptional programming? I do not think there is one all-encompassing solution to this question; instead each organization asking this question needs to look at their policies and traditions through an anti-oppression lens. Each centre will have different needs, people, mandate and contexts, all of which are in constant flux. Change is certain and strategies need to take this into account. The first step is to address these questions in an open and honest way, which sometimes is the most difficult task.

There are some particular outcomes that I have observed that have had very positive results. Stemming from an openness to learn and exchange, creating new

knowledge and counter-stories around art has been very powerful. Asking artists, educators and even entire organizations to work together is a way to foster this type of exchange. articule has expanded its outreach initiatives twofold in such a short period of time. Most of these initiatives have to do with collaborative efforts. The optimism for dialogue and international exchange is apparent in the excitement that articule is experiencing with regards to its new approaches to programming, and the show of interest from artists wanting to participate in exchanges or exhibitions. articule has received more international proposals this year, than any other year over the past thirty-one years of its existence.

Another strategy to remember is allowing one's self and organization to make mistakes and learn from them. If challenges present themselves along this road of self improvement, do not give up. This is an expected part of the process and most likely will have positive results in the long run. Disagreements and differences of opinions are bound to happen, and often, personal politics will present some of the biggest challenges. People bring with them a lifetime of experiences to the table. These include emotional triggers and insecurities along with valuable skills and wisdom. This is precisely why I feel addressing the individual within the organization is so integral to true institutional anti-oppression transformation.

Finally, an additional strategy that I believe to be one of the most powerful in promoting outreach and building bridges amongst communities, not surprisingly, is education. Using creative resources to implement alternative forms of education and curriculum can achieve numerous goals simultaneously. Education can work to promote thought and reflection around particular subjects, spread knowledge about art and artists, empower audiences and participants, create new knowledge, introduce counter-narratives, promote change, and bring groups together that may

not normally meet. The issue to stress here is the imaginative potential that education can hold. Workshops, discussions, lectures, tours and the likes have endless possibilities. Depending on the needs of the ARC or audiences, education can take almost any form.

An obstacle that exists is that ARCs most often do not have direct access to educators or the funds to pay them. That said, the number of artists who are becoming involved in art education is steadily growing. Particularly in Montreal, where one of only two Art Education PhD programs in Canada is offered. The number of cultural workers who are becoming interested in education as a part of their daily work activities is encouraging. It is rare today not to hear education mentioned as a component or objective in a centre's mandate or policies.

The start of this action research project began with personal hope in the power that education could hold in broadening outreach. This optimism, based more in empowering theory and less in personal experience, is what sustained the process of writing this thesis. Now that this project is coming to an end, I can confidently say I have witnessed the results of critical pedagogy first hand. This transformation has started to manifest itself not only amongst the research participants and in the planned objectives of the *Recognizing Oppression & Privilege Workshop*, but also in the concrete projects and programming already implemented over the past year.

Curation, programming and display practices: *In what way should curatorial, programming, and display practices be challenged and/or modified?*

Aesthetic values and social topic trends that define what 'good' art of the day is can work to exclude not only artists, but the centres who are introducing alternative

aesthetic leanings. The question ARCs that want to do outreach need to ask is: what communities do they want to respond to? Similar to the way people move within and through communities, centres can too. Different groups of people and associations can utilize institutional spaces. An ARC whose goal is to work in a more isolated community or one that would prefer to only pair with likeminded organizations would have different outcomes than a space such as articule. An ARC with a mandate committed to education and outreach as well as responding to the needs of artist and non-artist communities will most likely need to adopt flexible programming.

The area of programming is where some of the largest shifts must occur if an ARC wants to become a more inclusive space. Programming needs to encompass creative approaches, and possibly compromises. As it stands right now, most ARCs either invite artists to show their work, which is an extremely exclusive practice, or people are invited to submit proposals. Proposal writing can be time consuming and often a difficult task that can be compared to grant writing. The competitive process not only challenges artistic ideas and expression, but also literacy, language, and writing skills; artists must be good at selling themselves. This can result in the exclusion of artists whose first language is neither English nor French, or who do not have the writing skills to compete with university educated artists, or artists who may have time constraints or commitments like families to care for or demanding jobs.

The definition of programming needs to have several facets for inclusivity. If a centre only has long term programming for example, they are preventing themselves from responding to shorter term imaginative developments. Making room for programming to acquire new forms, though may have its headaches, I believe in the long run will bring new energy to an organization. Programming that moves between

short and long term, inside and outside the gallery in different mediums can reach a wider public while opening opportunities for alternative art practices.

Also related to programming is the way calls for proposal are distributed. Spreading the word outside of ARC communities and beyond regular communication avenues takes research and effort. Additionally, ARCs, including articule, I feel have the ability to broaden their proposal submission guidelines drastically. Instead of asking for a list of strict specifics, submissions themselves could take on added creativity, thus broadening the pool of applicants. Selecting proposals or programming through conversations or interviews, holding events or large brainstorming sessions could broaden access and success possibilities. Pairing with community groups to introduce new programming ventures may also give artists who are unfamiliar with ARC structures in Montreal and Canada, the opportunity to get acquainted and network with others.

In short, there is a need to foster more spontaneous programming and curatorial services and strategies that utilize creative techniques of displaying art to become a more encompassing and inclusive ARC. Furthermore, doing collaborative projects to engage a larger general public, though will often need to be planned months in advance, will also require a level of flexibility which may require short term adjustments. Letting go of the comfort and feeling of control that long term programming offers, of course has its risks but when discussing issues of accessibility it indeed is a must.

Budget concerns and realities: *How can changes become actualized under budgetary constraints?*

Budget constraints and shortages of funding are inherent issues most large, medium and small art institutions must deal with. Search for funding, as well as the process of filling in applications, take time and energy of an already over-burdened staff members. Although it is obviously worth it for the organization to obtain the results of successful applications, it is most disappointing when grants are unattainable. Fundraising is where volunteer efforts can have extraordinary effects. This can be through creating databases of donors, mail outs, phone calls, networking, organizing events, speaking with neighborhood businesses for sponsorships and much more.

Looking for alternative sources, such as donors, fundraising events, private sponsorship, or other funding bodies to receive funding outside of the government is a promising strategy. The traditional granting bodies have mostly been governmental and have guiding principles that ARCs have to abide by if they want to receive funding. This can pose restraints on particular initiatives, and thus substitute funding can bring a welcomed flexibility.

Reallocating already obtained funds from existing budgets can be problematic as it will ultimately be taking money away from legitimately assigned areas to give to new projects, but it can be another approach to working within constraints. This may be a necessary compromise until other grants are successfully obtained. Linked to programming changes, budget allocation must be reworked, as ARCs must follow government guidelines that state minimum remuneration scales for showing artists. It is not all negative though, as creative solutions can sometimes have powerful and surprising outcomes. With the example of articule, it may mean far less long term

exhibition programming inside the gallery in order to make resources available for other types of exhibitions and events, but this could be viewed as an exciting shift.

As we have seen, eagerness to break from a traditional ARC model to address provocative subject matter and provide important commentary, as well as opportunities of reflective action, has its barriers. Unfortunately the desire for change does not always lead to actual change because of limited financial resources. For ARCs to continue engaging audiences on topics that are affecting our daily lives, it must commit to the continual reconsidering, re-evaluating, and recreation of new forms of outreach possibilities. To do so most efficiently within its strict budgetary constraints, imaginative problem solving has to become a strength of the institution.

Museums and larger art institutions: *What can museums and larger civic institutions learn from community run centres?*

Ultimately museums or larger galleries have different roles in civic space than ARCs do. Though I do not think this excuses exclusionary or elitist behaviour. Connected to budgetary needs discussed above, the fundamental issue is, if an entire society is built upon the obsession and subsequently the need to earn money, how can the concerns of communities truly be heard? These ethical questions cannot be ignored. The purpose of these institutions is to serve the communities in which they are located, therefore, it is their obligation to address oppressive traditions and policies with much greater rigor and radical innovations. Greater support to artists whose statements are defined by making art for non-commercial purposes has to be included. This could consist of public art, relational aesthetics, installations, street art, performance, body art, and much more. Furthermore, art being created outside of popular or privileged circles should not be excluded from a museum or gallery.

The disconnect existing between some large institutions and the actual art being produced in the city they are located in can be vast. When a museum is concerned with more historical content or a blockbuster exhibition this can broaden the gap. Larger institutions, particularly those engaged in contemporary art, I think have a greater responsibility to include artists working in the community. With regards to the general public, I think all civic institutions are accountable. Particularly museums because they do not have to be concerned with representing work to sell; they too get government funding and have their own fundraising programs.

Albeit, contemporary art museums have tried a number of strategies to outreach to the public through advertisement, and evening events that include live music and programming that draws greater attention. Many have been successful in attracting large audiences. Still the people making up these crowds share an economic, education, and social privilege that leaves far too many others out of the discussions.

In my own visits to galleries and museums throughout Canada, the United States, Japan and Europe, it is clear that some institutions are more open to change and explorative ways to interact with the public through varied curatorial practices. Many such spaces are attempting to include members of communities to assist in these shifts, opening a dialogue and introducing counter-voices. Continuing to work towards the creation of more accessible exhibitions through alternative forms of display, such as interactive pieces, free educational programming, discounted days or free evenings, public events, invited guests, and other such measures are initiatives that both ARCs and larger galleries and museums need to consider and undertake. Forming links between such organizations and institutions could take these efforts even further.

REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My art-based educational practice is strongly grounded in activity and project programming, focusing on organizing and coordination within artist-run communities. Though my work often takes on a good deal of administrative duties, this is an essential aspect of action based education research that works with institutional reform. My goal is to promote community interaction, critical thought, inquiry and reflection, while hopefully provoking social consciousness-raising. My research interests, which I continually work to combine with my practices, are grounded in reflective and transformative learning, critical theory and pedagogy/andragogy that encompass feminist, anti-racist and anti-oppression frameworks. It is my goal to constantly strive to create inclusive spaces that work to break away from hegemonic ideals, while building stronger community bridges. I appreciate work that pushes challenging, destabilizing issues, using the teaching/learning power of discomfort, grounded in support, to allow resistance to be moved through positively for transformative action.

In my own efforts to become more aware in my practice as an educator, I recognize that the process is not static, but always fluid, and on going. This is not just the case for personal development but it is also relevant when thinking of community organizations such as artist-run centres. As Illeris (2006) states;

“...empowerment is not only about taking personal responsibility for one’s own learning processes but also about improving the general quality of life in the community. In the case of the museum and gallery education this means that we must consider education as not just an individual benefit, but as a social activity embedded in the surrounding social settings” (p. 23).

As a person who tries to keep in mind my position of privilege in society, a large part of my thesis has been committed to attempting to break down barriers and open access both on an individual and institutional level. Though I have met some obstacles along the way, it is my aspiration to continue to recognize my ability to promote change through being open to challenges and attempting to share that skill and strength with people I cross paths with over my lifetime.

Looking back over this entire process I realize that though the compiling and writing of this thesis took approximately one year more than I had originally planned for, it was necessary to take that time. It was beneficial to my personal learning, and I believe articulate's as well, for me to observe and experience the impacts of the *Recognizing Oppression & Privilege Workshop*. My two year mandate on the board was part of this process, as was my work with the development of the strategic plan, both of which concluded in June 2011.

With regards to my learning around qualitative research I have realized that my future projects will have to incorporate a more vigorous implementation of data collection. This could include forms of surveys, one on one interviews, and possibly statistical information. Upon reflection, I think gaining a deeper understanding of how individuals view themselves and their roles within an institutional and community space could make a study, such as this one, stronger. Furthermore, working closely with more than one space in another city or country could contribute to a more complex global reading of white privilege in creative production and community interactions.

Though my research has thus far been based in Montreal, I believe my findings are relevant to many contemporary urban centres in our globalized world. Community

based art projects that are trying to create dialogue and break oppressive traditions are born in every neighbourhood, thus it is important to share these experiences and knowledge.

From here my future research explorations include a number of possible avenues. With the completion of this thesis project it is my goal to continue community based action research. I plan to develop further, strategies for creative institutions to combat white supremacy and other interlocking forms of domination that damage healthy community knowledge exchange.

As a continuation of my research and the new opportunities presenting themselves, I want to pursue the deconstruction of how white supremacy in institutions affects the daily realities of people living in diverse urban spaces. Some questions I will seek to explore include: What pushes people to grow and express themselves within systems that simultaneously oppress and privilege, include and exclude? How are racist structures maintained within creative spaces? How do we construct identity? How are identities appropriated and performed through creative expression and how do identities manifest themselves within the artistic, cultural and social movements present in our everyday lives? It is these local movements, sometimes specific to particular cities or neighbourhoods that create social spaces for exchange, interaction and the introduction of counter-narratives that break away from the norms and beliefs of the centre. The intersecting and interlocking systems that inform our personal experience and how we live and interact on a daily basis, fuel my research, as well as an interest in how a history of racism and colonization forms, informs and helps perpetuate these realities.

I view my research projects as a part of a larger journey in my chosen explorative academic and educational career. The questions and areas I wish to explore deeper are inspired by the work I have done for my Master's thesis. It is under this desire for continual challenge and learning that I want to work. I expect tears and laughter, but the day I am no longer feeling challenged by these issues, I will know that there is a problem. Though incredibly challenging and uncomfortable at times, there is a need to self produce a "pedagogy of discomfort" to push learning forward.

Individually we must challenge the structures and institutions that shape our environment. Whiteness made visible can produce awareness of privilege and the supremacist systems we live within.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Workshop Agenda Part 1

Recognizing Oppression & Privilege: articule Workshop Part 1

March 13th, 2010

AGENDA

1. Get some food and get comfortable
2. Introduction to the workshop
3. Ice breaker activity
 - a. Personal description activity
4. Understanding forms of oppression: Positionality activity – *Flower of Power*
 - a. Different faces of oppression
 - b. Identity – 'othering'
 - c. Interlocking nature
 - d. How oppressive factors in society affect you

BREAK

5. Recognizing Privilege
 - a. P. McIntosh's White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack Checklist
<http://www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf>
 - b. Seeing oneself as a possible agent of oppression
 - c. Tim Wise lecture - video (homework)
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3812249801848706206#>

WORKSHOP GUIDELINES⁶

The goal of the workshop is to push such difficult issues to be confronted and worked through together in a supportive and safe space. With this in mind it will be important to remember to follow some basic guidelines to provide and maintain this space of support and respect. These are as follows:

- Speak from your heart and your experience. Use "I" statements.
- We're not here to judge each other, put each other down, or compete.
- Listen to the wisdom everyone brings to the group.
- Give each person the time and space to speak
- Practice "active listening". Do not interrupt each other – raise your hand as a signal
- Prioritize voices of people of colour and quiet white folks in the group
- Challenge behaviour respectfully
- Create anti-racist and feminist language and group dynamics by using such phrases as:
 - ⇒ "When you said or did... or when... happened"
 - ⇒ "I felt/I thought"
 - ⇒ "Because I think/feel I have experienced..."
 - ⇒ "And I'd suggest that... What do you think about it?"

⁶ Guidelines modified from Challenging White Supremacy workshop, 2008.

Appendix II: Information, Activity & Reflection Sheet

Recognizing Oppression & Privilege

articule Workshop Part 1

March 13th, 2010

Name: _____

Artistic practice: _____

Relationship to articule: _____ Years active: _____

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

What changes can artist-run centres implement to be more inclusive to the communities in which they are located?

Are notions of access and privilege being addressed?

How can changes be actualized under budgetary constraints?

In what way should curatorial, programming, and display practices be challenged and/or modified?

ICE BREAKER ACTIVITY

Describe yourself in 3 words:

1. _____

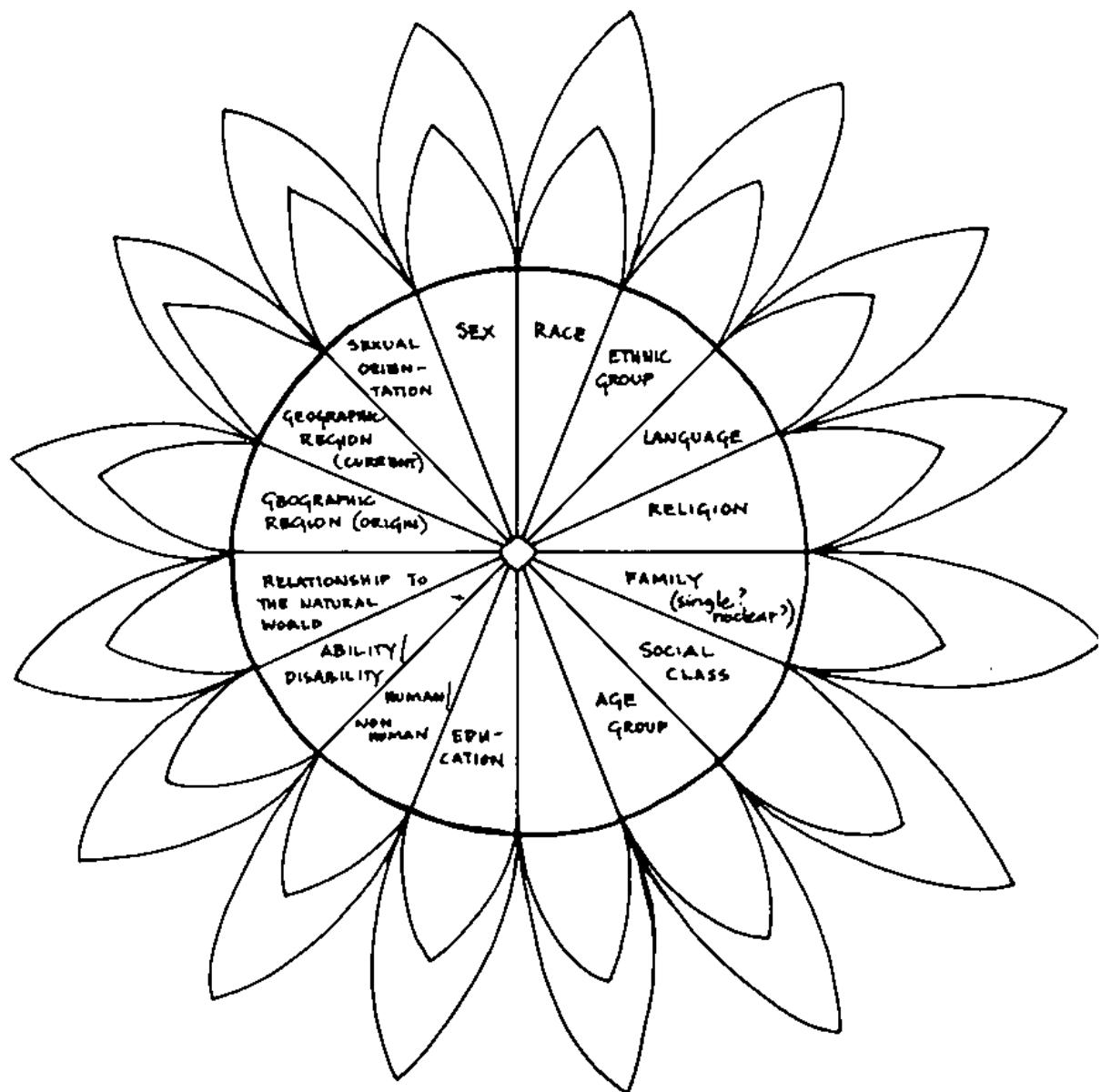
2. _____

3. _____

Discussion Notes:

FLOWER OF POWER:

If you feel uncomfortable sharing all this information you may omit parts of your flower



7

⁷ Source: Arnold, Rick, Bev Burke, e.a., *Educating for a Change, Between The Lines*, Toronto (1991)

Discussion Notes:

RECOGNIZING PRIVILEGE: P. McIntosh's White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack Checklist

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
14. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.
17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.
18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without

having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.

19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
23. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
24. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.
25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
27. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.
28. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.
29. I can be pretty sure that if I argue for the promotion of a person of another race, or a program centering on race, this is not likely to cost me heavily within my present setting, even if my colleagues disagree with me.
30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.
31. I can choose to ignore developments in minority writing and minority activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.
32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.
33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.
37. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.
38. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.
43. If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.
44. I can easily find academic courses and institutions which give attention only to

people of my race.

45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.

46. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.

48. I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.

49. My children are given texts and classes which implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.

50. I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.⁸

Discussion Notes:

Reflective Notes:

Homework

Tim Wise - *The Pathology of White Privilege* (video lecture)

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3812249801848706206#>

⁸ Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. This essay is excerpted from Working Paper 189. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh. The working paper contains a longer list of privileges. This excerpted essay is reprinted from the Winter 1990 issue of Independent School. <http://www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf>

Appendix III: Follow up email after first workshop

from Skye Maule-O'Brien <skyemo@gmail.com>
to Participants
date Mon, Mar 15, 2010 at 1:47 PM
subject workshop recap & resources

Hi All,

Thank you to everyone who came and participated in the workshop on Saturday. I know it ended on a some what difficult note, and in retrospect we maybe should have started with the more challenging exercise, but this is a learning experience for me as well.

If you are feeling anger, frustration or any other defensive feelings it is important to remember that this is COMPLETELY NORMAL. The purpose of the exercise was the stir up how we view our lived realities. My goal was not to make anyone feel guilty about these realities, but just to provoke discussion and deeper awareness. And what can be seen as an unfortunate reality of transformative thought is feelings of discomfort and anger. I encourage you to write down your feelings/thoughts on the activity and your reflections so we can discuss them further at the beginning of the next workshop. Also feel free to email me or call me if you want to talk about it before our next meeting 514-887-7593

Here is the link to the video lecture that I ask you to watch over the next few weeks before we meet again on **Saturday April 10th, at 10am** for Part 2 of the workshop. It's an hour long, but the speaker is interesting and engaging so it goes fast. It's also presented in chapters so you can watch it in segments if that's easier for you.

Tim Wise - *The Pathology of White Privilege*

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3812249801848706206#>

I'm also including the pdf of Peggy McIntosh's article where I got the 50 points we were reading over - of which we only got to 15. I also ask that you try and read over the rest of the list.

<name> since you missed the first part of the workshop I'm including the agenda we used as well as the activity sheet for you to look over. I know we have had a few discussions on the topics being covered at the workshops and I think you'd bring some important points up for discussion as a group, so hopefully you can make it to Part 2.

Thank you again!

Skye

Appendix IV: Workshop Agenda Part 2

Recognizing Oppression & Privilege

articule Workshop Part 2

April 18th, 2010

AGENDA

6. Get some food and get comfortable
7. Recognizing Privilege
 - a. Revisit: Thoughts on P. McIntosh's White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack Checklist
<http://www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf>
 - b. Seeing oneself and institution as a possible agent of oppression
 - c. Discussion: Tim Wise lecture - video (homework from last time)
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3812249801848706206#>
8. CHANGE AGENT: Seeing oneself and articulate in action for positive change
 - a. Analysis of institutional power
 - b. Learning from history - looking forward
 - c. Developing Leadership
 - d. Networking & Outreach
 - e. Maintaining Accountability
 - f. Gatekeeping⁹

WORKSHOP GUIDELINES¹⁰

The goal of the workshop is to push such difficult issues to be confronted and worked through together in a supportive and safe space. With this in mind it will be important to remember to follow some basic guidelines to provide and maintain this space of support and respect. These are as follows:

- Speak from your heart and your experience. Use "I" statements.
- We're not here to judge each other, put each other down, or compete.
- Listen to the wisdom everyone brings to the group.
- Give each person the time and space to speak
- Practice "active listening". Do not interrupt each other – raise your hand as a signal
- Prioritize voices of people of colour and quiet white folks in the group
- Challenge behaviour respectfully
- Create anti-racist and feminist language and group dynamics by using such phrases as:
 - ⇒ "When you said or did... or when... happened"
 - ⇒ "I felt/I thought"
 - ⇒ "Because I think/feel I have experienced..."
 - ⇒ "And I'd suggest that... What do you think about it?"

9 The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond

<http://www.pisab.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=498>

10 Guidelines modified from Challenging White Supremacy workshop, 2008.

Appendix V: Workshop Outcomes Digest

DIGEST OF THE *Recognizing Privilege & Oppression WORKSHOP 2*

a. Analysis of institutional power

- Rethinking structures as creative starting points – where we can exercise change and decision making
- Knowing institutional restraints – we have to be aware of policies
- Inefficiency can sometimes create openness
- Funding – 3 levels of government
- Language
- Peers
- Assume more of our power - we have the power to define programming and action
- Independent definitions
- Accessibility
- Academic / university
- intellectual

b. Learning from history - looking forward

- Learning to accept failure
- Learn from mistakes and the past
- Artist example (Jinhan Ko)

c. Developing Leadership

- In artist-run centres community - like minded – similar structures
- Could we be more open?
- Internal and external critical reflection – evaluation. How is articule perceived by the public and our membership body?
- Suggestion box (in gallery, on the web)

d. Networking & Outreach

- Advertise outreach initiatives more – to a general public and not just artist community
- Promote education
- Make resources more publically available and known
- Open up more to collaborations – make this known outside of art community
- Reach/seek out collaborations both artist and non-artist
- Media – newspapers, radio, web presence, publications, articles
- Reporting systems – annual report
- Promote communication with and within articule
- Show and tell and studio visits – so members get to know each other.
- Artist talk – collaboration with non-artist (to be implemented 2010/11)
- Julie's idea??? Reconfirm

e. Maintaining Accountability

- Board define objectives
- Connect to strategic plan – short, middle, long term goals
- Evaluation (survey) – external and internal
- Create an advisory board
- Ex-voto member of the board
- outreach initiatives more public
- have brainstorming & creative direction sessions/meetings to get input and share knowledge (board, staff, members, other artist centres, public, etc)

f. Gatekeeping¹¹

- This year Skye Maule-O'Brien will take on this role, but with the knowledge that this is to be an ongoing responsibility of the board as a whole.

11 The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond
<http://www.pisab.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=498>

Appendix VI: Evaluation Email Document

Evaluation

1. Think back to the first workshop when we did the flower of power, how did you feel during the exercise/activity? Were you able to express your feeling/thoughts/ideas openly?

2. Did the activity help you see yourself and your position within society or articulate differently? Or did it allow you to think of any issues differently?

3. Do you feel the homework (the article and video) was engaging and relevant to the subject of the workshop?

4. During the second part of the workshop, did you feel the brainstorming and discussion format was suitable and kept the flow of ideas going? Were you able to express your ideas and opinions openly?

5. How did you feel after the workshop was over? Did you feel that the workshop benefited yourself and/or articulate? Or were there any issues/feelings that were left unresolved for example?

6. Any other thoughts or constructive criticism on the workshop...