

Becoming Economic Subjects: A Participatory Action Research Project with Youth

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## Abstract

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This Participatory action research (PAR) project seeks to understand what happens when youth begin to imagine the economy differently. This project is about youth becoming economic subjects as they develop and run their own alternative economic initiative: a youth-led cooperative arcade. My youth co-researchers and I seek to reconfigure power relations as these four youth participate in a series of workshops designed to get them to think about the economy differently and to enact non-capitalist practices (other-doing). Each of the workshops is designed around one of J. K. Gibson-Graham's five ethical coordinates to help communities "take back their economies:" labour (surviving well), business (distributing surplus), market (encountering others), finance (investing in futures) and property (commoning) (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013). I borrow from critical pedagogy to co-develop and co-facilitate workshops with youth and, in doing so, reposition them as both learners and teachers. Through the PAR process and the development of Press Start, the four youth co-researchers develop a new language of diverse economies and begin to see themselves as critical economic subjects as they enact other-doing.

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## Introduction

*Fight from the particular, fight from where we are, here and now. Create spaces or moments of otherness, spaces or moments that walk in the opposite direction* (Holloway, 2010, p. 261).

After fifteen years of working with youth and families in Pointe Saint-Charles (PSC), I became increasingly frustrated watching young people and their families struggle. With an active community sector and a reputation for local activism (CourtePointe, 2006), it made little sense to me that, after decades, the cycle of social and economic despair endured with little hope of letting up. Over the past twenty years, gentrification has slowly crept deeper and deeper into Pointe Saint-Charles. Over ten years ago, the city of Montreal announced an expansion of the downtown core while developers caught wind of opportunities to cash in and condominiums unsurprisingly sprung up like mushrooms in Pointe Saint-Charles (Lemaire & Riwilis, 2013). This has led to rising housing costs and the displacement of friendly working-class stores and restaurants by economically and culturally inaccessible businesses. We are thus witness to social and economic transformation of the community brought about by external actors, with almost no prospects for the poor and working-class people who make up a significant proportion of the population. Although community organizations are doing tremendous work organizing resistance to gentrification, it appears that there are challenges in expanding the development of “popular” political and economic power and autonomy with the more marginalized segments of the population.

After a few years of working as a community organizer to mobilize the community to resist the changes inflicted upon it, I came to realize that I was equipped with too few tools to even imagine how one might support a community not only to resist but also to create opportunities. An opportunity emerged to create something by and for the community that became the inspiration for this research. As a long-time youth and community worker, I was asked to help develop an

assessment process to better understand the needs of youth in the community. My colleagues, Akki Mackay and Catherine McPherson, who coordinated youth programming at Saint Columba House, and I devised a youth-led consultation process in collaboration with four young women between 15 and 19 years of age. The consultation process resulted in the development of a youth-led cooperative arcade, Press Start, and the case study for this research.

The cooperative arcade at the heart of this research project is an outlier; it is an alternative economic initiative led by racialized and marginalized youth that seek to be radically democratic. This participatory action research (PAR) project is about those same youth becoming economic subjects as they engage in a series of workshops designed to co-learn a language of diverse economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006a) while, at the same time, creating a space of “other-doing” (Holloway, 2016). In doing so, they are also fighting from the particular, as they attempt to walk away from economic injustice and towards a radically democratic post-capitalist society (Gibson-Graham, 2006b).

For a multitude of reasons, many people are unable to effectively “fit” into various institutions and mainstream society and their livelihoods suffer as a result. The work of co-constructing new ways and enacting non-capitalist practices is why this research and the Press Start youth-led cooperative lay on the margins.

This research seeks to reinstitute spaces of socialization between youth and adults, challenging the youth-adult binary. In addition, we are engaging with the economy by re-framing it in such a way as to “take it back” and create our own space within it. Choosing the cooperative form for the arcade is an example of experimenting with “marginal” non-capitalist practices. Through this research and the development of this project, youth and adult allies explore possibilities for enacting non-capitalist practices and transform our practices and ourselves

together.

In the first chapter, I contextualize the background of the case study inclusive of the consultation process and the early development phase of Press Start up until we opened our doors in May 2018, just before beginning this research. Although, this is the prelude to the research, outlining this process helps to situate this participatory action research project and the values embodied by those that participated in the consultation and the development phase that continued into the research. It also situates my role in this project as a community-engaged researcher, my co-researchers and our pre-existing relationships.

In chapter two, I outline the conceptual framework used to reframe the economy applied to this study, as well as its research questions and objectives. In chapter three, I present my methodology in action, how and why I chose to combine PAR and critical pedagogy, as well as the use of thick description and weak theory. Additionally, I review the initial PAR research and the changes to the research that shifted to a two-year process of participant observation and documentary analysis as we continued to apply the reframing of the economy to the ongoing development of Press Start.

In chapter four, I engage with literature on the various discourses and cultural institutions that shape and shift youth's criticality and agency, affecting how they understand the economy and their place within it. I explore the social construction of youth, education and youth employment. In addition, I explore the margins as well as the care and radical love that emerges from this research and serves as an essential element in social transformation and constructing post-capitalist futures. I engage with the social economy and highly democratic autonomous initiatives to situate Press Start within the existing literature on the various forms of alternative economic initiatives.

In chapter five, I engage with a thick description of the findings of this research. I begin with how the youth understand the economy and their role within it prior to co-developing and co-facilitating workshops on reframing the economy. Afterwards, I share both how the youth's understanding of the economy shifted through this research as well as how they apply the reframing of the economy to Press Start and within their own lives. Finally, in chapter six, I conclude with a discussion in which I return to the literature and the findings exploring the elements that help and hinder youth's capacity to see themselves as critical economic subjects as well as the implications of this research.

## Chapter One: The Context of the Case Study, Press Start

In this section, I introduce the case study, Press Start, in which this research is rooted as well as the story of how this project came to be. Presented here are the several phases of consultation that lead to the development of a youth-led arcade up to the opening of Press Start. Lastly, I situate my co-researchers and myself before delving into the research.

I use the narrative form, as I am not an objective observer; I am a participant, in dialogue with the project and the youth who are both subjects of the research and my co-researchers. Press Start is a youth-led arcade<sup>1</sup> and up-cycling initiative with a commitment to working towards racial, economic and environmental justice. Press Start is housed in Bâtiment 7 (B7), a 100,000 square foot industrial building re-appropriated by the community, for the community in Pointe Saint-Charles, Montreal.

### **Background: Consultation Process**

In 2015, friends and colleagues working for a not-for-profit organization, Saint-Columba House, asked me to collaborate on a needs assessment process to understand the needs of youth in the community. In discussion, we determined that in order to conduct a community needs assessment process for youth we required youth leadership to help devise and conduct the process. The two values that framed this process and the project as a whole were youth engagement and social justice. Our approach to youth engagement is to cultivate youth leadership and to help amplify youth voices with the belief that youth should be an integral part of decisions that affect their lives. This process centered youth as experts of their own experience, both as individuals able to voice their own needs and as members of society capable of creating solutions to the

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<sup>1</sup> An arcade is typically a place to play video games that you pay for with coins. Press Start is a space with various video game consoles and homemade video game cabinets. However, instead of paying per game there is a small entrance fee to the space.

problems in their lives. Our<sup>2</sup> social justice lens means exploring the root causes of issues; engaging in reflection and action on how we can change the existing structures in our society; and creating new ones that work towards equity and justice, rather than trying to change individual behaviors that society has deemed undesirable.

We hired four young women between the ages of 15 and 19 to work on the consultation with us. My two colleagues from Saint-Columba House and I developed a process to train youth on how to conduct a consultation. In the spring of 2015, we worked with the youth team to develop questions for the consultation process. The four youth immediately wanted to move into proposing solutions and ask leading closed-ended questions. We worked on developing open-ended questions that were not leading. Many of the questions they framed and the solutions they proposed were oriented towards service provision or a charities approach. This led to a discussion around social justice versus a charities/service provision model. Charities provide short-term direct services to help individuals meet their basic needs by offering food, clothing, and emergency services. Service provision approaches offer various services that bring communities together and help people acquire different skills and resources to support their development. A social justice model seeks to address the root causes of issues that individuals and communities face and work towards social change.

This helped us develop questions that explored the needs of youth and the roots of the issues they witness/experience. The youth team had embraced many of the dominant discourses about youth that we continually worked through together. Afterwards, we developed various consultation tools (i.e., surveys, individual interviews, discussion groups) with the youth team.

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<sup>2</sup> When using “our” in this section, I am referring to me and my colleague, Akki Mackay.

The youth developed a preliminary questionnaire that we piloted. They began with individual interviews to be conducted after school at the Charlevoix metro (which serves the community) to establish themes. The youth connected with over 20 youth. Nevertheless, we concluded that the metro was not an ideal place to hold interviews since youth tended to give short and general answers, whereas our goal was to receive longer, more in-depth answers that better represented their opinions. Individual interviews continued at community events such as La Soirée Solidarité (held at the Carrefour d'Education Populaire) and Festi-Pointe, followed by a group discussion with the Counselors-In-Training at Saint-Columba House and a "Porteur des Paroles" consultation conducted at a Saint-Jean-Baptiste day event (held by the Centre africain de développement et d'entraide). Between May and June of 2015, 130 youth participated in the consultation.

In the summer, we analyzed the data and identified themes from the first phase of the consultation. Five themes emerged: safety in the neighborhood, spaces and activities, neighborhood cleanliness, drug use, and work. Based on their own experiences, the youth team added themes that they felt were pertinent: discrimination and school. To gather more in-depth information regarding each of the identified themes, the youth team decided to hold a community consultation for youth in the neighborhood, with group discussions focused on each theme. In preparation, we created new questions focusing on the seven themes as well as provided more training to continue enhancing the youth's skills. Training included how to present the project, group facilitation skills, how to use recording devices and how to publicize the event. This included developing outreach strategies and creating materials. The community consultation took place on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, with 20 youth in attendance. After the consultation and reviewing the data, the youth team decided that we had not gathered enough in-depth information to move forward with

any conclusions. We extended the consultation in order to gather more in-depth information and reach a larger more representative population of youth in the neighborhood, to include more youth of various ages and from varying socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The youth team decided to prioritize future consultations on the following themes: safety in the neighborhood, work, school, discrimination, and drug use. We developed a second round of questions based on the information from the July community event.

The youth team developed more tools and continued the consultations. This included an anonymous online survey on discrimination, drugs and work and a group discussion held with 10 teen girls at a local youth group, focusing on safety in the community. Individual interviews continued at Saint Columba House, Pathways to Education and Adozone focusing on work experience. A focus group at the Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi du Sud-Ouest took place with 15 youth, aged 18-24, who lived in different neighborhoods in the South-West (some from Pointe Saint-Charles, most from other neighborhoods such as Little Burgundy, Saint-Henri, and Verdun).

### ***Review of Data from the Consultation Process***

In the winter of 2016, we began the data analysis phase with one of the members of the youth team who participated from the beginning. As well, we hired a youth from the community to help with this process. We collectively analyzed all the information gathered throughout the consultations. We drew conclusions related to each theme identifying broad needs expressed by youth in the community and documenting solutions suggested by youth. Three solutions emerged that addressed various needs voiced by youth in the consultation and fit into a social justice framework. The first, the creation of a community-wide youth council, which could organize events and activities for youth related to community issues. Alternatively, there was the idea of having youth representatives as part of the Pointe Saint-Charles community roundtable, Action

Gardien, as well as campaigning to have youth representation within the Montreal municipal government. The second solution proposed was the creation of a youth-led drug support center. Finally, the proposal for the creation of a youth-run workers' cooperative was identified as a viable solution.

During the analysis phase, we created visuals to map out the themes (see Image 1) and the connections between them. Afterwards we looked at the solutions proposed to determine which could respond to the most needs identified in the consultation process (see Image 2). We concluded that the creation of a youth-run co-operative in Pointe Saint-Charles was the best fit and would respond to the most needs identified in the consultation process.

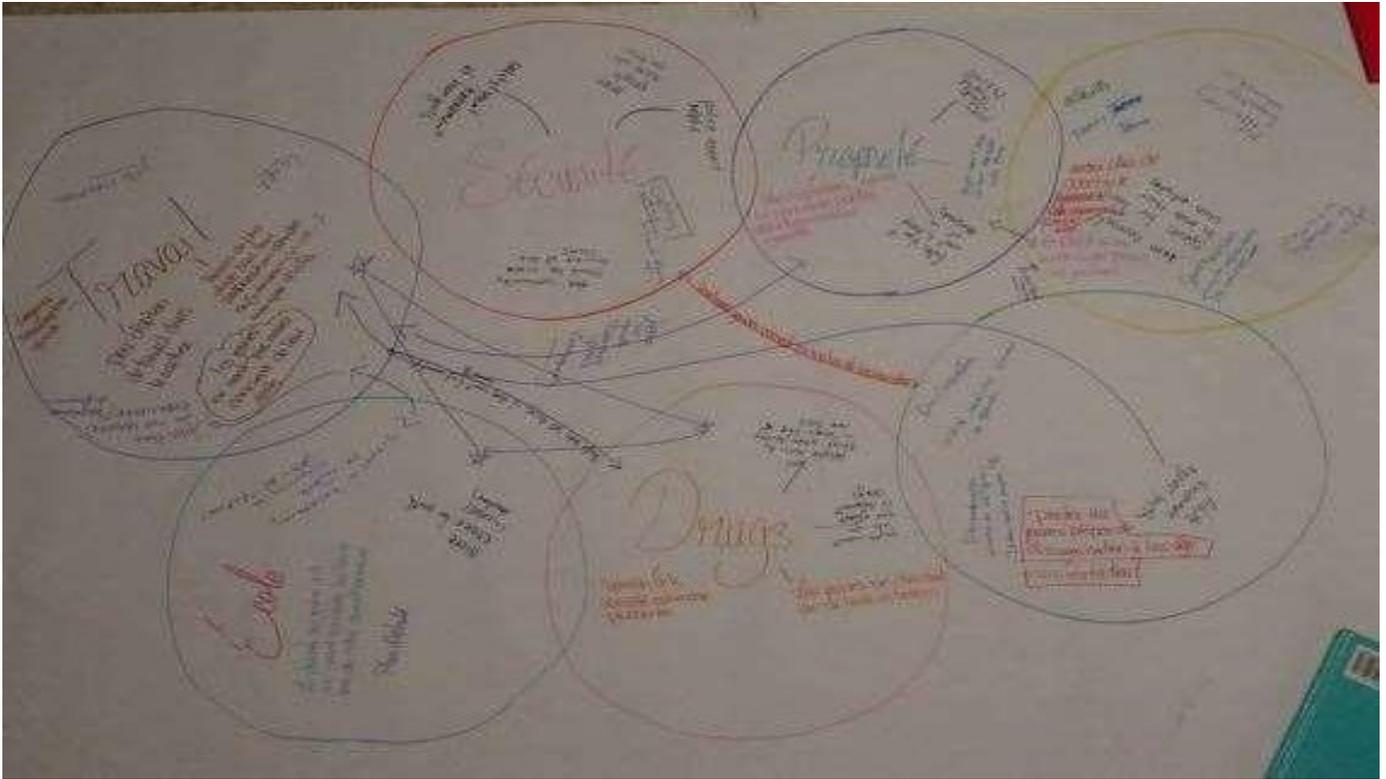


Image 1. Visual tool to organize and analyze the data from the consultations by them

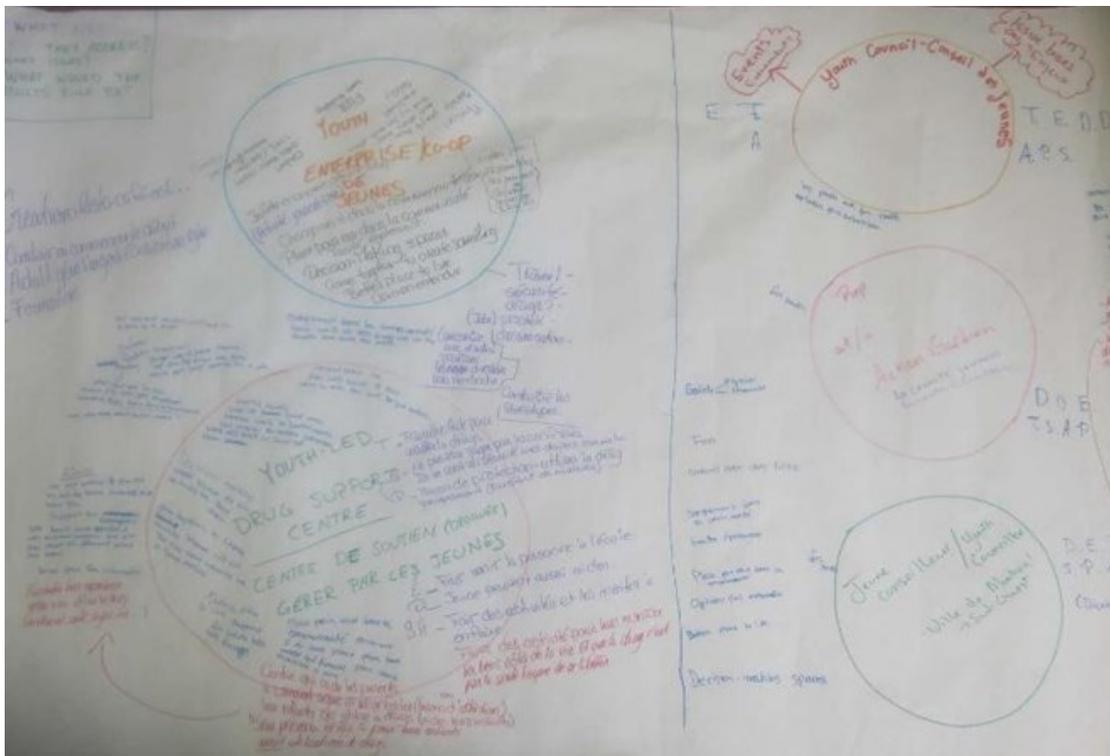


Image 2. Visual tool to explore proposed projects

## **Development Phase**

To facilitate the development phase of the youth-run cooperative, we hired two additional youth for the project and a fourth person shortly afterwards. The development phase consisted of determining the economic project, conducting a community validation process, devising the mission and vision, seeking a space, fundraising and garnering community support and much more.

The ideas that emerged from these discussions included a project to upcycle old objects, the development of an arcade space and a café for youth. Our youth-adult team worked together to determine possible economic activities for the youth-led coop. We decided that we could integrate all of the activities into a youth-led business with an arcade space as the primary economic activity. Since we were only a small group, a community validation process resembling a market analysis would need to take place. This process was to ensure that the economic activities/services that we were offering would appeal to a large number of youth and that the prices and operating hours were accessible. The process also sought to implicate youth from the community in shaping the project.

In the community validation process, we developed a questionnaire targeting youth and parents. The questions included the interest in having an arcade space in the community, entrance fees, snack prices as well as the days and hours that the business would run. Additionally, in the parent survey, we asked if they would rent the space for birthday parties and other events as well as how much they would be willing to pay. The survey for youth included questions about the types of snacks as well as the kinds of video games and activities we should offer. The survey for youth and parents circulated online. In addition, we conducted surveys at various community events, one in which there were solely youth present, and two others attended by both youth and

parents. After compiling all of the data, it was evident that there was a great deal of interest in having an arcade space in the community.

As we began to explore spaces to house the coop, we attended an assembly for Bâtiment 7 (B7) at the end of January 2017 in an effort to reach out to those involved about a possible space for our project. In the youth-led consultation, there were many mentions of bringing people of various ages together in the community. It seemed an ideal fit, cohabiting with other people and cooperative projects with a similar social justice frame, and with a great deal of potential for collaborating and learning together. After many discussions, the Collectif 7 à Nous, the legal entity responsible for B7, informed us that the project was a good fit with the mission and vision of B7. However, there remained the issue of finding a space in the building for our project.

B7, a self-managed community project working towards a horizontal decision-making structure, necessitated the involvement of all potential member-tenants and regular attendance at meetings for the development of the collective project. This included participation in collectively conceptualizing space. Each project within B7 outlined the amount of space that they predicted that they would need as well as their ideal location in the building. My community researcher, Akki Mackay, and I participated in these meetings due to the number of hours required and the timing of meetings which were generally held while the youth were in school or at night. However, we engaged the youth team in reflections about space and location. We reported regularly to the team about the meetings that we participated in and sought their perspectives to bring to the next meetings. After numerous meetings, the architects drew up blueprints (see Image 4). The youth team visited the space to begin designing the arcade and determine our infrastructural needs (see Image 3, 4 and 5). After many months of discussions with the other projects in B7, The Collectif 7 à Nous allotted Press Start 709 square feet on the second floor. In addition, due to the relevance

and importance of our mission, it was decided by the Collectif 7 à Nous that Press Start would pay \$12/sq. ft. in rent – one of the lowest rents in the building along with the community grocery store, Le Detour.



**Image 3. Visit to discuss space Bâtiment 7    Image 4. Visit to Bâtiment 7**



**Image 5. Shane and Samara outside of Bâtiment 7**

We were fortunate to have the financial support of Saint-Columba House throughout the consultation and development phase to pay the youth involved in this process. However, since the project required on-going funding, the Press Start team needed to begin working towards financial

autonomy. We organized fundraising events to help cover some of the costs, which also served as a way to talk about the upcoming project with community members, borough politicians and other community organizations. Fundraising events included a bake sale, selling raffle tickets at a community event and a car wash. We also organized a crowdsourcing campaign (see Image 6) where we raised our first \$10,000 for the project and gathered much of the furniture and equipment required for the space. This included the donation of various televisions, video game consoles and games, an air hockey table, a foosball table and much more. At the launch event held at Saint-Columba House, we received a tremendous show of support. Local politicians attended as well as members of other projects in B7, community members and workers from various community organizations. This was the first public event at which the youth team presented the project including its activities, mission and vision of the project. An important part of raising funds was also to begin promoting the project to the wider community and to begin building relationships and support.



**Image 6. Crowdsourcing launch event**

Developing the mission, vision and values of the project required reviewing the foundations of the project, the data that emerged from the consultation process as well as integrating how the youth team envisioned the project. Since only one of the young women from the consultation process remained, it was essential that the three new members of the youth team become wholly involved in the project. The youth were involved in discussions that my colleague and community researcher documented and transformed into our mission and vision statement finalized by our entire team as outlined below:

Press Start's mission is to provide youth from Pointe Saint-Charles and surrounding neighborhoods a space to build community and to grow as individuals, a space where youth can develop a variety of useful skills and can work together to make change in their communities.

Our Vision is to build a community where youth are truly valued, respected, supported and are seen as equal members of society, and have the power to power to positively influence the world around them.

Values:

- Community support
- Youth leadership & autonomy
- Horizontal decision-making
- Anti-oppression (anti-xenophobia, anti-racism, anti-homophobia, anti-sexism)
- Respect (respect of the environment, respect of ourselves and others, respect of the workers)

- Honesty<sup>4</sup>

The name of our project, Press Start, emerged from one of our work sessions. We were sitting in Akki's office at Saint-Columba House, and Shane was exploring names of arcades. He came across an image of an old video game console with the words Press Start. He jokingly said, Press Start. The team looked at one another and said, "Yes, that is it!"

As the project started to garner attention, volunteers began to contact us to see how they could contribute. One very special project proposed by community members was to teach our youth team how to build arcade cabinets (see Images 7, 8, and 9). The successful building of the arcade cabinets, setting up, and occupying our space in the building helped make the project feel more tangible. One of the volunteers, Dan, would even bring in fresh baked cookies his partner made for the team. These joyful moments of working and creating together were key to the development of our project.



**Image 7, 8, & 9. Arcade cabinet making at B7**

### ***Decision-Making Process***

Throughout the development of the project, youth and adult members alike have been

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<sup>4</sup> <https://presstartpsc.wixsite.com/presstart/mission-vision>

engaged in making decisions together. This has not been without challenges. Creating a context in which the youth team felt comfortable making decisions was a long process. For much of the consultation and development process, the youth were feeling ill-equipped to make decisions and would often try to comply with the adults' perspective. Part of this process was learning how to make consensus-based decisions. This included a workshop on the basics of consensus decision-making as well as continually engaging the youth in reflecting on each decision, discussing the possibilities and then finally working to agree on a decision together. The youth team gradually appropriated decision-making, in addition to taking on facilitation, note taking and time keeping roles during the meetings. Since our opening on May 4<sup>5</sup> 2018 (see Images 10 & 11), we continue to meet on a weekly basis to work through the day-to-day functions of the arcade, plan activities that align with our mission and vision, develop policies and discuss our financial situation.

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<sup>5</sup> Our Grand opening on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018. This was another playful choice by the youth. They chose May 4<sup>th</sup> so that they could say "May the fourth be with you," a Star Wars reference.



**Image 10. Grand opening**



**Image 11. Grand opening team cheer**

The research for my thesis began in the summer of 2018, not long after the opening of Press Start. The foundations of Press Start established before we opened in May 2018. However, with the research and with the concretization of the project, another more advanced phase of development occurred as we were confronted with questions related to our mission, vision, values and as we engaged with the Taking Back the Economy (TBTE) framework.

### **Situating Myself and my Co-researchers**

It is important that I situate myself within this research. I am a white, queer, cis-gendered woman who has spent the last fifteen years working in the community sector. My pathway through both the community sector and academia was not typical, as I simultaneously worked in the community sector while navigating academia, being a parent, and working as a community and student campaigns organizer. Not to say this is only my story – there are many similar to mine. I

am simply highlighting the multiple intersecting ways that I came into this research, as an engaged researcher in which my whole self enters. For example, the mom in me brought food to all of the workshops and often when I would meet with the youth to prepare for the workshops. My relationship with the youth in this research holds many complexities. I am a researcher, a community worker and their neighbor. My life trajectory has shaped my approach to youth work, research, my relationships with my co-researchers and the biases that I hold. My co-researchers, youth and adults alike, know various facets of me. My dual role of researcher and collaborator with the youth in the development of this project posed some challenges to the research. Although we named that, the research is separate from Press Start and the development of the project; upon reflection, they are closely intertwined and impossible to parse. The research has shaped the project and those of us implicated in it. Important to name is that I am invested in my community, in Press Start, and in this project not as an objective observer and researcher but as a part of this research seeking to document and enact other-doings in response to the ongoing challenges in my communities.

Akki Mackay, the community researcher and my colleague from Saint-Columba House, also has long-standing relationships with the youth and the community. Akki and I worked together through the consultation and the development phases and on different projects before and during these phases. Initially, Akki was supposed to be involved in all facets of the research. However, due to scheduling challenges, they took on a less active role in the process. Akki participated in the discussion on Participatory Action Research and the exploration of the research questions, in three of the five workshops as well as in the post-workshop focus group.

Our relationships with the four youth range from over one year to over five years. At the beginning of this research, Akki and I had already worked together for more than three years

collaborating on youth-leadership projects in Pointe Saint-Charles. One of our projects, in a local high school, was where we met two of the four youth involved in this research, Shane and Samara. Shane and Samara were 16 years of age and completing grade 10 at the time of the research. Akki and I met them through a community-led sexual health education project. The two other youth were 19 years of age. Imane had just finished her first year of CEGEP and Sam was completing his high school diploma in adult education. Akki and I met Imane at Saint-Columba House as she participated in various programs and was generally very active in the community. In addition, Imane is one of the original members who was actively involved throughout the consultation, analysis and development phase. Sam's involvement with Press Start was through the Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi program.

All four of the youth identify as visible minorities and come from working class backgrounds. Sam identifies as Métis, Samara as Muslim and Black, Shane as Black and Imane as Moroccan and Muslim. The community researcher and I are not visible minorities. However, I share a similar socio-economic background to the four youth. Two of the youth are Anglophone, one unilingual and the other is bilingual, one youth is allophone (speaks and studies in French and speaks English) and one youth is a unilingual Francophone.

Our existing relationships enabled us to develop the research methods and process with their capacities, strengths and challenges in mind. It was also messy as our relationships with the youth in the development of the project and research were intertwined.

## Chapter Two: Reframing the Economy

Without peering into the micro level inner workings of the economy, it appears to be an intricate system controlled by the state and corporate actors while ordinary folks passively await the impact of these decisions on their daily lives and on the planet. Between sound bites of the federal budget, waves of panic and media attention during an economic crisis and confusing grade 11 economics classes, the economy remains a vast and amorphous entity. Two feminist economic geographers who go by the pen name J. K. Gibson-Graham challenge the dominant capitalocentric portrayal of the economy. In particular, they critique the image of the economy as a complex machine “that operates in a predictable way” and cannot be understood by lay-people (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 7). Holloway (2016), Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) and Springer (2012) use different language to describe the process of resisting capital and creating post-capitalist societies. Whether this is creating the “crack” and “ruptures” of Holloway (2016), the “other-doing” of Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) or engaging in the “here and now” of Springer (2012), all of these imply direct and immediate engagement. They do not, however, propose a hegemonic solution but rather, recognize that our imaginations are the limit to how to create alternatives that are “infused with non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, and non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid” (Springer, 2012, p. 1617). Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) recognize the ways that we are already working towards creating other worlds.

### Take Back the Economy (TBTE)

Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson (of J. K. Gibson-Graham) first introduced the field of ‘diverse economies’ in their 1996 book *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. In *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006), they began to lay the foundations of a community economy “as a space for ethical negotiation and decision making”

(Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. ix). The diverse economies and community economies scholarship has been taken up by a variety of researchers across disciplines through the Community Economies Collective and the Community Economies Research Network (CERN).

Gibson-Graham joined by Jenny Cameron and Stephen Healy from CERN co-authored *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities* (2013) outlining conceptual tools for carving out even more possibilities for other-doing. The Take Back the Economy (TBTE) conceptual framework is the focus of this research, which explores possibilities for communities impacted by various social, economic and political factors to become critical economic subjects and work towards creating worlds that are more just and equitable.

The TBTE framework is a reframing of the economy moving beyond the capitalocentric vision with the idea that “we can build the economies we live in” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. xiii). It permits us the space to see ourselves as economic actors – to “think big” in order to see our larger global community and the impact of our decisions on people and the planet. As well, it allows us to “think small” about how through our everyday actions and relationships we can begin to transform our communities and ourselves (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

### ***Diverse Economies Framework***

The diverse economies framework seeks to move away from capitalism as a totalizing force by peering into the economic practices that make up the economy. The refocus on a diversity of economic practices inclusive of capitalist, alter-capitalist and non-capitalist practices is:

- 1) “A refusal of economic determinism and the ontological commitment to certain practices (such as capitalist accumulation) as more determining of world outcomes than others” (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 6).

- 2) “A refusal of empirical realism and the epistemological commitment to a simple separation between reality and reflection that could be directly mediated by neutral empirical evidence [...] Gibson-Graham began to conceptualize a world of overdetermination in which all existing conditions are the outcome of their myriad conditions for existence” (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 6).
  
- 3) A belief that research “is performative, that is, it brings into being that which it theorizes [...] The performative view of theory and research opens up the possibility of making worlds, but it offers no recipe for social transformation” (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 7).

The diverse economies framework moves towards the “heterogeneity of economic practices” (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 9) dislocating the power held within the hegemonic discourse of capitalism and proposing an array of possibilities for change.

The diverse economic framework differentiates economic practices as capitalist, alter-capitalist and non-capitalist. Capitalist practices are the mainstream practices inclusive of wage labour, the private accumulation of wealth, private property, the production of goods and services for market exchange, and finances in which interest is mediated by the market. Alter-capitalists are similar to mainstream practices; however, they are not solely mediated by markets and motivated by the accumulation of private wealth (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Alter-capitalist practices also have an alternative element such as “a commitment to producing social or environmental well-being (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 12). Non-capitalist practices are those that are not mediated by markets and by the accumulation of monetary wealth (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

## ***Community Economies***

A community economy is the manifestation of these diverse economic practices and the relationships formed through these negotiations. It moves away from traditional thinking, language and practices oriented around money and profit towards relationships, responsibility as well as personal and collective transformation. This is what we are moving towards in Press Start as we reframe the economy and enact a diversity of practices, with a focus on expanding alter- and non-capitalist practices.

An important part of the community economies perspective is the rejection of a “one-size-fits-all approach” in favor of one that recognizes and supports diverse economic practices (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 7). This approach is not prescriptive and leaves space for carving out various pathways for experimentation. Each decision we make can bring us closer to the worlds we want, here and now. This approach allows for experimentation where the youth of Press Start reflect, make decisions and shape their project while negotiating the challenges and benefits of living well together (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

## **The Five Ethical Coordinates**

A tool within this framework consists of the five ethical coordinates that break down various elements of the economy to help us better understand and act upon it. Each of these elements involves choices for ethical actions. Each of these ethical coordinates encompasses human and non-human interdependence. Reframing and making ethical decisions involves “recognizing and negotiating” with ourselves, other humans, non-humans and the planet, and through this process, we become a community (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. xix). In the following section, I define the coordinates and the concepts that we apply within this research.

### ***Taking Back Labour (Surviving Well)***

Taking back labour elaborates on our understanding of wellness and various types of work beyond paid work: capitalist, alter-capitalist and unpaid. Capitalist labour encompasses waged labour, when an employee works for someone and is paid a salary. Alter-capitalist labour is alternatively paid, including self-employment, cooperatives, reciprocal labor, in-kind, and work for welfare. Lastly, there is unpaid labour that refers to housework, family care (taking care of children, aging parents), neighborhood work and self-provisioning.

Taking back labour also has us consider the balance between various elements and the way they interact with one another for us to survive well together. Gibson-Graham (2013) highlights five facets of wellness: material, occupational, physical, community and the social. Material well-being comes from having the necessary resources to meet our basic needs and being satisfied with the resources we have (housing, clothing, food and other basic needs). Occupational well-being comes from a sense of enjoyment of what you do each day, whether in a conventional job or as a student, as a parent, a volunteer or as a retiree. Social well-being is having close personal relationships and a supportive social network. Community well-being comes from being involved in community activities. Physical well-being comes from good health and a safe work and living environment.

**Work-life balance.** Within the TBTE framework, there is a recognition that people engage in various forms of work that are necessary in supporting livelihoods beyond paid work, meaning that many people are working for more than 8 hours per day (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). In an ideal work-life balance, each person has 8 hours of rest and 8 hours of recreation and 8 hours of work that includes the various forms of work that they do, not only paid work, as all forms of work are vital in keeping communities going (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013)

### ***Taking Back Business (Distributing Surplus)***

Taking back business is about different forms of enterprises and organizations as well as the negotiations and decisions of producing and distributing surplus that are just and equitable for both humans and the planet (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013). The different forms of business include capitalist enterprises, alternative capitalist that includes green capitalist firms, state-run enterprises and socially responsible firms. Non-capitalist enterprises include cooperatives, social enterprises, self-employed businesses, etc. (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013). Each form of business is differentiated based on “who appropriates the surplus and thus makes decisions about its distribution” (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020, p. 11).

The survival-surplus nexus considers the cost for businesses to survive as well as the cost of workers and their survival (survival payment). The survival payment refers to the payments invested in the survival and well-being of the workers who produce the goods and services. Surplus labour “refers to the ‘extra’ goods or services that workers produce above this survival payment” (Cameron, 2020, p. 27). The survival-surplus nexus is the tension between the survival wage and the surplus that is redistributed. In the context of a community economy, “we negotiate how to spread the benefit bestowed by surplus to the well-being of people and the planet” (Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2013, p. 73). Survival and surplus are interdependent (Cameron, 2020, p. 27). How new wealth is distributed matters. Surplus can be used to line the pockets of those who are already wealthy, investments to increase production and profits, the investment in the well-being of workers, communities and the planet or a variation.

### ***Transactions/Markets (Encountering Others)***

Gibson-Graham & Dombroski (2020) define markets as “encounters where ethics, values, trust and certainty play out in diverse ways. They include equal and unequal exchanges, but also

sharing, allocating, reciprocating, authorized stealing” (p. 13). Transactions are the exchange of goods and services that permit us to meet one another’s needs while considering planetary needs, in part, by minimizing distance, facilitating direct encounters and establishing reciprocal relationships (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). The capitalocentric vision of markets focuses on commodity exchanges mediated by supply and demand. The mechanism of supply and demand is believed to create a “level playing field of the market” where “we are all members of a ‘democracy of consumers,’ free to exercise choice over what we want and free to achieve the highest possible standard of living we can buy” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 85).

Within the TBTE framework, there are three forms of encounters/transactions: non-market exchanges that do not result in an equal exchange of money, services or goods that are incommensurable such as gifting, gleaning, and household flow. Market exchanges are those described above that are economically commensurable. Other markets, exchanges are not centered on supply and demand but rather social commensurability for example: inter-coop agreements, state policy, trade agreements (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020).

### ***Property (Commoning)***

Within the TBTE framework, there is a belief that all forms of property can be commoned, including individually owned private property, collectively owned private property, state-owned and open-access. Founded on an ethics of care, commoning is the process of negotiating and re-negotiating access, use, benefit, care and responsibility of a community or collective resource (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Commoning is about maintaining and expanding access, use, benefits, care and responsibility to the commons as much as possible and to as many people as possible (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Commoning is key to community economies and for surviving well together (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

### ***Finance (Investing in Futures)***

Finance is concerned with investing in futures that benefit the whole of society, including future societies, through monetary and non-monetary means (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Within the TBTE economy framework, there are three forms of finance: non-market, market and other market. Non-market investments include donations, crowdsourcing, interest-free loans, sweat equity, family lending and are direct negotiations. The returns on these investments are either non-monetary or do not yield profit (i.e., no interest or additional fees) (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). Market investments are those with private, for-profit financial institutions, investment companies and insurance companies in which there is a monetary return in the form of interest or premiums; these investments are regulated by the market considerations (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020). Other markets include state banks, cooperative banks and credit unions, as well as community currency in which there is a monetary return; however, they are regulated by their members or through non-market considerations (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020).

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

In this research, we learn a language of diverse economies that seeks to dislocate the hegemony of neoliberal discourse “through a proliferative queering of the economic landscape and construction of a new language” (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 56). The politics of language can stifle or open up economic imaginaries; the TBTE economy framework and ethical coordinates do the latter (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). This expansion of economic imaginaries creates opportunities for youth to expand decision-making, negotiate power and transform themselves through the enactment of diverse practices (Gibson-Graham, 2006b). This movement of creating community economies shifts the focus from capital to human and more-than-human subjects through a process of experimenting and cultivating livelihoods.

Beyond the introduction to a new language with which to understand and engage with the economy, the research process seeks to reconfigure relationships and power between youth and adults as well as youth's relationship to the economy. Through this, we engage with marginal practices. These practices are typically not valued or undervalued in mainstream culture and in a capitalocentric vision of the economy that frames both human and non-human subjects alike in relation to their capacity to produce wealth. These practices are marginal in that they are invisible or invisibilized.

### ***Research Questions***

- 1) What happens when youth are engaged in reframing the economy as they participate in the co-design and co-facilitation of workshops based on the Taking Back the Economy framework (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013)?
- 2) How do youth understand the economy and their place in it before and after engaging with the TBTE framework?
- 3) How do they begin to apply these principles in the development of a youth-led cooperative arcade?

### Chapter Three: Methodology in Action

Participatory Action Research (PAR) became popularized in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to positivist research paradigms (Irizarry & Brown, 2014). PAR challenges how and by whom knowledge is constructed and controlled, seeking to democratize research. There is the epistemological belief that those affected by injustice are best positioned to reflect on and transform their own condition (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2016; Irizarry & Brown, 2014; Jacobs, 2018; Wilson, 2016). The subjects of the research are actively engaged in the process and in the co-production of knowledge as co-researchers in various facets of the process. “The researcher is not considered the expert but is also a participant and learner in the research process” (Jacobs, 2018, p. 45).

PAR “critiques the status quo” and aims to “bring about social, cultural, and political change” while “envisioning new possibilities” (Jacobs, 2018, p. 42). According to Jacobs (2018):

PAR allows participants to describe how their practices are shaped and constrained by political, economic, and cultural structures and if they can intervene on their own behalf to escape these constraints, and if not, how they can work within these structures to minimize the irrationality, dissatisfaction, and inefficiencies within. (p. 44)

PAR is more than just the acquisition of knowledge, it is about engaging in a process of transformation, transforming both the researcher and the subjects of the research. Both the process and the outcome of the research seek to be transformational, by “challenging traditional hierarchies” and “larger rules and structures which keep issues and problems in place” (Jacobs, 2018, p. 45).

Both PAR and critical pedagogy are designed to shift power through a process of reflection and action – praxis (Freire, 2012). By combining these two approaches, engaged-researchers seek

to transform the dominant paradigms that often position marginalized communities from “passive knowledge consumers” to “empowered knowledge producers” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 106). Critical pedagogy and PAR build “social and critical consciousness” (Scott et al., 2015, p. 143) or, conscientization (Freire, 2012). The process of “conscientization and praxis is not smooth, linear, predictable, or inevitable” (Scott et al., 2015, p. 155). PAR and critical pedagogy ground learning in each person’s experience (Lashua & Wishart-Leard, 2006) and in the youth’s “social, cultural, cognitive, economic and political context” (Breuing, 2005, p. 109). Scott et al. (2015) used youth-led PAR and critical pedagogy in their research because both sets of traditions “present productive challenges for continuing reflection on working both within and against existing educational systems” (Scott et al., 2015, p. 139). Similarly, this research applies PAR and critical pedagogy to begin to imagine, develop and apply economic practices that work “within and against” the dominant vision of the economy towards economic justice.

This research was designed as a participatory action research project (PAR) working with the four youth and the other adult co-founder of Press Start. PAR methodology is about shifting power relations and provoking social change (Thiollent, 2011; Price & Mencke, 2013) that aligns with the work that we do at Press Start. The youth, within the constraints of time and resources, were involved in finalizing methods, data collection and the first level of analysis as co-researchers. The data collection and analysis were interwoven into various steps: 1) Pre-focus group (video-recorded) with youth exploring their understanding of the economy and their role within it; 2) Participation of four youth in the co-design and co-facilitation of five workshops, with all participants completing a feedback questionnaire (what they learned, suggestions for future workshops) at the end; 3) Post-focus group (audio-recorded) to reflect on how their comprehension of the economy and their role within has evolved over the course of the research; and 4) Coding

session with youth and the community researcher. However, the research did not cease here as initially intended. I continued to document our work together using 5) participant observation and documentary analysis that I will discuss later in this chapter.

### **Thick Description and Weak Theory**

Thick description is a concept often attributed to the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) to describe ethnography, although British metaphysical philosopher, Gilbert Riley (1971), initially conceived of it. Thick description began primarily as a research tool for ethnographers involved in participant observation. However, it is now used across various disciplines by researchers conducting qualitative research (Ponterotto, 2018). Thick description involves the double task of describing and interpreting (Geertz, 1973; Gibson-Graham, 2014a; Ponterotto, 2018). Thick description describes the mundane and everyday social interactions with detail and nuance and interprets these based on the cultural context in which they are rooted (Geertz, 1973; Gibson-Graham, 2014a). These “small facts” can “speak to large concerns;” however, it does not mean that truths that emerge are universally applicable since they are rooted in a particular context, as experienced by the subjects of the research in that moment (Gibson-Graham, 2014b, p. 1). Ponterotto (2018) acknowledges that there is confusion about thick description and its dual role and develops a working definition:

Thick description refers to the researcher’s task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behavior) within its particular context. The context can be within a smaller unit (such as a couple, a family, a work environment) or within a larger unit (such as one’s village, a community, or general culture). Thick description accurately describes observed social actions and assigns purpose and intentionality to these actions, by way of the researcher’s understanding and clear description of the context under which the social

actions took place. Thick description captures the thoughts and feelings of participants as well as the, often complex, web of relationships among them. Thick description leads to thick interpretation, which in turns leads to thick meaning of the research findings for the researchers and participants themselves, and for the report's intended readership. Thick meaning of findings leads readers to a sense of verisimilitude, wherein they can cognitively and emotively "place" themselves within the research context. (p. 543)

Weak theory does not begin from a knowing stance but rather "observes, interprets, and yields to emerging knowledge" (Gibson-Graham, 2014a, p. 149). Weak theory and thick description take the time to describe what is happening and to draw out the knowledge that emerges from this process (Cameron, 2020). Gibson-Graham (2014b) use thick description and weak theory to draw out the economic practices that are often overlooked or analyzed with the context of the capitalocentric vision of the economy, such as: "relationships of interdependence, the challenges and the contradictions that shape economic practices" (Gibson-Graham, 2014b). Gibson-Graham (2014a) describe this ethnographic process as a performative ontology, or a political choice of world-making (2014a). Thick description is "a political choice to enact a revolution of sorts, one that makes faint glimmers into prefigurative elements of becoming" (Gibson-Graham, 2014a, p. 151).

In this research process, the youth and adult team alike are experiencing the process and learning together and from one another. None of us is an objective researcher as we are all engaged in the process and implicated in the becoming of this project, in becoming critical economic subjects and engaging as knowledge producers. It is difficult not to see the world through a capitalocentric lens and through the many injustices experienced, witnessed and learned through stories of others and in the media. Much of the hope and possibility in our lives, communities and

in the world are invisible or invisibilized. Therefore, thick description permits us to make the various economic practices that are not captured through the lens of capitalocentrism and to make them visible.

This research is not an attempt to make claims that this knowledge is generalizable as it is rooted in a case study about how these four youth understand the economy before and after participating in a process of reframing the economy as well as the application of the TBTE framework to Press Start. It encompasses our reflections and our actions (praxis) as individuals and collectively through the development of the project. I use weak theory and thick description as I seek to center the youth's voices, the research process and the nuances hidden in the details as well as the actions that resulted from our work together. To encapsulate the process and the youth's perspective, I apply thick description using excerpts from the focus groups and the five workshops, including the dialogue between the youth and the progression of their reflections, and my notes over the course of the last two years from our informal and formal moments of learning together in the development of Press Start. As an engaged researcher, I interpret their words and actions and how this speaks to their understanding of the economy and their place within it after learning a language of diverse economies.

As initially outlined in my research plan, my youth co-researchers participated in five workshops focused on five ethical coordinates for Taking Back the Economy as well as a pre- and post-workshop focus groups. To develop the workshops, we used the TBTE framework working namely with the concepts of community economies, diverse economies and the five ethical coordinates (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013): labour (surviving well), business (distributing surplus), market (encountering others), finance (investing in futures) and property (commoning) (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

## Workshops

Each of the youth became an expert of one of the conceptual tools. In advance of each workshop, I met with one of the four youths to co-design and prepare to co-facilitate one of the workshops on the five ethical coordinates. Each youth chose an ethical coordinate that interested them the most. Before meeting with me to prepare the workshop, my youth co-facilitators read the chapter on the ethical coordinate that they chose from *Take Back the Economy* by Gibson-Graham et al. (2013). We used the book chapter on the subject to develop an adapted version of the activities in order to explore the content, with the exception of the workshop co-facilitated by the unilingual francophone youth as the book is only in English. Instead, I used translated handouts, facilitation outlines and PowerPoint presentation provided by my supervisor, Dr. Anna Kruzynski. Although this strategy was somewhat useful, it did demonstrate a disadvantage as the francophone youth did not get to engage with all of the examples in the book that help to elaborate on the framework to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts and their application. However, when preparing the workshops, each youth confessed that they did not read the chapter in its entirety. Two of the four youths took the book home after our meeting to be able to continue reading, specifically focusing on reviewing the content that they were responsible for facilitating. Each preparation meeting was approximately two and a half hours. We reviewed the proposed activities in the book together and began to build the workshop also dividing facilitation tasks. The youth took on the content that they felt they understood the best. We prepared a few guiding questions to animate a discussion at the end of the workshop to deepen reflections and validate their understandings. In this next section, I outline the workshops and the pre- and post-workshop focus groups.

### ***Phase I: Pre-workshop Focus Groups***

The pre-workshop focus group was to document the youth's understanding of the economy prior to engaging with the five ethical coordinates. We video-recorded this semi-structured discussion (Guiding questions, Appendix A) led by me so that we may refer back to it after the series of workshops on reframing the economy. Initially, I had planned to use the video to begin the first level of analysis to explore if and how their perceptions have changed. However, we proceeded differently, which I will elaborate on later.

The length of the focus group was approximately three hours to give adequate time for each youth to answer questions and engage with what others have said. Two of the youth involved are primarily French-speaking and two are primarily English-speaking. This meant that throughout the focus group we needed to read the questions aloud in both English and French. My pre-existing relationship with the youth helped to facilitate this process as I understood both their capacities to understand and communicate in the other language and their non-verbal cues when they do not understand. The existing relationships between the youth and how we function within also helped with addressing language. The youth themselves would try to translate part of what they said from English to French or vice versa. However, admittedly, translation from English to French did not occur as consistently as it could have.

### ***Workshop on Participatory Action Research***

After the pre-focus group, I met with the group to give space for changes based on the youth's and community researcher's feedback. This session consisted of a workshop on participatory action research, the research process itself and reviewing the research questions. This research seeks to engage youth genuinely; therefore, it is crucial that there is space and time to alter the research and process based on input from my youth co-researchers.

### ***Phase II: Implementation – TBTE Framework***

Each youth co-facilitated the workshop (Sample workshop outline, Appendix A) for the other three youth co-researchers while also participating with the group in the activities. Each workshop lasted approximately three hours with two breaks. The workshops were audio recorded. At the end of each workshop, each participant filled in a short questionnaire of open-ended questions on the workshop, their learning and the process (Questionnaire, Appendix B). These short questionnaires were used to help us prepare the following workshop and address any concepts that were unclear. After the five workshops on the ethical coordinates, in advance of the post-workshop focus group, one of the youth and my community co-researcher went through the pre-workshop focus group video as well as the recordings from the five workshops and drew out key findings.

### ***Phase III: Post-workshop Focus Group and Data Analysis***

I organized all of the documentation from each workshop. The data organized by workshop included the notes that we took together, their personal notes as well as their feedback forms. The group had approximately forty minutes to go through the data.

Afterwards, we met again to reflect on their overall learning from the workshops and the themes that emerged in all of the workshops. Then one by one, we went through the workshops and what they took away from each, asking them to reflect on how they understood the economy before and after having participated in the series of workshops. This process allowed us to see if and how there was a shift in their understanding of the economy and their role within it. The discussion and reflections that emerged were the first level of analysis that shaped the later phases of analyses.

The post-workshop focus group happened a few months after the workshops, as it was difficult to find a date that everyone could attend. The youth had different school schedules; some of the youth had other jobs and family obligations as well. We tried not to interfere with their Press Start work schedule.

### ***Workshop on Coding***

Following the post-workshop focus group, I facilitated a workshop on coding data in which we also coded the data together. In preparation, one of the youth and the community researcher drew out relevant information from the pre- and post-workshop interviews. In the coding session with the rest of the team, we reviewed the different notes that were taken during the workshops as well as the questionnaires that they filled in at the end of each. The youth organized the data and documented their learning and any themes that emerged. The basis of my analysis is rooted in the themes that the youth drew out in the coding session and, in particular, the shifts in their understanding of the economy.

In this session, we also brainstormed how we wanted to share our learning. The youth came up with a list of ways to transfer knowledge to other youth in the community about the economy and our work at Press Start.

### **Beginning of Participant Observation & Documentary Analysis**

In the following section, I outline the formal and informal learning that occurred after the PAR process was complete and as we began to integrate the concepts and reflections from the PAR workshops into the development of Press Start and the continuation of the research. The formal workshop was on the mission and vision of B7 and returning to the roots of our process at Press Start. Followed by the process of planning for Hip Hop as Resistance. In addition, this section contains a table of the research timeline as well as the changes to the proposed research

and the process of documenting our work together using documentary analysis and participant observation.

### ***Workshop on Mission and Vision***

In this workshop, we discussed both the history and mission of B7 and Press Start. We also explored the commitments that all members need to make under three themes: deep democracy, interdependence and emancipatory economic practices. Under the heading of emancipatory economic practice, we delved deeper into understanding the work of other projects within B7 that is unseen – the transformative practices on the margins. With respect to deep democracy, we discussed the horizontal decision-making structure and the spaces of participation and engagement that all projects including Press Start are implicated in, as well as the rationale and importance of these types of spaces. Lastly, we explored interdependence. The youth were encouraged to name all the ways we are connected to other projects and B7 and elaborate on these relationships and the reciprocity within them. Within each theme, we also explored how we can and want to continue building on these various aspects. In order to document this process and ensure that my interpretations were accurate to what the youth were naming, I acted as a public scribe by writing on large pieces of paper visible to all.

### ***Hip Hop as Resistance***

The planning of Hip Hop as Resistance occurred over many meetings with just the Press Start team, as well as four collective meetings with Press Start and the various projects within B7. We planned and discussed how we want to bring the community together in a safe way. In the collective meetings, Press Start presented how this event was connected to our racial justice mission, the political nature of this event and the values that frame our work. The other projects and members of the B7 ecosystem proposed ways that they can contribute to the event in line with

our values. Although there was some collective planning, the Press Start team outlined their capacities and expectations, which included that each project was to function autonomously. However, we outlined that we were all responsible for creating a safer space for the attendees, the BIPOC artists and one another. Notes were taken in these meetings; however, most of the data and reflections from this process are my recollections of events and the interactions that I only began to document more formally in the fall 2020.

**Figure 1. Timeline of research**

<b>PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH &amp; PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION</b>	
Workshop on participatory action research, review of questions and research process	May, 2018
Pre-workshop focus group	June, 2018
Workshop # 1 Reframing the economy and work coordinate	July, 2018
Workshop#2 Business/enterprise coordinate	August, 2018
Workshop # 3 Market coordinate	August, 2018
Workshop # 4 Property coordinate	August, 2018
Workshop # 5 Finance coordinate	August, 2018
Post-workshop focus group	October, 2018
Coding workshop & coding session	October, 2018
<b>PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION</b>	2018-2021
Workshop on mission and vision	March, 2019
Hip hop as Resistance	Summer-Fall, 2020
<b>PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION &amp; DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS</b>	Fall 2020-Winter 2021

### **Changes to the Process Outlined in my Research Proposal**

This research initially was focused on analyzing the pre- and post-workshop focus groups; however, it continued long afterwards. There are two reasons for this decision to continue. First, as someone committed to the project beyond the research, and as the project was just beginning, a significant portion of my focus was shifted to the sustainability of the project, the well-being of the youth involved and a commitment to living out our mission. This meant that my time was diverted to the project instead of immediately delving into the analysis. As a community engaged

researcher, I could not in good faith leave the project to immerse myself in data analysis and thesis writing. My process was much slower. Over two years, I continuously engaged with the recorded workshop interviews and the transcriptions of the pre- and post-workshop focus groups. Secondly, after the initial research process, I began to see the greater impact of the work that my co-researchers and I did together. The application of the TBTE framework began to take shape and nourish our work long after the workshops were completed. Our research manifested concretely in shaping Press Start, the individuals involved and the ecosystem in which we are rooted. The reflections and actions that emerged in the first two years of our project were too important not to bring into the analysis and outcomes.

After the workshops ended, I continued to document the actions and reflections that emerged in the ongoing development of the project through participant observation and documentary analysis.

### **Participatory Observation and Documentary Analysis**

Beyond the initial research process that ended in the fall of 2018, as the development of Press Start progressed, I continued the research through participant observation and documentary analysis. We continued to weave our learning from the workshops into our on-going work together developing Press Start. During this time, I shifted to participant observation, by documenting notes in the margins of the transcripts. The participant observations were not systematically but rather, periodically documented. As new developments occurred that aligned with the research, I returned to the transcripts and the coding notes. There were also moments where there was no written documentation of the reflections and applications. Instead, there were observations that I made as I continued to analyze the research process.

The documentary analysis consisted of reviewing our team meeting notes. This was, in part, to validate my mental observations and ensure that my memory of events was accurate. In addition, I scanned our meeting notes for relevant information that I may have missed. The notes from our meetings varied, as the youth and adults in Press Start shared facilitation and note-taking responsibilities in each meeting. Therefore, some of our notes are very detailed (almost verbatim), while other notes from our meetings consist primarily of dates and decisions made.

There were both formal and informal moments of deepening our understanding of the TBTE framework and applying it to our work. This consisted of discussions that emerged naturally in our weekly team meetings. My youth co-researchers and the community researcher brought in elements from the workshops in relation to decisions we needed to make, reflecting on how we can make the most ethical decision given our particular context. We also had formal discussions on emancipatory economic practices that continued to nourish our reflections and this research.

There were various sources of data: the focus group interviews and notes, the workshop recordings, my participant observation as well as documentary analysis of meeting and workshop notes. Primary sources of data were the audio and video recordings before, during and after the workshops on the five ethical coordinates as well the questionnaires filled in by the youth after each workshop. The pre- and post-workshop interviews were transcribed verbatim whereas the workshops were not transcribed. I listened to the workshop interviews and took notes. As we continued the development of Press Start, there was a deeper application of the content. At times, I would bring in concepts from the research to help frame our reflections and in other moments, the youth co-researchers would refer back to workshops on the five ethical coordinates. The research became a spiral in which new reflections and learning continued to fold into the development of the project and our learning together.

## **Navigating Research with Youth**

There are various points to consider and prepare for when engaging in this process with youth. It is not always comfortable and it can be difficult for youth to deal with the new knowledge they developed through this process, specifically that which sheds light on exploitative social realities. Through this process, youth may have various emotional responses as they are introduced to “uncomfortable new ideas” and “new identities” (Scott et al. 2015, p. 148). Creating a place for healing is essential as they work through feelings of anger, guilt and injustice. If supported effectively and given time to work through these feelings by first naming these realities and recognizing that others experience a similar reality, this process can be an empowering one – a context that they can act upon both individually and collectively. Moving through the process of praxis, from reflection and action, helps move to indignation versus the feelings of alienation that so many youth and adults alike experience their entire lives (Wilson, 2016). Youth negotiate and renegotiate their role as “agents of change” (Wilson, 2016, p. 24). This includes their role as co-researchers and co-conspirators as well as identities constructed through participation in mainstream society, i.e., the relationship between youth and adults (Wilson, 2016).

As outlined in the introduction, this research is about engaging youth as critical economic subjects as they learn a language of diverse economies in order for these same youth to engage in transforming themselves, their communities and the economy. The TBTE framework, although political in nature, does not advance any one political ideology. The diverse economies framework creates space for varied responses to working towards community economies. This is important to name, as this is not an attempt to indoctrinate the youth into one particular vision of the economy, which was one of the concerns raised by one of the members of my supervisory committee. Although my personal political beliefs are rooted in anarchism as are those of my community co-

researcher, this framework along with our approach to working with youth is rather about supporting the development of youth's critical consciousness. In part, this is accomplished by introducing them to a reframing of the economy and creating a space for dialogue as we work through the TBTE framework, which ultimately gives them the space to develop their own ideas about the world, the economy and their place within it.

Through this PAR process with the four youth co-researchers, we explored how the various political, economic and cultural forces shape their lives and the lives of others within their own communities, making connections with communities across the globe. The discussions were rooted in their experience as individuals as well as in the collective economic project that we were co-constructing. Each workshop was focused on a particular element of economic practices (the five ethical coordinates) exploring a wide range of practices, the impacts that they have and the spaces for ethical negotiation. A significant piece of the work we did together was reflecting on capitalism and the state, how they are intertwined and how these forces shape their lives, the discourse and practices that shape the economy. Beyond sitting with the woes of capitalism and the failure of the state, we explored the possibilities for other-doing and made visible the diverse economic practices that are usually hidden and relegated to the margins. We engaged with transformative practices, which take place in communities across the globe, to shift the hegemonic discourse and build our project together away from the discourse and practices that are harmful to human and non-human alike. Together we decide if and how we want to apply these various concepts and practices to our everyday lives and to the development of Press Start.

As the four youth engaged in this research and in the reframing of the economy using the TBTE framework, the youth researchers simultaneously became knowledge producers and economic actors in the application of these concepts. We continue to do this with the explicit

objective of shifting power in relation to the economy, within the research process and between youth and adults. This happens as the youth researchers take on the role of co-teachers as they co-design and co-facilitate the workshops on the five ethical coordinates. In addition, as researchers with critical skills, they also participate in data analysis to emerge with conclusions around what happens when we reframe the economy. The adult and youth researchers become collaborators as we engage in collective action in the development of Press Start.

### *Documenting Dialogue*

Critical pedagogy is about dialogue, which is different from discourse and the traditional banking model of education (Freire, 2012). Freire (2012) describes what dialogue is not:

Dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants. Nor yet, is it hostile, polemic argument between those who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. (p. 89)

Rather than introducing youth to photo journaling, script writing or other tools frequently used with youth, our research engages with the TBTE tools that facilitate dialogue as the youth are introduced to a new language and framing of the economy. In the pre- and post-workshop focus groups, I use guiding questions to structure the discussions to capture whether there was a shift in their understanding and how it transformed after the five workshops. My role in the focus groups was simply to ask the questions as they engaged with one another to respond. The five workshops were co-designed and co-facilitated by me and one of the youth. Each workshop centered on one of the five ethical coordinates of Taking Back the Economy. In each workshop, the youth were introduced to new concepts, participated in a series of activities to deepen their understanding in

dialogue with one another to explore the spaces of ethical negotiation in which they could enact these tools as individuals and within our collective project.

Over the past years of working with this group of youth, dialogue has been a very effective way to work, learn and transform together. As Freire (2012) articulates, “if it is in speaking their words that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as a way by which they achieve significance as human beings” (Freire, 2012, p. 88). Dialogue does not require that the group comes to consensus but rather creates space for individuals to share their reflections and ideas for action while simultaneously hearing and engaging with other perspectives. This allowed us to reveal differing, and even contradictory interpretations and learnings. Thick description and dialogue allow us to show how the youth’s reflections deepened or even transformed in engagement with one another. This inclusionary process better captures realities and refuses to flush out experiences in order to achieve a “single, unified, and dominant truth” (Scott et al., 2015, pp. 139-140).

If this group did not have previous and successful experiences in sharing differing, and at times conflicting ideas, we would have used additional methods to facilitate each person’s ability to express their ideas and reflections. Using dialogue made the most sense, since we have already established trust as well as experience with this method within our team meetings and group training sessions.

### ***Sharing Power***

As adults, we are perceived to know more and are allotted automatic authority in various cultural institutions, family and schooling. This is a perception that is difficult to shift as many youth-adult relationships perpetuate this form of interaction. In addition to this, the community researcher and I are familiar with the various resources in the community and have pre-existing

relationships with other community groups and adults in the neighborhood. In the development of the arcade and up-cycling project, my community researcher and I tried our best to share power and responsibility with the four youths. This process was not linear or perfect. Our roles as adults in the project meant adapting to both the youth's capacity and desire to engage in different parts of the project over time. Power and responsibility were constantly shifting based on the needs of the youth and the project. This facilitated the process of shifting from traditional research relationships, with the researcher as expert to the subjects of the researcher as the experts of their own experience. However, there were still disparities. In the pre-workshop focus group, this dynamic was present as the youth continually sought for me to confirm whether their responses were correct or sufficient. However, as they began to move through the process, their understanding of the objectives of the research and their role became clearer. They began to engage more with one another and less with me. Helpful to this was working one-on-one with youth to develop the plan for the workshop and getting them more familiar with the content that we were introducing to the rest of the group. In addition, the on-going process of deliberating collectively both in the research and the development of the project enabled this shift to happen. An example of this shift was after our first Hip Hop as Resistance event. We were reflecting on the event. One of the youth, also one of the co-researchers, turned to me and said that she felt like I took too much space at the event, and that I was "bossy." Although this was difficult to hear, it demonstrated to me that this particular youth was asserting herself within the project and challenging the role of the adults, namely me. It also demonstrated a level of trust on her part in feeling safe enough to name this without fear of negative consequences. It also revealed that although I hold values of facilitating youth leadership and youth autonomy, that I exist with contradictions that I need to continue to work on and reflect on to transform.

Language and group composition also brought some complexity to the research. One member of the group is Francophone and understands very little English, he is also the one member of the group who seems to struggle expressing himself in-group contexts. Our pre-existing relationship with each youth and the foundation of the project helped us to overcome certain challenges. For example, the youth who is quieter and has more difficulty with group discussions participates if we ask him questions directly and take the time to translate all content from English to French. Another youth struggles to remain focused if sessions last longer than one hour without a break. We pay attention to body language that indicates difficulty focusing and make sure to take breaks after an hour of talking together or when requested by the youth. As I listened to the recordings, the youth clearly said when they needed breaks, an indication perhaps that I was less attentive to their non-verbal communication and that the youth are comfortable naming their needs.

### ***Engagement Levels Fluctuating***

We were hoping to complete the workshops and focus groups in the summer; however, finding moments when we were all available was difficult. The youth had numerous other engagements and although we tried to set dates in advance, we often had to change the dates to ensure everyone was present. The pre-workshop focus group and the five workshops on the ethical coordinates ended in the summer of 2018 with varying gaps between each workshop. It was helpful when the gap between the workshops was not more than two weeks as the youth were more able to draw on information from the last workshop. The post workshop focus group and the analysis happened approximately two months after the workshops. In order to make up for this gap, the youth had time to review the documents from the workshops (their feedback forms, the public notes that we took together at each workshop, etc.).

A few of the youth arrived late to workshops. On one occasion, one of the youth, although messaged to let us know he would be late, arrived so late that we could not integrate him into the workshop. The youth leading the workshop with me set a date with the latecomer to give him a review of the content from the workshop. However, we chose not to record this one-on-one workshop.

### ***Recordings***

The quality of the recordings varied. There are sections of the interviews that were difficult to transcribe, as there was background noise as well. Some of the youth speak more quietly and do not articulate their words. Although this did not obstruct the content, it is important to mention.

### **Ethics**

In order to conduct this research, I requested approval from the Research Ethics department at Concordia University for a Masters Research study *Becoming economic subjects: A participatory action research project with youth*. The approval for the research was granted from the ethics department under the larger faculty-led research study *Community economies for social and environmental justice in Quebec: Mapping diverse economic and political practices proliferating at the margins*, overseen by Dr. Anna Kruzynski (2017-2022).

### ***Consent Forms***

Two consent forms (Appendix D) were devised and approved, one form for my youth co-researchers and my community research as well as an additional form for parents of the youth who were under 18 years of age at the time of the research. Before beginning the research and after the ethics approval, I presented my research proposal and the ethics forms to the Saint-Columba House board of directors, the organization at the time legally responsible for Press Start.

The form devised for this research consists of clear and simple language devoid of academic jargon. In addition, I created both an English version and a French version of the form. The form outlines the purpose of the research, the procedures including the various workshops and focus groups, the risks and benefits as well as the conditions of participation. The youth and community researcher were paid for their participation in the various facets of the research.

### ***Layers of Consent***

Before applying to do my master's degree, I met with the four youth and my community researcher to discuss doing my research at Press Start with the group as my co-researchers. The Press Start team gave me preliminary consent to apply to do this research and agreed to participate as my co-researchers. At each phase, I continued to check in to ensure that they still had the desire to participate as co-researchers. Before beginning the research in the summer of 2018, I reviewed the ethics forms both collectively with the group and with each of them individually working through any questions or concerns. In the ethics form, participants/co-researchers had the option to choose whether they consented to be recorded as well as the option to disclose their name or remain anonymous. I reminded the youth throughout the research process that they could withdraw their consent at any time without any consequences.

## **Chapter Four: Shaping and Shifting Discourse, Criticality & Agency**

In the literature review ahead, 1) I engage with the concept of the margins as a space for transformation examined throughout this research. Next, I explore the discourses that shape the image of youth and the ways in which these traverse various realms: cultural, social, political and economic. 2) I explore the social construction of youth and dominant discourses where they emerge, as well as how it shapes youth agency and consequently how youth see themselves as political and economic actors. I focus primarily on education and youth employment, these being some of the most pervasive forces in the lives of many youth that shape their immediate and future possibilities. Importantly, I consider how 3) schooling, 4) youth employment and the social economy position youth as critical economic subjects as well as if and how they offer equitable terrain for participation. I delve into education as a cultural institution that reinforces the discourses of youth and affects their criticality and their agency. Following, I examine youth employment another domain in which various tropes around youth surface in both policy and practice. I continue by exploring the social economy in Quebec, one of the important facets of the economy that has devised various strategies to address youth employment encompassing both institutionalized and autonomous, collectivist self-managed initiatives. 5) Last, I discuss care as a transformative practice that both emerged from the research with youth and within the literature as a necessary practice in social transformation.

### **The Margins, a Space for Social Transformation**

Marginality is commonly used to describe a space, whether real or imaginary, situated on the peripheries and existing as a somewhat hidden and outcasted feature of society that tends to carry a negative association (Parazelli, 2007). Parazelli (2007) on the other hand asks us to think of marginality differently, as a place of exploration and a search for meaning in the lives of those

who cannot do so within the “centre” or mainstream. Parazelli (2007) understands marginality as constituting complex power relations in which social transformation is attempting to emerge, which may result in the status quo or emancipation. Society as a whole benefits from the existence of the margins that push issues, reflections and social change (Colombo et al., 2007; Parazelli, 2007, p. 72).

Furthermore, the centre, or mainstream, interacts with the margins in an exclusionary way (Colombo et al., 2007). Marginal individuals, practices or initiatives challenge the status quo and are often seen as problematic and can even result in punitive consequences for those on the margins.

Parazelli uses the term “socialisation marginalisée” that recognizes that some youth need to become part of society but not through the traditional institutional spaces such as school (Parazelli, 2007). As we have seen in the upcoming sections, societal institutions such as school can be exclusionary and traditional employment opportunities for youth can lead to exploitation and further marginalization. Exclusion can lead young people to search out a place on the margins in search of a place to “fit” or belong in.

In this research, we engage with the concept of the margins as a space of transformation that challenges the status quo, namely, seeking to challenge relationships of domination.

### **The Social Construction of Youth**

Since the late nineteenth century, advanced industrial capitalism has shaped the construction of youth as a social category (Parazelli, 2007; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). Parazelli (2007) explores the paradoxical historical and sociological spaces in various societies in the western world, where order and disorder during youth’s transition to adulthood were built into the social fabric of communities. Each society possessed its own form of myths, roles and rites of

passage for youth that facilitated the maintenance of social order and morality. These spaces served to consolidate intergenerational relationships and establish social cohesion. Parazelli (2007) explores the break between youth and adults as well as youth and society with industrialization and urban densification. The result of these changes was a different and tension based relationship between youth and adults, in particular, with youth who could not find a way to “fit”, leading some young people to the margins in search of belonging.

Industrialization, urban densification and capitalism changed the ways we organize our worlds. Work moved further from the home while wage labour became increasingly the norm and schooling expanded to accommodate the needs of the state and capital (Parazelli, 2007; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). Schools and various other institutions took on the role of teaching morality, social norms and preparing young people to participate in the workforce. The streets and the economics of the home were increasingly lost as a space of interaction between generations. Young people were gradually herded into age-segregated institutions, spent less time with their families and increasingly became absorbed into consumer culture (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). Moreover, those who do not conform are confronted with an onslaught of interventions to help them integrate into society. Those who do not “fit” are cast aside and barricaded within the margins through the youth criminal justice system, youth protection and various other institutions (Giroux, 2009). This is reinforced with sociological perceptions of youth that paint youth as a problem needing to be managed (Parazelli, 2007).

### ***The Youth Problem, the Problem with Youth***

Youth as a social category is a recent construction that, in part, attained particular rights and protections for children and youth. However, Giroux (2009) argues that within the last few decades youth are “increasingly demonized by the popular media and derided by politicians

looking for quick-fix solutions to crime and other social ills (p. 19). In addition, this generalized category often does not recognize and consider the differing social, political and economic realities of people within this age group. The traditional conceptualizations have framed youth as a problem that needs to be managed. Furthermore, it has also been used for both political and economic gain from the elite classes and as a form of social reproduction and social control, namely through education and employment. Consequently, youth agency is depleted and youth are influenced as to their perceptions of their place in the world.

In the mid-twentieth century, one sociological perspective dominated the field of youth studies and contributed to a distorted image of youth that continues to influence policy (Woodland, 2014). It was a tradition that “argued that a generation gap (represented by a general youth culture in opposition to the parent culture) had emerged” (Woodland, 2014, p. 21). This proposed a vision of youth in conflict with the rest of society. There are young people that “fit” into the functionalist vision as “good” (Woodland, 2014). Those that do not “fit” are seen as defiant (Woodland, 2014), presenting an image “discursively framed around youth as a problem invariably with the presumption that wayward young people need to be fixed by professional and policy intervention” (Cullen & Bradford, 2012, p. 205). Giroux (2009) argues that “if youth once constituted a social investment in the future and symbolized the promise of a better world, they are now entering another stage in the construction of a global social order in which children are increasingly demonized and criminalized” (p. 29). And, while the language of commodification and criminalization defines youth, it is primarily poor and racialized youth who carry the stigma consequences of this image of youth (Giroux, 2009).

### *The Homogenization of Youth*

The youth category creates a homogeneous image that does not consider the differing realities of youth, the barriers to participation in various societal institutions and the outcomes for youth from different social, economic and geographical contexts.

In her 2011 book *Rebel Girls: Youth Activism and Social Change Across the Americas*, Jessica Taft interviews girl activists, highlighting the possibilities and strengths of implicating youth in social movements and political spaces as well as the very different social and political realities and the different consequences of youth participation. The youth activists interviewed by Taft see their political involvement as both different from that of adults and equally important, since they contribute innovation, openness, and the ability to take risks in their actions and their discourse. “Rebellious, abrupt, or troublesome behaviors and speech are allowed during youth in a way that it is not always permitted in adulthood. In this case, the image of youthful defiance is clearly useful for adolescents” (Taft, 2011, p. 60). The activists describe that they are given more “permission” to be defiant, as rebellion is seen as part of the socially constructed age category – youth in conflict with society. However, Taft (2011) highlights that this leniency is not given to all youth:

In most instances, classifying young people as “dangerous,” “rebellious,” and “defiant” can also lead to the intense criminalization of teens. How youthful rebellion is treated is deeply racialized and class-specific; white, middle-class rebellion is more frequently allowed as “normal” youthful troublemaking, while the defiance of youth of color and of poor teens is often harshly punished. Taking up the image of youthful rebellion, then, carries greater risks for those teenagers who are more likely to be treated as criminals, or as dangers to the social order, most notably teens from marginalized or ethnic groups, indigenous teens, or

those from impoverished families. Although it is an identity claim that many girls use to authorize their politics, the potential social impact and risk of its use is greater for some teens than for others. (p. 60)

Sukarieh & Tannock (2016) caution against the conceptualization of youth as a homogenous category. They cite the work of Groves, Siu, and Ho (2014) who demonstrate how, in the case of Hong Kong, “an alliance of elite government, business and academic interests has driven ‘a process of ‘genericization’ of middle-class youth [that] perpetuates a marginalization of the activities of their less-privileged counterparts in the public consciousness” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 7). Youth as a social category, at times, creates an image of a homogenous group that ignores the structural inequalities that different young people experience; the impact that it has on their lives and their ability or inability to participate in society. Youth “have multiple overlapping identities, different levels of resources and exist within distinctive civic-political cultures” (Furlong, 2014, p. 288). The varying realities of youth are important to engage with, as there may be harmful consequences in making sweeping generalizations based on age.

If we do not pay attention to how the political and economic landscape affects racialized communities, the poor and working class, youth of differing sexual orientations and gender identities, and the list goes on, we are erasing the very different realities that further marginalize these groups. Sukarieh & Tannock (2016) argue that there are more useful parallels to be made between marginalized groups across ages than the amorphous category at times used that centers primarily around the experience of white middle-class youth. In addition, the vision of youth in conflict with society is used as a rationale for youth uprisings and deters collective action and movement building across age groups that are fundamentally working towards similar ends - social and economic justice. As well, it ignores the reasons why some youth are defiant, angry and in

conflict with society.

The failure to turn a critical lens upon this process creates a danger that both those who identify as youth, as well as those who study youth, may end up being shaped by a broader global social politics of which they remain not quite fully aware. (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 7)

### ***The Youth-Adult Divide***

Various facets of youth studies, even more critical perspectives, create an image of youth as becoming subjects, as “citizens in the making” rather than as active members of society capable of shaping their own lives and the wellbeing of their communities. This understanding of youth as a phase of “becoming” a citizen, an economic actor, and an adult justifies the use of mechanisms of social control and the need for youth to be shaped into the vision of a “good citizen.” Engaging with young people as though they are not fully human alienates them, hinders their participation and prevents transformative possibilities across ages and generations. This division creates a tension inducing relationship constructed around power and authority that influences how youth see themselves and their agency in political and economic spaces. Taft (2011) recounts the challenges youth face in attempting to gain political authority:

While Venezuelan youth felt that they were finally being acknowledged as legitimate political actors, this was not the case for girls in the other four countries in this study. Most girl activists continue to be frustrated by their lack of democratic inclusion or equality in the present. The language of democratic inclusion is a useful discursive tool in girl activists’ struggles to construct their social movement identities and to claim authority, but, so far, these assertions of standing have not yet yielded the desired results in most locations or circumstances. (p. 55)

The lack of recognition of youth voice and agency exists within various relationships and in various organizations and institutions in which young people frequent daily. In Taft's (2011) analysis of interviews with young activists, she shares "that many adults continue to see them as 'cute,' as incapable, or as needing adult guidance in everything that they do. These perceptions of youth do not build a positive foundation on which to build cross-age relationships" (p. 69). These perceptions ignore the opportunities for "developing robust critiques, transformative action or new theoretical paradigms" (Cullen & Bradford, 2012, p. 205).

Although not true for all countries, the stratification of youth and adults in many societies across the globe has resulted in labour laws protecting youth from exploitation as well as access to rights and protections. On the other hand, it has created separate worlds for youth and adults. The divisive conceptualizations between youth and adults frame adults as superior and youth as inferior, youth as biologically inadequate, irrational and defiant and adults as mature and rational. The discourse around youth as a period of storm and stress is another example of framing youth as volatile and emotional and adults as stable and logical. These sorts of divides do just that, create divides that are a rationale for exclusion or for symbolic participation, namely from the economic and political spheres in society. While youth are excluded from various spheres, on the other hand they are targeted by marketers exploiting the influence youth have on their families' choices, on their peers and on consumer culture (Calvert, 2008).

### *Youth as Consumers*

Post-World War 2 incomes in Canada increased as did consumption habits. During this period, there was also a sudden increase in the birth rate known as the Baby Boom. High school attendance climbed as well as youth acquiring part-time jobs. During this period, youth became the new focus of marketing. Everything from magazines, clothing to movies targeted and were

influenced by this age group. According to Calvert (2008) “youths now have influence over billions of dollars in spending each year” in the U.S. (p. 207). Côté (2014) argues that youth culture is a “merchandisers’ invention” (p. 531). With this came the image of youth affluence, youth seen as a group with significant leisure time, money to spend and influence on shaping popular culture. Various subcategories emerged, one being the category of “tween.” “Tween” refers to the age between childhood and adolescence, or rather, pre-adolescence that is seemingly a catchy term to market products to this age group.

Youth bombarded by advertising can lead to detrimental impacts including parent-child tensions and obesity (Calvert, 2008). In addition, an identity is developed in relation to their capacity to consume – “the construction of particular modes of subjectivity, identification, and agency” (Giroux, 2009, p. 44). Youth are not only buying goods and services, they are buying a lifestyle and an identity that strips away and devalues other parts of identity formation (Giroux, 2009). In this market society, “corporations, marketers, and advertisers are not just exploiting kids for profit; they are actually both constructing them as commodities and promoting the concept of childhood as a saleable commodity” (Giroux, 2009, p. 50). Important to highlight is that although this impacts all youth, those “who are marginalized by virtue of their race and class bear the burdens of not only the narrow impositions of a market-driven commodified culture but also the harsh experiences of impoverishment and suffering that mark them as disposable and redundant populations” (Giroux, 2009, p. 24). This results in a form of social exclusion and devaluation of the humanity of those who do not have the financial capacity to purchase their identities and “fit” in the culture of consumption.

Youth are targeted by advertisements in school, in the home and in various public spaces making it difficult to avoid the onslaught of messaging promoting youth consumption, aligning

happiness with consumption, and thereby solidifying the identity of youth as consumers (Giroux, 2009). Giroux (2009) refers to this “public pedagogy” that targets youth as a pedagogy of commodification:

As commodity markets assume a commanding role ‘in raising, educating and shaping children,’ pedagogy is redefined as a tool of commerce aggressively promoting the commodification of young people. Free-market fundamentalism is more than willing to invest in a risky but repellent conceit that defines children’s worth in largely market values, reducing them to both commodities and a source of profit. (p. 33)

One of the elements of breaking these problematic links that promote overconsumption, connect well-being to the accumulation of material wealth and commodify young people is the development of critical awareness (Calvert, 2008). Giroux (2009) also recognizes that youth are not merely passive in this culture of consumption but notes that the spaces of resistance to challenge public pedagogy and the pedagogy of commodification are diminishing.

### ***Critical Youth Studies***

Various discourses and conceptualizations of youth, at times, disseminate harmful messages that deplete youth agency, and when youth are enacting their own agency, they are critiqued and can be penalized. Social scientists, policy makers, and service providers criticize youth when they are not participating in “appropriate” ways in existing institutions. Youth frequently described as apathetic and politically disengaged often face opportunities for participation that are limited, consultative or performative. If we contextualize behaviors and reactions of youth beyond seeing them as typical, age-based responses, we can acquire a richer, more complete portrait. For example, instead of seeing defiance in youth as typical behaviour, we

can engage with what they are responding to and reframe it as resistance in response to systemic injustice. Through this different lens, we begin to see more spaces of possibility for transformation.

Critical youth studies (CYS) draws on many different disciplines and more recently seeks to understand how youth are engaging and resisting the dominant discourse and structures. Critical youth studies is moving away from seeing youth as solely a developmental stage, a phase in which to mold and shape youth to "fit" into society. It "began as a scholarship to understand how and why some youth challenge dominant ideological structures perpetuating inequality" (Cammarata, 2017, p. 188). However, the past framings did not recognize youth agency and their capacity to "overcome the structural exigencies influencing their lives" (Cammarata, 2017, p. 188). Whereas, Côté (2014) and Sukarieh & Tannock (2014), approach youth studies from a critical perspective, they engage primarily with how youth are acted upon versus how youth act upon the world.

Earlier forms of resistance theory within CYS were documenting youth challenging various systems; however, the strategies and outcomes were self-defeating or conformist (Cammarata, 2017). Self-defeating strategies include resistance that results in a consequence that works against the youth and does nothing to transform the system which they are challenging. Conformist strategies are those that work within the status quo. The evolution of critical youth studies has elaborated theories of resistance that recognize youth agency and their creative capacity to do differently. Solórzano & Delgado Bernal (2001) elaborate an additional "transformational" form of resistance that moves beyond critiquing the status quo and imagines and even creates alternatives. Solórzano & Delgado Bernal (2001) describe transformational resistance as youth holding "some level of awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination and must be at least somewhat motivated by a sense of social justice" (p. 319). Traditional conceptualizations of youth would frame resistance as a feature of this age group, as a

problem that requires intervention, rather than as youth asserting their agency and responding to institutions/systems and actors that are problematic. Holloway (2016) would refer to this as youth recognizing a structural “misfitting.” These are the spaces of transformation, of other-doing, and where this present research is situated. In youth studies, there are those who focus on the structural elements and others that focus on agency. This literature review and this research attempts to understand the structural elements that act upon youth as well as youth’s agency and how they act upon the world. The reframing of the economy that the youth are introduced to in this research is a resistance to capitalocentrism and the case study, Press Start, is an example of transformational resistance where these four youth with their adult collaborators develop a project and practices that attempt to challenge relationships of domination outside of state and market systems.

In the following section, I explore the role education plays in the lives of youth and in perpetuating inequity and a space in which resistance appears. Along with family, media and church, schooling is one of the cultural institutions that shape how youth see themselves, thereby shaping how they see their role in the economy and in various other spheres.

### **Education, Inequity and Resistance**

Formal schooling is one of the cultural institutions that plays an immense role in the lives of young people, how they see themselves, and how they understand the world and their place within it. Education is touted as one of the solutions to addressing social inequalities. However, numerous authors challenge this claim and rather see schooling as perpetuating inequity. In addition, it reinforces traditional conceptualizations of youth as a problem to be managed, as subjects in the “becoming,” as separate from the adult world that attempts to stifle their agency, their criticality and their creativity.

Education was and is believed to be the “great equalizer,” yet despite the expansion of schooling and access, the disparity between rich and poor continues to grow (Côté, 2014; Giroux, 2009; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016; Sium, 2014; Torche, 2013). Inequity is prevalent in all levels of education from primary school through post-secondary education (Giroux, 2009; Sium, 2014). The education system frequently fails poor and racialized youth as they are more likely to be “pushed,” “pulled” or “fall” out of school. For those who manage to thrive and end up with a post-secondary degree, opportunities are limited and upward mobility unlikely. Relying on institutionalized schooling to transform our systems and to construct more equitable worlds has already proven to be a flawed approach. The education system “responds to the fluctuating needs of industry and hence ‘capital’” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 59) and does little to directly address social and economic entitlements. An education system that seeks to respond to the needs of industry or “capital” is not designed to support the development of critical economic subjects but rather to prepare students to be “good” workers and consumers.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that educational institutions serve as a smokescreen for the reproduction of traditional social classes as well as a way to instill the ideological foundations of capitalism. Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) and Giroux (2009) discuss the expansion of schooling as a way to fill the needs of corporations and state bureaucracies for more skilled workers. Mass education is used as reserve labour, a system “to ‘park’ young people for longer periods until their cheap labour is needed” (Côté, 2014, p. 531). Education is “warehousing young people” while they accrue student debt (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 66).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) describe how schooling reinforces social class on two levels. On one level, schooling operates to prepare the children of affluent families for better paying skilled work, while on another level, preparing marginalized children to be compliant and ready for low-

wage work. Those who do not “fit” within the socially defined indicators of success are devalued, made to be seen as inferior and even criminalized (Giroux, 2009). Competition in itself means that we cannot all fit or be the strongest – therefore, those who cannot compete within the system hierarchically constructed around race, gender and class suffer the consequences even though they systematically begin with barriers in place to hinder their capacity to “rise” or “succeed.” Those unable to or who refuse to compete are then considered “disposable” as they do not “serve” society and are relegated to the margins (Giroux, 2000).

Livingston and Weinfeld (2017) conducted a multivariate analysis of high school completion rates in Quebec and Ontario. The study in 2006 focused on 18 to 19-year-olds still living at home and revealed that 29.9% of Black youth compared to 23.3 % of White youth in Quebec had not yet completed high school. Latin American and Arab/West Asian youth had similar rates to Black youth in Quebec. In Ontario, 34.6% of Black youth versus 31% of White youth had not yet completed high school (Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017, p. 189). However, when the authors controlled for socioeconomic status, there were minimal disparities of high school completion rates between Black and White youth (Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017). In the same study, they look at family structure and income. The study revealed both a higher proportion of Black youth living in single-family homes as well as Black youth (in both single and two parent families) living below the poverty line (LICO). In Quebec, 34.4% of Black youth live below the poverty line compared to 11.5 % of White youth. In Ontario, 29% of Black youth and 9.8% of White youth live below the poverty line (Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017, p.190).

In his 2014 book *How Black and Working-Class Children Are Deprived of Basic Education in Canada*, Bairu Sium engages with both quantitative and qualitative research to discuss schooling for poor and racialized youth. Beyond graduation rates, Sium also exposes the policies

and practices that demonstrate the failures of basic education. One example is the disproportionate number of poor and racialized students streamed into Special Education programs or into streams that prepare them for work versus post-secondary education (Sium, 2014). The issue is not trade programs; there is a need for workers in various trades. What is problematic is that marginalized youth are being streamed into these programs while youth from more privileged segments of the population are encouraged to continue to post-secondary studies. The streaming process is inequitable as well; trade programs are undervalued and considered a solution for those who do not “fit” into mainstream schooling.

Although some streaming programs begin in high school, Sium’s research shows that informal streaming begins in elementary school. Sium (2014) writes:

Some children have various forms of learning disabilities, and they need modified programming. This is commendable. Evidently, though, the whole Special Education designation structure has been working against African-Canadian students instead of working for them. No one explains this better than Trisha’s cousin has, as quoted in chapter six: “You are afraid they will not understand you, so you remain quiet. Then they say you are dumb, retarded, deaf, and with sight problems.” The achievement problems of African-Canadian students born in Ontario have different causes. For most, it begins with low expectations by teachers, and therefore lack of follow-up by the school when these students are performing poorly. The moment that their performance sinks below grade level, they are targeted for evaluation by an IPRC committee under Bill 82. (p. 120)

Students are placed in Special Education programs often without a formal evaluation (Sium, 2014). This is just one of the ways in which hierarchies around race, class are socially reproduced within schooling and continue into employment. Across Canada there are very few

studies focused on the experience of racialized youth in schooling, most studies focusing on gender and/or socio-economic status. The few that exist demonstrate the disadvantage experienced by poor, racialized and Indigenous youth in formal school. Gillen (2014), in *Educating for Insurgency*, describes three outcomes for Black youth in the education system in the U.S. that are not so different from the Canadian context:

We are labelled by the authorities as “defiant” or “subordinate” and forced to leave, we decide on our own to leave to preserve our health and sanity, or we compromise and accept the ideology of schooling whenever we must; shutting off our humanity into smaller and smaller boxes alienated from any concept of the greater good. (foreword)

The labels prescribed to those who do not fit are often then internalized and continue to impact how youth perceive themselves and their agency.

Jordan et al. (1994) and Watt and Roessingh (1994) developed a framework to better understand the differing factors that lead to high school dropout referred to as push, pull and fall (Doll et al., 2013). Push is “when adverse situations within the school environment lead to consequences” (Doll et al., 2013, p. 2). This includes evaluation mechanisms, school policies around discipline and consequences. Pull refers to factors outside of school that interfere with a student’s motivation to remain in school. “Financial worries, out-of-school employment, family needs, or even family changes, such as marriage or childbirth” (Doll et al., 2013, p. 2) as well as illness can pull students away from school. Watt and Roessingh (1994) added a third factor, falling. Students with academic challenges or difficulties within a school context do not receive the support required and school completion does not feel possible (Doll et al., 2013).

In both Sium’s and Livingston and Weinstein’s research, the push, pull and fall factors are present. High school completion rates are only one measure of the inequity that exists within

formal education. However, high school completion rates do not capture the full impact of how discrimination manifests in schooling and the other effects on the students that experience this marginalization. More research is needed into the long-term impacts of marginalization within the education systems on youth.

Youth who complete high school and continue into post-secondary studies often struggle despite educational achievement. Higher education is not attainable in the same way for everyone nor has it proven to lead to more opportunities. Each generation believes that more schooling will result in more opportunities and greater success. As outlined above, many poor and racialized youth are streamed into trade schools although more and more young people are continuing into university. Post-secondary education is seen as the necessary feature to “succeed,” to acquire more opportunities and to compete in the global market economy. However, mass schooling has led to a saturation of educated young people with undergraduate degrees and a lack of opportunities in many fields. Youth across the globe with undergraduate degrees struggle to find employment or are underemployed (Côté, 2014; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). One solution proposed in various reports to address the saturation of young people with undergraduate degrees is to work to increase the focus and value in trade programs. This may be a very valid proposal; however, it becomes problematic if there is a focus on streaming racialized and marginalized young people into trade programs and not their more privileged peers.

Graduate degrees are where there is an increase in value. Youth with graduate degrees are those that have more opportunities within the job market. Youth from more privileged families are more likely to have the means to access graduate studies, therefore, reproducing wealth and their social and economic advantage. Upward mobility is uncommon in the era of globalization and neoliberalism. Rather, “intergenerational transmission of social advantage” (Torche, 2013) is a

more accurate determining factor in social and economic well-being benefiting the top quintile of socio-economic strata (Côté, 2014, p. 534). “Intergenerational mobility is limited not only by class, but also by race in Canada” (Sengupta, 2014, p. 9). Higher education is one of the ways in which social advantage is reproduced. Despite the increase in education attainment over the decades, there has been a decline in wages in Canada for 18 to 24-year-olds. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen. Only the top percentile of income earners continues to gain wealth while the rest lose wealth (Côté, 2014).

In addition to schooling ineffectively addressing inequity, various authors highlight that mandatory schooling hinders the development of critical consciousness (Elmore, 2017; Freire, 2012; Giroux, 2009). Although it is important to note that within institutionalized education there are critical pedagogues and educators seeking to transform the system from within and schools that work from an alternative approach, education continues to function largely from a “banking model” (Elmore, 2017; Freire, 2012). The “banking model” positions students as receivers of knowledge transmitted by “knowers,” the teachers (Freire, 2012). The content of the curriculum, how it is taught and the relational elements of schooling all reinforce the systems of domination. Westby and Dawson (1995) name that creative personality traits are disliked by teachers who adhere to the banking model and prefer students that are easy to manage in the classroom and who seek to please. Those students able to conform to the pre-prescribed curriculum are rewarded, and compliance versus criticality are reinforced (Westby & Dawson, 1995). Graeber (2011) describes education as a “war on the imagination” in that children's creativity is repressed and rather conscripted to a dominant way of thinking and understanding the world. Grabbard (2017) notes:

As long as market systems maintain their dominance over society, the state will function as one of the principal means for enforcing that dominance, and compulsory schooling will

function as one of the primary instruments through which the security state fulfills that mission. (pp. 51-52)

These authors and many others comment on how the education system, inclusive of teacher's education, values certain knowledge and behaviours and reinforces them. Schooling centers and reward certain forms of knowledge and knowing, which also stifles creativity and critical consciousness (Freire, 2012; Giroux, 2009). It prepares young people to be compliant citizens and workers and institutionalizes punitive consequences for those who do not fall in line with the dominant ways of being.

### **Youth Employment, Youth Unemployment**

Youth employment is an area in which various conceptualizations of youth impact policy, youth agency and the development of youth as critical economic subjects. Youth employment is seen as part of their transition to adulthood. However, the discourse of youth affluence and the homogenization of youth, posit youth employment as a learning opportunity in the process of becoming or as a distraction to prevent youth from becoming a "problem." These forms of discourse are used to justify unjust policies and poor wages for youth as it is seen as disposable income.

Since the 2008 global economic crisis, the unemployment rates reached an unprecedented high across all age groups. The political and economic elite however turned their focus to youth unemployment. Policies developed after the crisis focused on youth unemployment weakened the rights of all workers. The focus on youth unemployment has not addressed the underlying issues; in fact, it can be argued that it was used to deter from the issues that led to the economic crisis and the dramatic increase in unemployment (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). According to the report *Youth, Unemployment and Joblessness: Causes, Consequences, Responses* (2012), by the end of

2010, approximately 75.1 million youth were unemployed. Unemployed youth, youth neither in school nor in training continues to grow (Sanchez-Casteneda et al., 2012). In Canada, “youth aged 17-24 experienced the greatest long-term decline in full-time employment between the years 1976-2014” (Sengupta, 2014, p. 4). The Community Planning Council of Greater Victoria (2014) highlight three concerning trends in youth employment:

1. Poverty and unemployment: “Youth who experience poverty also often face more barriers to employment and are more likely to become the permanent working poor.” (Coenjaerts et al., 2009, p. 6)
2. Employment precarity: “According to the OECD<sup>6</sup> and Statistics Canada more and more youth are getting stuck in low wage, contract and unstable employment and are finding it difficult to grow or ladder into new opportunities.” (p. 6)
3. Underemployment: “As youth are increasingly graduating post-secondary or other training and are unable to access jobs that utilized their skills.” (p. 6)

It is important to note that unemployment trends began long before the economic crisis and continue to present day (Sengupta, 2014).

Despite the long-standing trend, countries across the globe made changes to labour laws under the guise of responding to the economic crisis that in many instances contribute to poverty and precarity. Forty countries worldwide made changes to labour laws after the 2008 economic crisis that resulted primarily in the weakening of worker protections including extending probation periods, revising pensions and health care plans and various forms of market deregulation

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<sup>6</sup> The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

(Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). In addition, following the global economic crisis, many countries across the world “focused largely on providing economic subsidies to the private and voluntary sectors to provide young people with jobs, training and work experience” (Sukarieh & Tannock, p. 55). South Africa, New Zealand and Canada explored youth subminimum wages or wage subsidies to employers to address youth unemployment (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). The impact of youth subminimum policies and wage subsidies to employers affects both youth and adults alike. In addition, subminimum wage policies contribute to youth poverty, and it also prevents older workers from acquiring jobs and drives down all wages (Barbegelate, 2012; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). Additionally, subminimum wages are once again an indicator of the problematic homogenous grouping of youth as a social category and the discourse around youth affluence.

Youth employment is seen as part of their transition to adulthood but without holding the same financial responsibilities of adults. Employment for youth is seen as disposable income and as a way for youth to learn to manage their finances, a transitory phase into adulthood. Youth affluence is used as a way to justify poor wages and significant precarity. However, many youth are working out of necessity and as a means of survival. According to the *Québec Survey on Working and Employment Conditions and Occupational Health and Safety* (2011):

Workers 15 to 24 years of age, who have less work experience and are more likely to be studying while working, live in the lowest income-level households. In fact, compared to the other age groups, proportionally more of these workers are found in households with an annual income of less than \$20,000 or a very low income level. (p.3)

The discourse of youth affluence and the homogenous categorization affects youth employment strategies and policies. In addition, the homogenous category does not address the existing social inequities, particularly those related to the intersections of race, class, gender and

immigration status. Ornstein (2006) analyzed the socio-economic profiles of various ethno-racial groups in Toronto, and found that Indigenous communities experienced the greatest level of socio-economic marginalization, followed by African and West Asian ethno-racial groups. A similar study by Ornstein (2007) in Montreal and Vancouver indicates that Aboriginal, Caribbean, and South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan) groups are particularly disadvantaged. “The intersectionality of race, class and gender have been experienced most acutely by Indigenous communities in Canada through colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy” (Senguta, 2016, p. 9). Livingstone and Weinfeld (2017) highlight that:

It is important to keep in mind the closely intertwined relationship between social class and race, gender, and immigration (Robson et al. 2014). As indicated earlier, black families in Canada face higher rates of socioeconomic disadvantage than average, and this is due not only to class, but also racial discrimination, labor market barriers for immigrants, segregation in low-wage work, and gender biases. (p.193)

Without responding to the systemic injustice and merely allocating funds to companies that are imbricated in social, economic and racial injustices, these forms of youth employment strategies will only perpetuate inequities. Subsidies given to companies by the state to increase youth employment result in increased profitability to capitalist companies, as these are frequently jobs they need to fill anyway. This hands over additional profit to the wealthy, widening the gap between the richest and the poorest segments of the population (Barbegelata, 2012; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). In fact, these strategies do not lead to an improvement in youth employment. Quebec implemented a youth employment strategy yet continues to exhibit high unemployment rates amongst youth (Barbegelata, 2012). Statistics Canada (2015) “indicates a downward trend in

full-time employment in Canada, and an increase in precarious part-time employment” amongst all age groups (Sengupta, 2014, p. 4).

Throughout industrial capitalism, there has been a concern of “idle youth” and employment is seen as a strategy to “appease” youth. For example, youth unemployment has been seen as contributing to the Arab Spring in 2010, the Swedish riots in 2013, Austerity protests in Greece and Spain in 2012, the English riots in 2011, and so on (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016):

Concerns about “youth unemployment” thus has frequently served as a metaphor or euphemism for growing anxiety about the dangers of increased levels of crime, violence, unrest, rioting and general loss of control in society (p.58).

Youth are seen as a threat and youth employment as a way to subdue youth (Giroux, 2009; Graham & Pugh, 2019; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). These forms of appeasement strategies are not effectively responding to human needs nor system failures.

The discourse of generational conflict emerges to justify youth unemployment and underemployment and further segregate youth and adults. Youth and adults alike are blamed for the lack of employment opportunities for youth and are pitted against one another. Youth in mainstream discourse are described as entitled, having poor attitudes and values that are responsible for their current employment context. This discourse is “critiqued in youth studies literature as being both inaccurate and unjustified” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 73). The blame for youth unemployment and precarity is simultaneously attributed to older generations criticized for “holding onto the better jobs” and “demanding rich private and public pensions” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 71).

In addition, the blame for the high rates of unemployment is delegated to the inefficiency of the current education system. Marco Annunziata, the chief economist from the Deutsche Bank,

and Klaus Schwab, the founder and director of the World Economic Forum, in 2012 claimed that austerity cannot be blamed for youth unemployment (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). “Political and business elites around the world have thus sought to use the global economic crisis to consolidate and extend their involvement and influence over national education and systems” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 67). The blame for youth unemployment is cast off to ill-equipped classrooms, untrained teachers, outmoded curriculums, poor career advice and a lack of exposure to the entrepreneurial spirit” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 67).

Despite the widespread impact, there was a focus on youth specifically by the global business and financial elites, the same people responsible for the crisis. “Individualistic and moralistic solutions” emerged, as they had in the 1930s during The Great Depression and during the International Debt Crisis in the 1980s (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 59). Political and business elites continue to use youth unemployment “to promote a business-friendly agenda” (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 59), while distracting from their responsibility and implication in the crisis as well as a rationale for altering policy that in many instances has resulted in the loss of rights and protections. It is important to consider the political and ideological motivation that shapes the construction of youth and the resulting exploitation of youth by the state and business (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016, p. 56).

The market and schooling contribute to inequities as well as diminish the potential for youth to see themselves as critical subjects. This often leads to pushing young people to seek out alternative ways to act upon the world and seek humanization, or to the margins in search of belonging (Parazelli, 2007). The social economy in Quebec as well as more self-managed autonomous initiatives emerged in response to the inequity and the flaws of the system. These are

some of the spaces of possibility and resistance, to challenge the status quo and shift the hegemonic discourse of capitalocentrism.

### ***The Social Economy & Youth***

Quebec's social economy is internationally renowned and thriving, with an astounding number of initiatives from workplace training, various programs to support the development of collective enterprises, state funded universal daycare, health, and social services. The social economy is an alternative to market- and profit-driven production and service provision, largely working to democratize the economy and address social and environmental injustice. Quebec's commitment to developing this "third" sector of the economy is the result of mass mobilizations from 1968-1970 that led to government policy in 1996. Twenty-five years later, the social economy is firmly institutionalized, with state funding, policies, university actors and various systems in place to support the ongoing development of this "third" sector. The various initiatives have undoubtedly contributed to democratizing the economy; however, "many of them face serious challenges today, from cut-backs, to centralisation of power, to increased bureaucratisation and control" (Kruzynski, 2017-2022).

In contrast to the institutionalized social economy, economic initiatives at the margins of the mainstream have multiplied over the last 15 years (Alteo, 2010; Carlsson, 2008; Dixon, 2014; Frémeau & Jordon, 2012; Grubacic & O'Hearn, 2016; Healy, 2015; Maeckelbergh, 2011; Parker et al., 2014; Piotrowski, 2014; Sitrin & Azzelini, 2014; Sarrasin et al., 2012, 2016; Solnit, 2010; Zibechi, 2010). Following the 2001 anti-globalization protests and the 2012 Maple Springs, the more recent political generation has been engaging in the creation of collectivist, autonomous and critical approaches to social innovation (Fontan et al., 2007; Kruzynski, 2007). These more marginal economic initiatives have taken many forms: "worker, consumer and producer

cooperatives; fair trade initiatives; intentional communities; alternative currencies; community-run social centers and resource libraries; community development credit unions; community gardens; opensource free software initiatives; community-supported agriculture programs; community land trusts and more” (Miller, 2010, p. 25). This more recent phase on the margins has yet to be studied extensively (Kruzynski, 2017-2022).

Jonathan Durand Folco (2019) explores three models of social innovation. The neoliberal model centers market practices and attempts to work towards a “friendly” or conscious form of capitalism. The social-democratic model favors a plural economy working towards renewing the role of the state. The emancipatory model seeks to transform the structures of domination away from state and market interests. As Durand Folco (2019) highlights, none of these models is static. In the literature ahead, I focus on examples within Quebec’s social economy that fall within the more social-democratic and emancipatory models of social innovation.

The institutionalized social economy sector offers various programs aimed at youth. Examples of programs aimed at youth include, but are not limited to, insertion enterprises, Les Coopératives Jeunesse de Services (CJS), as well as various programs to support the development of collective enterprises. These programs respond to different needs yet, in some ways, replicate some of the power structures that create inequity. More transformative are autonomous economic initiatives that are emancipatory in their goals and practices. However, they are mostly composed of white, university-educated youth with antiauthoritarian politics. They are qualitatively different from the more institutionalized social economy initiatives yet, in many ways exclude marginalized youth for reasons of “cultural” inaccessibility. There is yet another sector of informal organizing on the margins, which are autonomous economic initiatives run by marginalized youth. Over the last few years, we are seeing a growing number of initiatives led by racialized and marginalized

communities for example: Black-led businesses such as the Racines bookstore, as well as the numerous Indigenous-led social economy initiatives such as Coop Nitaskinan with an economic, political and social mission.

Despite the many successes of the social economy in Quebec and in Canada, several authors have shown that marginalized communities are not benefiting in the same ways as those with more privilege and power. I will explore the mainstream, or what Durand-Folco (2019) refers to as the social-democratic strategies aimed at youth: insertion enterprises, les coopératives jeunesse de services (CJS) and collective entrepreneurship programs.

Insertion enterprises are one of many poverty reduction and social inclusion strategies within the social economy. Insertion enterprises hold an aspiration for both economic viability as well as facilitating the social-professional integration of people “in difficulty” by providing paid, time-limited in-training opportunities (primarily targeting those 18 to 35 years of age) in the workforce. Insertion enterprises attempt to provide working contexts that create space for their young workers to thrive by providing additional psychosocial support, expectations that are adapted and evaluation mechanisms that are not only based on productivity but also on self-improvement and wellness. All the while trying to provide “quality” services that allow the business to compete within the market economy and to prepare their young workers to find work after the program (Alberio & Tremblay, 2014). In a study of insertion enterprises in Quebec, the results showed that almost three-quarters of participants did not complete high school (Comeau, 2011, pp. 9-10). In a study of Insertion Enterprises between July 2007 and June 2008, 51% of participants had no revenue before entering the program (Comeau, 2011, p. 9). Many of the participants in these programs have had negative encounters with various societal institutions, and over 50% have dropped out of high school (Comeau, 2011, pp. 9-10). This reveals that there is a

segment of the youth population falling through the cracks, in which school and traditional modes of employment are unable to meet their needs.

The various social insertion programs successfully train marginalized youth to become “employable” as well as successfully linking youth to employment after the training program (Alberio & Tremblay, 2014; Assogba, 2000). However, many of the training and employment opportunities are in lower wage, precarious and demanding sectors such as the food industry as well as sound and lighting technical support. In addition, most do little to challenge and change what is wrong with the various systems; few create spaces of genuine engagement in decision-making or reposition youth as critical economic subjects. Insertion programs support youth in conforming to and developing the necessary skills to fit into the existing job market.

Another form of youth-focused strategy in the social economy sector includes the cooperative jeunesse de services (CJS). CJS’s began with a project in Ontario in 1983, replicated in the rest of Ontario and then spread to other parts of Canada in 1996, including Quebec. CJS are described as “un moment d’initiation et d’exercice de l’entrepreneuriat collectif ou le coopérant apprend les règles de production du ‘capital’ dans un esprit de coopération essentiel au succès de l’entreprise” (Fontan et al., 2006, p. 9). High school aged students learn about decision-making processes in a cooperative structure and learn the “rules” of the production of capital. They make decisions about the services and prices offered, and then they promote and contract out their services. The CJS program is described as providing skills that are useful in school and in the workforce (Fontan et al., 2006, p. 9). This program is, none-the-less, very much tied to a predetermined structure, the cooperative, and tied to various institutions such as schools and youth centres. This does not leave a great deal of space for youth to develop the form of enterprise that

best suits their needs, in addition to the institutional ties that are non-negotiable and may influence or limit youth's capacity to make certain decisions.

In addition to this, there are programs to support collective entrepreneurs that do provide more opportunities for other-doing (Bouchard, Filho, & Zerdani, 2015; Madill, Brouard, & Hebb, 2010). Some examples are *District 3 Concordia* that offers various supports for the development of social entrepreneurship. *Petit Moyen Entreprise (PME's)* are local development organizations that offer expertise and financing for small and medium size businesses. They offer specific support for youth called *Fonds Jeunes Entreprise Collective*. There are also other supports specific for cooperatives, such as *Réseau COOP* that offers workshops, helps in creating a business plan and secure funding. However, marginalized youth do not tend to benefit because they are competing for limited funds with university-educated applicants (Sengupta, 2014).

The existing critiques of the social economy highlight that it does not challenge the hegemonic cultural assumptions, nor does it address the various barriers for marginalized peoples and in fact, it perpetuates disadvantage in many ways. Sengupta (2016) suggests that:

If the Social Economy as a whole is to support the development of different organizations, many of which will not essentially emulate current organizations, a different and more diverse approach supporting transformational social innovation from the margins of the social economy is required. (p. 2)

My primary critiques are that the social economy engages in working to integrate folks on the margins into the mainstream as participants versus as critical economic subjects. Those from marginalized communities have little power within the mainstream social economy to make decisions and shape the projects or initiatives they are engaged in as they are embedded within the

state and the market. The social-democratic models are challenging the existing system and trying to transform facets in collaboration with the state and market actors.

Although diverse economic initiatives are important and can and do engage in other-doing to some extent, my interest lies with emancipatory economic initiatives that intentionally seek to address and challenge systems of exploitation and domination. My literature review shows that there are some positive attributes of the social economy and some impact on marginalized sectors of the population. For example, social insertion enterprises respond to those who have not “successfully” moved through academia or into the job market in addition to providing much needed support in other areas beyond employability skills. As Sengupta (2016) highlights:

The social economy field is a site of a struggle, where different agents, whether individuals or organizations, compete to gain power and continually redefine the field to their own benefit. An increasing market orientation of the social economy provides advantages to agents with economic and cultural capital (Woolford, 2011). Although the social economy is engaged in economic and social justice issues, the opportunities for individuals, who are directly facing economic and social issues to start and develop organizations, are becoming increasingly limited within the social economy itself. As the social economy has become more professionalized and has more recently favored marketization and managerialist skills, agents with existing privilege and skills in the new environment, or habitus as described by Bourdieu, are able to start up different social economy organizations as well as move into leadership and management positions of existing social economy organizations. The ongoing changes in the ability of equity seeking individuals and groups to start and develop social economy organizations in Canada remains an under-researched area. As the social economy grows in size and importance, we need to be conscious about

who is advantaged, and who is disadvantaged in the changing dynamics of the social economy. (p.3)

The primary task in many of the youth oriented social economy programs is to help young people “fit” into the workforce. However, it offers few opportunities for marginalized communities to participate as leaders and decision-makers, as critical economic and political subjects (Sengupta, 2016). The social economy sector with more possibilities for other-doing and collective entrepreneurs benefits more privileged segments of the population while more marginalized populations remain status quo (Sengupta, 2016). Sengupta continues by outlining the changing demographics in Canada, with more and more non-European migrants and Indigenous communities as some of the fastest growing groups. Sengupta (2016) proposes that the social economy will benefit by expanding cultural competencies and supporting the development of organizations led by those with different forms of social capital and lived experiences.

### ***Self-Organized Autonomous Initiatives***

Research on the social economy in Quebec is primarily focused on the mainstream facets using a “theoretical framework that mobilises institutionalist-regulationist social movement and organization theory” (Kruzynski, 2017-2022). The institutionalist focus of the CRISES<sup>7</sup> is seen as reformist versus revolutionary by the new political generation (Sarrasin et al., 2012, 2016), framing “the social economy and its emphasis on social change as renewed social democracy” (Kruzynski, 2017-2022). In parallel to the more institutionalized social economy, highly democratic economic initiatives (Kruzynski, 2007) with more possibilities for other-doing have emerged. These are initiatives on the margins that challenge the status quo and are made up of both informal and formal

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<sup>7</sup> Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales

practices. These are initiatives that align more with initiatives that I believe are more transformative, yet there are still challenges with engaging youth from racialized and marginalized communities.

One informal practice is the dumpster diving networks and communities created in Montreal and in various other cities. In Vinegar's (2016) research, what emerged was an organized network constructed around both survival as well as a response to the tremendous amounts of food waste. In this qualitative study, the researchers conducted 26 interviews to gather a detailed portrait of the community and their practices. They learned that divers were predominantly young adults with an average age of 28, 17 of which were under 30 years of age (Vinegar, 2016). The majority of divers were educated, mainly Caucasian, lived in communal housing situations and had a social network of other divers who shared information and resources. The more marginalized divers from racialized communities participated in this practice out of necessity, felt shame dumpster diving and dove alone. The younger Caucasian divers felt pride in engaging in this practice publicly in daylight hours and described a sense of community through this practice (Vinegar, 2016).

Commanenci (2013) explores squats and collective housing. He describes squats as being a direct response to the fundamental critique of capitalism and the state (Commanenci, 2013). Daily life is the ultimate example of dispossession and squats are a reclaiming of space and relationships (Commanenci, 2013). It allows those living in these spaces to invest in the day-to-day in order to fight and live differently rather than be defined by market relationships (Commanenci, 2013). People living in collective housing share space, make decisions together, socialize and often engage in collective action around various issues, which allows them in some sense to be free from outside forces of alienation (Commanenci, 2013).

Beyond being highly democratic, these economic practices challenge market defined living

and being together, whether it be dumpster diving, collective housing, or other forms of alternative economic practices such as Bâtiment 7 – an example of a formalized initiative. That being said, poor and racialized populations are almost absent. These spaces are composed of predominantly university educated folks and/or those who have been socialized into these spheres. Commanenci (2013) describes these spaces as inclusive; however, they may also result in rejecting the outside world that does not permit the same way of being. He continues by saying that if these become spaces of moral superiority, they run the risk of being exclusive to those who do not fit within them. Through community norms of “activist” or “alternative” culture consisting of its own language and practices primarily learned in privileged spaces, “outsiders” struggle to integrate (Commanenci, 2013). Even La Pointe Libertaire and Le Centre Social Autogéré, despite their intentional efforts to engage the more marginalised populations in the community, were not able to broaden their base in Pointe Saint-Charles (Kruzynski, 2018).

The social economy and even the more marginal economic initiatives reproduce privilege and power, demonstrated through who is taking part and how they are taking part in this “alternative” sector of the economy in Canada (Sengupta, 2016). Made evident in the literature is that when youth are politically engaged, it merely looks different across different populations (Solórzano & Delgado Berna, 2001; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2014). White, middle-class youth are present in electoral politics, in not-for-profit organizations and actively engaged in various facets of the social economy. Youth with fewer opportunities and resources, however, are less engaged in traditional formal spaces (Akiva et al. 2017; O'Brien, Selboe et al., 2018). In our current context, “volunteering and political activism outside institutional contexts is increasing among youth. The economic crisis, instead of pushing young people deeper into the realms of the ‘private’ sphere caused a proliferation in several of these alternative forms of participation” (Domaneschi, 2019,

p. 20). Poor and marginalized youth are actively engaged in their communities on the margins within "alternative local forums to create a meaningful sense of belonging and agency" (O'Brien et al., 2018, p. 3). However, these marginal initiatives are often invisible or invisibilized.

### **Care and Radical Love in Social Transformation**

The capitalocentric vision of the economy does not acknowledge the importance of care and renders it invisible. Care is central to all communities and economies and needs to be the foundation of social change. However, care work, in many ways, is used to uphold systems of exploitation and domination. The education system and many youth employment and work opportunities are some of the spaces in which care needs to be reconsidered in how we want to construct post-capitalist futures, namely, how care can support versus exploit the most marginalized people in our communities.

Formal schooling (elementary and secondary education) is a prime example of care being used to uphold systems of domination and exploitation. Firstly, as explored earlier, schooling reproduces social and economic inequities upholding class structures and creating masses of workers to fill the underpaid, undervalued and exploitative workforce. Teachers are underpaid, undervalued, lack the resources to do their work, and their autonomy in the classroom hindered. Various facets of institutionalized education consequentially affect teachers' capacity to provide the kind of care needed to transform communities.

A feminist ethics of care moves beyond morality framed around justice and rights. As Noddings (1999) articulates, "care often picks up where justice leaves off. We do not suppose that ethical responsibility is finished when a just decision has been reached" (p. 12). An ethics of care understands the development of self in relationship to others (Robinson, 2011). "The relational ontology of care ethics claims that relations of interdependence and dependence are a fundamental

feature of our existence” (Robinson, 2011, p. 4). It is non-universalizing and focuses on the practical elements of care. In the context of curriculum, this means responding to social inequity by bringing in content that challenges the dominant ways of knowing and is more effectively representative of the students in the classroom, i.e., culturally relevant curriculum. As hooks (1994) describes, much of the existing curriculum in schools reinforces systems of domination. Transforming the classroom requires “interrogating biases in curricula that re-inscribe systems of domination, while simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students” (hooks, 1994, p. 10).

Care responses may be individual or collective. Teachers provide care to individual students by taking the time to understand their personal context, interests and adapting to that child’s needs. Care may also be a collective response to the needs of students and communities for example, recognizing that which is negated in the curriculum and in pedagogical approaches. Care can take on the form of teachers and other school staff fighting for institutional change or ensuring that the curriculum is culturally relevant. The important element is that it recognizes the systems of power and domination and seeks to change these relationships of power. Care is not only kindness. Care is not empty, meaningless words. Care is thought and empathy put into action.

In *Standing Firm*, a study on social justice in education and Social Justice Educators (SJE), care was part of why and how educators became SJEs, care for themselves, care about their marginalized identities. This moved from caring for oneself to having empathy for others, beginning with those with similar marginalized identities and later into generalized caring (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). The research revealed that SJE had a diversity of experiences that led them to social justice work, from family relationships and peer relations to social and political

contexts. However, what they all held in common was critical consciousness, intentionality and care (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014).

However, education is not the sole place that an ethics of care needs to exist within; we need to bring care into all facets of our lives to ensure that this cultural shift happens. Care as a transformative practice is fundamental to social, economic and environmental justice. Much of the harm that occurs within economic practices in the prioritization of profit over individual and collective wellbeing. Care is crucial to igniting a cultural revolution. We need to enact care in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres. This means reclaiming care! Reclaiming care “means breaking the peace treaty with our rulers, withdrawing care from the processes that reproduce the society we live in and putting it to subversive and insurrectionary purposes” (CrimethInc). Various authors and researchers have named care and love as transformative and crucial to social justice work.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2012) writes about radical love and the necessity of love in the process of transforming our worlds. hooks (2000) writes about the importance of all forms of love in a loveless world. In her book *About Love*, she writes:

Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all the dimensions of love – ‘care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge’ – in our everyday lives. We can successfully do this only by cultivating awareness. Being aware enables us to critically examine our actions to see what is needed so that we can give care, be responsible, show respect, and indicate a willingness to learn. (p. 91)

Cultivating care is an intentional process. It is an intellectual and emotional process of making visible our interconnectedness. It is about re-awakening love of nature, humanity and a collective concern for an overall wellbeing of societies near and far. Although we live in a culture

that reinforces individualism, values material wealth and promotes domination, the reality is, we are all inextricably linked and care is foundational to our existence.

Numerous activists and authors alike name the need for love, sometimes referred to as radical love. Love is something that we often reserve for our families and romantic partners. Emotions seem to cause great discomfort and so we banish them to the personal realm hidden behind closed doors. The political and economic spheres as well as certain parts of the cultural sphere, namely educational institutions, are spaces in which rationality is understood in a way that excludes emotions. Emotions are seen as irrational and those who express them as incapable of being rational. Val Plumwood (2002) explores the reason/emotion dualism that is persistent in the dominant culture, stating that “objectivity is usually seen as excluding the emotional, the bodily, the particular, the personal, and of course especially the ‘political’” (p. 41). Many feminist thinkers challenge this notion and understand knowledge as inclusive of emotions.

Care, love and cooperation are exceptions or are marginal within various societal institutions. Rather, these institutions reinforce competition, performance, productivity, submission and domination all of which leads to an alienation of self and others. Various social change theorists propose different ways to move forward. The theorists that I engage with propose enacting the worlds we want now. Holloway discusses a politics of hope versus a politics of poverty. By naming that which already exists, the spaces of hope and care, we can then intentionally enact these spaces of possibility. This does not mean that we ignore domination, it means enacting more spaces of radical love and collective care which are currently negated in the world. A politics of dignity is in part the recognition that “we are in rebellion” (Holloway, 2016, p. 8). Spaces of creation, radical love and care already exist and must be multiplied (Holloway, 2016). Participation in such spaces looks different and the status quo is challenged (O'Brien et al.,

2018). These forms of participation encourage people to speak...to draw out their own dignities” (Holloway, 2016, p. 10). Social transformation will not happen overnight – “we have to think of an interstitial process, a process of multiple ‘ruptures’ and ‘cracks’” (Holloway, 2016, p. 42). They do not, however, propose a hegemonic solution but rather, recognize that our imaginations are the limit to how we create alternatives. Within a vision shared by anarchist thinkers and some critical pedagogues, there is an alternative to education that is “infused with non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, and non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid” (Springer, 2012, p. 1617).

## **Chapter Five: Thick Description of Findings**

This research attempts to capture 1) What happens when youth are engaged in reframing the economy as they participate in the co-design and co-facilitation of workshops based on the Taking Back the Economy conceptual framework (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013); 2) How these four youths understand the economy and their place in it before and after engaging with the TBTE conceptual framework; and 3) How they begin to apply these principles in the development of a youth-led cooperative arcade.

In this Chapter, consistent with my methodology, I use thick description both for describing and analyzing the shift in the youth's learning, reflections and the application of the TBTE framework. Moreover, I reveal how in dialogue with the TBTE framework and with one another, the youth' ideas and understandings transform. In the first section, I present how the youth understand the economy prior to engaging with the TBTE conceptual framework (pre-workshop focus group). The proceeding section, we see how their discourse shifts as well as how they enact the TBTE framework to Press Start and in their own lives. The findings include data from the post-workshop focus groups as well as data gathered through participant observation and documentary analysis (see timeline in the Methodology in Action chapter). In the last section of this chapter, I engage with findings from the post-workshop focus group that demonstrate part of the PAR process as these four youth simultaneously navigate their conscientization and the indignation that emerges from their increasing awareness of the inequity reproduced.

### **Pre-workshop Focus Group**

In order to understand if and how there was a shift in the youths' understanding of the economy and their place within it after being introduced to the TBTE framework we conducted a

pre-workshop focus group. This first section focuses on how these four youths understand the economy and their place within it prior to the workshops.

We began with an activity to ease into the discussion. The youth were asked to place different colored sticky notes on a visual scale of 1-5, 1 being not important at all and 5 being very important. When asked what importance that they gave to the economy, all four youths rated it between somewhat important (3) and very important (5). We asked them to explain their reasoning for placing the marker where they did:

Imane: Elle a un rôle très majeur pour la stabilité et comment un pays est géré, mais si je comprends aussi comment je prends l'économie, comment à quel... comme, genre, l'importance de l'argent, puis de l'économie, en général, dans ma vie c'est pas si grand que ça, c'est pour ça que je l'ai mis comme entre les deux.

Samara: I've put it close to the five because it is actually important, like, example, schools, the economy of, like, you were saying, about the food that's coming in and things like that, and also like the roads in Montreal so it's pretty important. Cause that's how the world functions of money, exactly, but yeah.

Shane: I've put it more in the middle. For me the economy when I think of it it's my parents, their money, the bank, all their getting paid, but also when I think about it the economy is everything to do with money ... if there is like a switch, any slight switch in our economy, and all prices at stores can go up or down so that really matters to, me, 'cause I buy... everyone buys stuff the prices would go up or down so that's why it's important.

Sam: Ouais, je l'ai mis entre trois et cinq parce que, c'est comme je le vois quand même, parce qu'il faut déjà que je paye un peu ma nourriture, puis si je veux m'acheter du linge

ça fait partie un peu de l'économie, mais, je l'aurais pas mis à cinq parce que je suis pas encore en appartement tout seul, comme, je paye pas hydro et tout ça, mais je paye quand même un peu de mes effets personnels à moi.

Samara, Shane and Imane all brought in the larger implications of the economy. Although Imane named the importance of how a country is managed, her response indicates that she sees these macro aspects as separate from her everyday life. Shane, on the other hand, related the larger picture to himself, specifically in relation to his capacity to “buy stuff.” Sam also spoke to his purchasing power and the need to pay for services essential to wellbeing and even survival.

When discussing whether the economy was important to their friends, there were varying responses based on age and privilege. The youth indicated that as their friends' neared adulthood or reached adulthood, the more concerned they would be with the economy. Imane, Shane and Sam talked about themselves and their friends moving into “adulthood” which would happen once they were finished school, and that this was going to be the moment that the economy would affect their lives more substantially as they become responsible for paying bills. Adulthood for Shane, Sam and Imane meant a direct implication in the economy.

Imane: Lorsqu'une personne, finalement, termine les études, comme, lorsque tu commences l'école tu penses pas vraiment à ça, puis tu te sens pas concerné, tu es juste concerné à, juste, étudier. T'es pas concernée que comment tu vas trouver un travail, puis l'économie, puis, en général, mais le moment que tu termines les études, puis tu commences un travail c'est là, comme, genre, tu vois l'importance de l'économie que ça a sur nos vies [...] Donc tu entends plus parler de ça lorsqu'une personne s'immisce, comme, dans, on va dire, dans le monde des vieux, des adultes, puis c'est là où on entend plus parler de ça.

Shane: I think of all my friends, a lot of my friends either need to make money just so they can help themselves, but some of my friends don't get help from their parents a lot when they want money because they want the newest gadget, the newest everything, just so they can be new. And, also, because I'm 17 and I know in the next, like, two years the economy is gonna have to become really important to me so I'm just thinking that in a couple years my friends will be the same age [...] so they're gonna have to think of it eventually, and I'm pretty sure a lot of them are trying to think of it now especially in the last year of high school.

Samara, on the other hand, talked about the economy already being part of her life as it was essential for her to gain an income. More financial privilege, named by Samara, was associated with less engagement in the economy. Those of her friends who came from wealthier homes did not need to think about money and therefore were less concerned about the economy and their futures as they had their families to provide financial support for them.

Samara: I was just thinking about my friends so I put it as not important. But, honestly, depends on how they're very spoiled. It ain't a bad thing but really just spoiled. Their parents do everything for them, so I'm pretty sure that they don't really think about the future, 'cause they really have support. So, I've put it as not important cause they're not really thinking about their future to know that the economy is a part. Like, money is actually important or not because they're surrounded by money [...] it's not important to them.

Samara needs to contribute to the financial stability of her family as well as be responsible for her own consumption habits. Samara acknowledges the difference in her circumstances compared to some of the people in her friend group. Shane names differences based on capacity to purchase the things they want, i.e., "the newest gadgets". Both Imane and Sam, in many ways,

also contribute to the financial well-being of their families and for their own consumption habits. In addition, Sam, Imane and Samara also contribute to their family's well-being that were not named here such as helping with younger siblings, helping with chores and so forth.

The youth believe that the economy is very important to their parents and families primarily because as adults they must work and pay bills. They all name discussions of the economy in the media, with their families and in school. However, as we explore more, discussions of the economy with their families were limited to mentions of the rising or falling cost of certain commodities and comments on the economy doing well or poorly. These snippets of information about the economy were not integrated into an overall understanding of the economy and its interconnectedness. Samara and Shane, who went to the same high school, shared a great deal about one of their teachers, Penny, who discussed the economy from a critical perspective. They both understood that this was not typical of high school classes. Penny's analysis seemed to greatly influence how Shane and Samara understand the economy. Imane, a CEGEP student, gained much of her critical perspective from some of her classes that she referred to frequently. Samara, Shane and Imane's classes consisted of the evolution and critiques of capitalism.

The discourse the youth hear from the media, their families and school, although often critical, in many ways is primarily centered on money and consumption, which represents a capitalocentric vision of the economy that positions "all of economic identities with reference to capitalism" (Gibson-Graham, 2014b, p. 5). The exposure the youth had with learning and discussing the economy was unidirectional, with the economy an external system that acts upon us.

There was some divergence about who influences the economy. Everyone immediately responds, naming both government and corporations as holding the greatest influence. Shane, Sam

and Imane later say that they believe that corporations influence governments and therefore hold the most influence. Imane and Shane name that corporations influence and corrupt governments. Imane talks about the economy transforming democracy into liberalism: “l’économie a changé la démocratie en libéralisme, puis comment l’argent est devenu la première chose que sur quoi un pays se gère.” She continues by naming how regular folks lack power to influence the economy:

Imane: C’est seulement pas la majorité de la population qui est au pouvoir, bien sûr. Donc, c’est juste c’est, comme, le contraire pour moi. C’est plutôt les compagnies, puis l’économie, puis les entreprises ont corrompues le gouvernement en le rendant ainsi, comme, aliéné pour faire des règlements qui les bénéficiera, puis qui feront en sorte de, ainsi, bénéficier les entreprises [...]

Shane, in dialogue with Imane, alters his comment and names that people and business have the greatest influence. That, if enough people collectively organize that they in fact hold the greatest power.

Shane: The government does influence the economy, but we have much much more influence in the economy, because, let’s say, for instance, if we all, everyone in Montreal just stopped working, like, all of us, no more jobs for anyone then that would really impact the economy, but if the government changes like a couple laws it could really impact but not as much as everyone stopping working in one area.

With some exceptions, the hegemonic discourse around “the economy” was present in most of the discussion about the economy. The four youth co-researchers describe the economy as “money,” “debt,” “the government,” “import and export,” “jobs,” “banks.” Imane mentions many facets of the economy but still describes one economy – the capitalist economy. This also emerges in the youth’s understanding of property, finances, transactions, work and business later on in the

pre-workshop focus group. Although the youth's discussion of the economy was primarily centered on money, there are a few examples that demonstrate elements that challenge the dominant vision of the economy. Sam refers to non-capitalist or alternative practices such as bartering. Samara also uses the word "evil" and shares that she feels that the economy causes stress and issues in her family and in the world. She also talks about how people are not seen as whole people and for all of the other parts of their lives and the ways that they contribute to the world. Samara's comment indicates her recognition of a structural "misfitting" (Holloway, 2016) emerging as she reflects on her lived experience of poverty and as she engages with her teacher's critiques of the economy. Imane and Shane also name a structural "misfitting" (Holloway, 2016), observing that many people suffer, discussing homelessness and relating it to who holds power and influence within the economy. Lastly, Shane through his dialogue with Imane on who has the most influence on the economy concludes that people have agency to create change more so than governments.

The relational elements of the economy are scarce in this discussion. All four youth, to differing degrees, discern already being part of the economy through work and school. However, they see the economy as an external structure upon which they have very little impact. The youth's relationship to the economy is understood primarily through consumption (encounters) including the role youth take in promoting brands. There was discussion around survival needs (material well-being) as youth moved into adulthood and had to think about living expenses (material well-being). According to all four youth, the economy is something that adults are a part of and that they will be part of once they reach adulthood. Adulthood happens once they complete schooling and have to begin paying bills.

At times, “the government” and “the economy” are used interchangeably and at other moments, a clear differentiation is made. The four youth have various pieces of the economic puzzle that they try to fit together, attempting to place “the economy,” “the government” and corporations in context.

Before being introduced to the TBTE conceptual framework, the four youth co-researchers understood the economy primarily through a capitalocentric lens. Yet, glimmers of diverse economic practices existed as well as their own critiques and resistance to a system that all four youth understand as unjust.

### **Integrating the TBTE Framework into Press Start**

Through the workshops, we were introduced to a new language that broadened our understanding of the economy and our capacity as individuals and as a project to affect change. In this section, I explore how we apply these principles in the development of Press Start and the impact on how the four youth saw themselves as economic subjects. Not all coordinates are equally applied. The work coordinate was the most relevant to the youth as individuals as well as within the context of Press Start. On the other hand, business, transactions, finance and property were more applicable to Press Start and less applicable to their everyday lives.

### **Labour Coordinate**

Before being introduced to the TBTE framework, all four youths define labour as an agreement between a boss (business) and a worker, and as a way to make money in order to fulfill your material needs and consumption habits. However, there were other elements that each of the four youth brought to the discussion around defining work. Shane mentioned that work is anything you have to do and included school and volunteering in the definition, explaining that in the case of doing unpaid work, you are helping others meet their “end goal” and get their job done. Samara

included both wage labour and unpaid work in her definition. She saw work as “a challenge,” a learning opportunity and a way to “find out about yourself” (occupational well-being). She also made reference to Press Start helping prepare her for the future as she hopes to open her own hair salon. Samara named that work is about relationships with others (social and community well-being).

Imane’s perspective around work was that it gives you value in society and is something that you “owe” to the government and society for receiving a free education. Imane described work as being an important part of life as a citizen. She recognized that everyone has his or her own path, but the “end game” is for everyone to get a job and serve society. She ascribed happiness and success to finding a good, well-paying job (occupational and material well-being). Both Samara and Shane believe that work prevents young people from “getting into trouble,” specifically mentioning preventing drug use. Samara was in a group home and was encouraged by her social worker to get a job to “keep out of trouble.” This included her social worker invalidating her work at Press Start, insisting that she get a full-time job, and specifically encouraging her to get a job doing cleaning work for the city. Shane admitted that if he just stayed home doing nothing, he might do “stupid stuff” and find ways to make money quickly.

The youth’s understanding of work was primarily wage labour in the context of capitalist enterprises with some nuances. As we engage with the TBTE economy framework, we are introduced to various forms of work. Within the TBTE framework, the image of an iceberg is used to highlight that below the water, there are a great deal of economic activities that are hidden such as the work of maintaining households, care work inside and outside of the home, subsistence agriculture, and other forms of providing for communities. Those that are visible above water are those that we acknowledge and value as paid forms of work.

During the workshop, we explored the breakdown of labour into three forms: capitalist, alternative capitalist and unpaid. As well, we discussed the five different elements for surviving well together: material, occupational, social, community and physical. Additionally, we engaged in an activity that explores work-life balance using a 24-hour clock to map the amount of time each person spends on recreation, rest and work. We discussed how the choices we make in our lives might undermine the five elements that are part of well-being. This means having time for the different kinds of work in our lives that nourish us, whether socially, economically or in a way that nourishes our communities, which in turn improves our well-being.

As we broke down each section, new spaces opened up to explore how we can improve our working conditions. In material well-being, the youth felt that as far as their salaries go, it was adequate considering that for the time being they were all living at home. At this time, the youth were paid minimum wage. Akki and I on the other hand believed that minimum wage was not sufficient and shared that we felt that we would like to work towards paying them a living wage, or \$15/hour. The youth, of course, agreed that more money would be better but did not feel that it was necessary now. Samara, Imane and Sam all had one or more jobs outside of Press Start in order to provide for their material conditions. The fact that they needed to have other jobs to pay for their needs felt like a contradiction regarding not needing a higher salary. Youth, like many other folks, come to accept minimal payment for the time and energy they give, as they do not feel that they are in need or deserving of higher wages. Youth, in particular, are socialized that their contributions are less valuable than those of adults. As we explored other facets of well-being, it became evident that they gained other things from Press Start beyond pay. When we engaged with the concept of surviving well, including rest and recreation, this is when the issues with low-wage

jobs emerged; satisfying their material conditions interfered with the amount of time spent on other elements of their livelihoods.

In the occupational aspect, all of the youth mentioned appreciating their work, each describing a different facet that nourishes them. Samara wished that she had more time to commit to the project and felt as though there was never adequate time to plan and prepare collectively, in part because of her own schedule and commitments as well as the amount of time we already spend working together to manage the project. The youth talked about their work at Press Start, feeling fortunate that they had this opportunity. Samara describes feeling “blessed” and compares this work to other jobs that she had:

Samara: Yeah. Basically, what I realized is that if you really want to be successful in life, you really have to do something that you enjoy, that... Because if you don't enjoy it, then you are going to be miserable your whole life, if you know what I'm saying. Example, I work with Press Start, I enjoy it. I'm always hella tired because I just do multiple things, but like I was saying, I enjoy it, and that's what makes me want to keep coming back. I want to do something better, do something more... you know?

For social well-being, all of the youth appreciate working with the team as well as their relationships with the kids and families who came to Press Start. Sam, however, names that he did not necessarily feel close to the other team members. He said that for him, friendships take time and that his social well-being was satisfied outside of work. All four youths spent time with friends and family, that was an important part of their lives. The amount of time they had varied based on their various commitments: school, other jobs, time spent contributing to their households and so forth.

For community well-being, the youth describe a sense of community, naming their connection to the kids who come to the arcade and their families. Shane said that before participating in this project, he had almost no connections to the community and knew very little about Pointe Saint-Charles. Samara appreciated the connections with the other members of B7 ecosystem but later said that the relationships were quite superficial and longs for connections that are more meaningful. Shane in the post-workshop reflections had this same realization and the desire to connect more with the other projects and members. Shane and Imane both felt we should be doing more to contribute to the community of Pointe Saint-Charles. For Shane, Samara and Imane, relationships carried a great deal of value and in many ways was one of the primary reasons for their involvement in this project. For Sam, this was less important.

Physical well-being was satisfactory to the youth; however, Shane mentioned that both the air conditioning and heating system in the building need to be improved. In the winter, it was too cold, and in the summer it was too hot.

During the pandemic, an important part of our work together shifted to discussions on physical well-being. For many months, we could not offer in-person activities due to government regulations. As we are beginning the process of de-confinement, we are not only engaging with government regulations but also around the teams' comfort in returning to work and working with the public. We engage in on-going discussions with the youth on how safe they feel coming into the space to work, working with other team members in person and working with the public. These discussions require that we navigate with care so that each person can work under the conditions that respond to their individual safety needs while also responding to their survival needs. Each youth's context and safety needs are vastly different including their comfort to express their needs.

**De-centering Work, Towards a Work-Life Balance.** In exploring the concept of work-life balance, the youth map the amount of time they commit to recreation, rest and work including forms of work that are not typically considered in capitalocentric discourse. Imane struggled with the reframing of work, her self-worth connected to her capacity to produce and consume: “on se concentre vraiment juste sur travailler parce qu’on se dit que si on ne travaille pas assez, alors on ne va pas pouvoir comme *deserve it.*”

Imane : La seule manière que je visualise, c’est plutôt comme une manière capitaliste. Tu travailles, tu te fais payer, puis c’est comme ça le travail. Ça fait que c’est pour ça c’est comme vraiment dur pour moi de comme voir différentes façons, même après qu’on a abordé les différentes manières de travailler qui sont non payées, comme prendre soin de tes enfants, ou juste comme faire du bénévolat. C’est comme c’était vraiment vraiment difficile pour moi de juste comprendre que ça pourrait être une manière de travailler, parce que pour moi, ça ce n’est pas un travail. Je crois que c’est juste comment à travers le temps, comment la société nous a amenés juste à comprendre que si tu veux travailler et si tu veux avoir comme genre si tu veux survivre, il faut que tu travailles. Si tu travailles, c’est pour avoir de l’argent. Si tu as de l’argent, alors tu es comme heureux, tu as survécu comme tu as *succeed* dans ta vie.

[...] comment la vision de la société, comment comme si tu veux être heureux, il faut que tu travailles vraiment fort, comme pour pouvoir devenir quelque chose, pour pouvoir comme complètement dire: OK, j’ai réussi, c’est parce que j’ai vraiment travaillé fort, puis c’est parce qu’à cause de mon gros travail, mon gros effort, que je vais pouvoir être heureux et comme dire que: *I deserve it.*

Et que j'ai appris de l'atelier que travailler, c'est pas... il ne faut pas vraiment que tu donnes à... comme cent pour cent ta vie doit être consacrée au travail pour être heureux. Comme genre c'est complètement contraire [...]

The learning she is sharing is the recognition of her challenge recognizing unpaid work as work. Also, prior to the workshop on work she struggled with the notion that happiness is about much more than working all of the time and that there are other elements to well-being such as rest and recreation which we must consider important. Shane echoes some of the same sentiments that Imane has around the different types of work and the issue with how success and happiness are defined.

Shane: I think that for sure the workshop that we did, what I take away from it is also thinking about the relationship that we have, especially to paid work, and to, like as you guys have talked about already a lot, just questioning how we define success and how we define happiness. That doesn't need to be like types, like material wealth, and these sorts of things. I think the other part too like Imane was talking about was just to understand work as something that's not just paid work, and that you know like I think we're thinking about. Unpaid work also is like volunteering, or like you know helping with the kid, but I think is also if you're just like writing a book or like learning how to like build [...]

For Samara, the activity had her reflecting on how much time she works and her need for a greater work-life balance:

Samara: I have been working extremely hard and I have been extremely tired, so that also helped me about thinking about my well-being, on my social, on my talking with people, am I getting enough sleep? Am I active enough? Am I eating properly? Things like that helped me too, so it helped me think that I need to relax, relax a bit and think about myself

and my well-being. How do I feel working? Am I working way too much? Am I working way too less? School wise too, like, I have to organize my days, my schedule, my daily schedule because it's just too much for me to handle, so that helped me a lot.

Samara and Imane, not long after the workshops in the fall of 2019 re-evaluated their time and energy and chose to leave Press Start. Imane decided to focus on her studies and chose to keep a job that was closer to home to give herself more time to study, rest and play. Samara chose to take a job that could provide her with more hours so that she would not have to balance many different jobs and schedules. At the time Samara and Imane left, we were not in a financially stable situation and could not provide more hours or a better pay.

**Beyond Productivity.** Instead of integrating youth into “adult” ways of functioning, what we have done together is create spaces that build skills (note-taking, animation, and consensus-decision-making). These skills are important in working towards horizontal decision-making centered on both sharing power and responsibility between the youth and adult members of our team. We simultaneously integrate adults into ways of functioning that are “youth-friendly” or rather “people-friendly” and accessible. This includes taking breaks, integrating spaces of joy and laughter in our meetings, use of accessible language and/or explaining concepts that are not understood by everyone or that may be understood differently amongst our members. This creates more equitable grounds in which both power and responsibility are shared.

We also recognize that we do not always have the capacity to do what we are “supposed” to do. Capacities are always shifting based on our circumstances. This means providing care by shifting tasks and responsibilities based on each person's capacities to complete the work. For example, during the fall of 2020, I experienced a loss of someone close while also supporting someone with severe mental health issues. I had taken on the responsibility to create a sick

day/mental health policy. My mind was preoccupied with what was going on in my personal life. My capacity to make decisions that were thoughtful and aligned with our mission and values was limited. My two co-coordinators, after identifying this, offered to take on this task. Part of what we have done over the past year is to engage in regular discussion on our capacities and shifting work responsibilities in response to each person's needs and capacities. The youth and adult team alike are not always able to name our needs and capacities. At times, it requires one-on-one discussions to review what each of us hold as responsibilities and explore what supports are needed to complete this work. At times, it means letting go of certain responsibilities and ensuring that each member has adequate time for other facets of their lives: the other forms of work in their lives, rest and recreation. This includes deciding not to do something if we do not collectively have the capacity. We all have different needs and capacities to manage the different parts of our lives. Many typical workplace settings focus on material and physical well-being as these are regulated through government policy (minimum wage and health and safety regulations) to some extent. This is what Nodding (1999) highlights in an ethics of care that moves beyond justice – we do not all have equal lives. An ethics of care and the TBTE framework understand the other facets of well-being that are important in creating worlds that are more just.

At Press Start, the other facets of well-being are equally important. Rather than solely looking at the organizational needs, we do our best to ensure that our team's overall well-being is nourished. We do this by working to provide equitable pay (material well-being); paid sick and mental health days (physical well-being); time building relationships and community (social and community well-being); capacity building and ongoing learning (occupational well-being); and time for other parts of our lives (work-life balance).

In addition, we encourage self-care but also create a space of collective care in which we hold space to be open about what we are living in the moment, our struggles and our vulnerabilities. Creating space for vulnerability in our meetings has been hugely transformative – “we” the adults participate and even model vulnerability in our meetings. These practices both acknowledge dominant and dominating practices and attempt to work away from them. We try to balance work and a culture of care. This does not mean that we try to nurture care in order to facilitate productivity, which is one way in which care serves systems of domination and exploitation. In our various decision-making spaces where we make decision about our work together, we challenge the values of productivism and cultivate care, in part, by creating space within our meetings for feelings, integrating moments of being together and on-going moments of getting to know one another and share what is going on in our lives outside of our work together. These are spaces of authenticity, in which we encourage people to come as their whole selves.

### **Enterprise/Business Coordinate**

Before participating in the workshop on business, all four youths describe business/enterprise as “huge companies.” Shane even used the word “conglomerate.” These companies employ many people, have a boss and make money. Sam added that they pay minimum wage and often are big companies with little companies all over the world. The youth’s understanding of business/enterprise was that it was hierarchical, profit-seeking and exploitative.

In the workshop on business, we discussed different forms of businesses: capitalist, alter-capitalist and non-capitalist, as well as two primary elements within a business: decision-making and surplus. We explored the different decision-making structures of businesses, who makes decisions and how this can affect the well-being of the workers and communities. We also explored the different ways surplus can be used and to whose benefit (workers, community, the planet,

shareholders, those in upper management/bosses, etc.) referred to as the survival-surplus nexus. The survival-surplus nexus explores different possibilities of making decisions – the spaces of ethical negotiation for producing and distributing surplus for the benefit of workers and communities (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

The four youth immediately upon discussing the business coordinate mentioned that we (Press Start) are fortunate that we function differently from capitalist businesses. The youth described Press Start as a cooperative and as a non-capitalist enterprise. We are working towards becoming a legally incorporated cooperative, as we believe that it permits the most democratic engagement of stakeholders. The youth understand that at Press Start, no one is a boss and we make decisions through a consensus-based process. The one deficit is that we lack financial stability that hinders our capacity to do more for the community. Although the youth have a good understanding of the cooperative form, there were elements from the TBTE framework that revealed hopeful possibilities and opened up new spaces of decision-making and a different way of understanding surplus beyond its monetary dimension.

### *Hopeful Possibilities and Inspiration for Press Start*

In the workshop on taking back business, the youth were inspired by some of the examples such as FaSinPat, a worker-run ceramic tile factory in Argentina re-appropriated by the workers from a capitalist boss and transformed into a community asset. However, they were also dismayed at all of the challenges the workers had to endure including both the political repression and the personal sacrifices the workers had to make to transform the factory into a worker-owned business.

Imane: [...] ça m'a fait réaliser comment les gens devaient vraiment y aller à des points vraiment atroces pour qu'il puisse y avoir un changement. Comme par exemple avec l'usine, comment les gens ont dû mourir, comment les gens ont dû ne pas avoir d'argent

pour survivre, pour, comme, genre, ils travaillent, mais ils ne sont pas payés, puis, comme, y'a jamais eu d'actions jusqu'à ce qu'eux, comme, ils devaient vraiment prendre les choses en main [...]

Despite the challenges faced by the factory workers at FaSinPat, Imane realized the possibilities of non-capitalist forms of businesses. In the post-workshop reflections, she shared that she learned that alternative or non-capitalist enterprises could be viable, have more worker implication in decision-making and give back to communities.

Imane: [...] j'ai visualisé qu'il y avait une seule forme d'entreprise qui est capable de survivre, mais pas juste survivre, mais aussi faire du profit de ça, mais que on a découvert à travers les ateliers que y'a différentes façons de gérer une entreprise et de bénéficier autant l'environnement que les gens, mais que, nulle part, comme, cette forme d'entreprise ne va pas juste survivre, mais, elle, aussi elle va pouvoir *succeed* et même plus qu'une forme capitaliste [...]

This brought up discussions regarding moments where we lacked the financial resources to pay our team and the youth accepted minimal survival payments for a few weeks until we were once again in a more financially stable situation. At Press Start, there are moments that we have had to sacrifice for the survival of the organization and to continue offering programming to the community. As a new organization, we struggled with cash flow in order to ensure that the youth team were paid for hours worked at various moments in the first year of the project. However, as a horizontal organization in which the workers make the decisions, the youth were the ones who determined how we move forward. The youth chose to work, with the understanding that they would be paid for their hours worked once we were able to secure funds. In moments when we

had less funds available, they chose to have some of their hours considered volunteer hours and some paid hours.

Despite some of the challenges faced by non-capitalist or alter-capitalist enterprises, they brought hopeful inspiration and lessons for the Press Start team that shifted their perspective about how businesses can become viable and can contribute to communities.

Imane: J'ai compris c'est que, pour les formes d'entreprise, puis, c'est juste, nous, comment on pourrait prendre action sur ce qui est, ce qu'on trouve inégalitaire ou ce qu'on trouve mauvais. Comme, pas juste s'asseoir derrière et dire : « Ah, c'est comme ça que le monde marche, on peut rien faire. » Mais, plutôt, elle donne vraiment des exemples que les personnes ont pris action et qu'elles ont fait quelque chose avec ces exemples pour rendre leur communauté ou leur endroit plus mieux et plus, comme, vivable. Puis juste comment elle, comme, nous donner peut-être espoir sur, OK, c'est comme, y'a ces gens-là qui ont réussi à, comme, genre, à surmonter l'inégalité et de faire quelque chose avec et que, comme, nous, si y'a différentes formes qui sont possibles, on doit juste essayer de les découvrir pour rendre notre monde meilleur si on trouve que ce monde-là est, comme, genre, mauvais.

In addition to looking at alter-capitalist or non-capitalist businesses we also looked at capitalist businesses. In these examples, we saw that capitalist businesses can and do distribute surplus for the benefit of people and/or the planet. Sam touched on this, saying that “même si une entreprise est capitaliste, des fois, elle peut être un peu plus éthique.” The TBTE framework recognizes that within any form of business it is possible to make ethical decisions for the betterment of people and the planet. In the following section, I explore the process of becoming

an autonomous organization and the spaces of decision-making that were maintained while others opened up.

### *Legal Structure and Maintaining Horizontality*

In the first years of development, we were not legally incorporated as we were being supported by a charitable organization, Saint-Columba House. However, we functioned as though we were a workers' cooperative. In the winter of 2020, the relationship with Saint-Columba House ended abruptly. In a haste, we decided to incorporate as a not-for-profit business for the sustainability of Press Start. Incorporating as a not-for-profit permitted access to more grant money and to focus on our social mission. Despite not taking on the cooperative form legally, we made a commitment to create a nonhierarchical structure, preserve the youth team's decision-making autonomy while also ensuring to meet the legal requirement of a not-for-profit such as establishing a board of directors. We are still working out some of the details but still manage to have a highly democratic organization that is not hierarchically structured. The legal status of an organization or business can have an immense bearing on how decisions are made, and by whom as well as how surplus is distributed as it is codified in the institutional practices. As I review the youth's reflections about Press Start and engage with other authors, Press Start could be considered a community enterprise that is "usually associated with locally grassroots activism and tend to have a more radical agenda that challenges familiar ways of doing business" (Cameron, 2020, p. 31). Cameron (2020) goes on to say that community enterprises are most similar to worker cooperatives in that "only shareholders can be workers" (Cameron, 2020, p. 31). One of our commitments as an organization is to train and engage youth to be able to appropriate all decision-making within Press Start and in our broader community in addition to ensuring that our project (board and staff) makeup is representative of the community that we wish to serve, namely racialized and

marginalized youth. Our team and board consist of marginalized and racialized youth under 30 years of age with the exception of me. The goal in the near future, is to turn my position into a paid position for a racialized/marginalized young person.

As we engage with the TBTE framework one of the important reflections that emerge is that all forms of business, despite their legal form have the capacity to ethically distribute surplus. Within Press Start, we understand that our legal form does not dictate whether we function horizontally. We work to ensure that decisions are made horizontally and seek to benefit the workers and the community. However, from our experience at Press Start, it requires a great deal of work and creativity to ensure that both the legal requirements are met along with our commitment to working towards a fully horizontal organization is sustained.

### ***Survival-Surplus Nexus***

Accessibility refers to people's capacity to access our services and employment opportunities. Viability consists of our capacity to pay our team, environmental sustainability in addition to ensuring our capacity to pay the costs related to running Press Start: rent, electricity, insurance, materials (business payments). Part of our ability to pay rent and to ensure that youth salaries (survival payments) are paid requires that we generate income; therefore, a fee is asked for entrance to the arcade. The Press Start team decided accessibility to poor and marginalized communities was essential. Namely, all activities connected with our anti-racism and environmental justice mission would be free – our priority to racialized and marginalized youth shapes all of the programming we offer. The discussions on accessibility versus viability left the youth feeling that we were working from a place of scarcity and needing to choose to be accessible or to become viable. As a new organization, the youth felt like we are in survival mode with very few resources to distribute. However, as we engaged with the survival-surplus nexus we began to

see more spaces to make decisions as well as recognize how we are already contributing to our communities in meaningful ways despite not having access to a great deal of monetary resources.

The survival-surplus nexus and the decision-making flashpoints are a tool in TBTE that permit businesses such as Press Start to explore the spaces of ethical negotiation via the production of surplus, its appropriation and how it is distributed. The appropriation of surplus “refers to ‘taking’ of the extra that workers produce, and distribution refers to various ways that the extra is dispersed” (Cameron, 2020, p. 27).

Below (Figure 1) is a broad overview of Press Start’s survival and surplus situation and how it is distributed using Gibson-Graham et al.’s (2013) decision-making flashpoints. The income generated through Press Start is minimal and does not cover the worker’s salaries nor the business payments. Therefore, we rely on various forms of donations and grants to cover our survival needs while also contributing to the community. Twenty three percent of our income goes towards business payments: rent, insurance, accounting costs as well as materials and supplies. The Press Start team engaged in determining how much was acceptable for accounting costs i.e., bank and payroll fees. Currently, these costs are minimal as I do the accounting and payroll for free. The decision to go with the Desjardins bank was in part because they are a cooperative (ethical decision & aligned with our mission) as well as the costs associated. The other decision the youth were engaged in making was around estimating the costs of our programming needs for the year. Lastly, although there was not a great deal of leeway, the two youth board members from the Press Start team were engaged in confirming whether we had the desire and capacity to renew our lease.

The youth’s salaries and contracts are devised with the youth discussing whether we have the capacity to pay them the hours they need at a fair wage. We are continuously engaging in both individual and collective discussions around the youth’s survival needs.

**Figure 2. A people's account of Press Start**

<b>A people's account of Press Start</b>		
<b>Decision Flashpoints</b>		
<b>Hours of the workday</b>	<b>Government grants, individual donations, funding from foundations and universities</b>	
<b>Survival payment</b>	<b>Surplus value &amp; social surplus</b>	
54% of our income goes toward paying our youth and adult team. This permits the youth to live out our mission and to invest in our communities in a multitude of ways.	23% Social wealth is the money invested in living out our mission:  - Anti-racism & environmental programming  - Honorariums to BIPOC artists & youth for engagement in community events and activities. Mentorship opportunities for BIPOC youth, etc.	23% - business payments  - rent  - insurance  - accounting  - material/supplies

***Distributing Surplus***

Although we do not have monetary surplus that we can re-distribute, what we do provide is time and energy to important issues that we believe align with our mission and vision and work towards the betterment of our community. This is our social surplus. Social surplus is primarily the decision of the youth. For example, the youth use their time and resources to offer free activities to the community.

The grant money we receive is to pay our team to provide a survival payment and to invest in our communities. We organize free events connected to our racial and environmental justice mission. Our events are free however, at some events we collect donations to give to other

organizations doing important work as a show of solidarity. For example, at our first Hip Hop as Resistance event, food was offered in exchange for a donation to an organization in Little Burgundy called Youth in Motion. In addition, we also invest time and energy into community events led by other organizations. One event was a community meeting on gentrification organized by housing groups and the community roundtable. We helped with set up and clean-up of the event, and offered free childcare as it was an important issue affecting our community and strongly aligned with our mission, vision and values.

An important piece of our work is offering empowering paid opportunities to youth in the community. Time and money are invested in our youth mentorship program, in which youth have the chance to learn new skills such as silk-screening, metal and foundry work, digital printing and much more. Through this mentorship program, youth learn about and apply collective decision-making skills. In addition, we co-construct communities and create intergenerational learning and doing together.

### **Transaction/Market Coordinate**

Before being exposed to the TBTE framework, all four youth understood transactions as an exchange between two or more parties. Whether the exchange is between a person and an institution, namely a bank, or between two people. However, Sam included trading as a form of transaction. Sam stated that “de comme, de soit les services ou on ne donne rien, comme dire je t’aide à faire ton patio, tu m’aides à peindre ma maison.” Shane questioned whether this was a transaction. Samara responded when I asked the group what they thought: “not with the world, we know now,” suggesting that the world revolves around money. Imane could not understand how a transaction could occur without money being involved, “c’est majoritairement économique? Parce

que je ne vois pas une transaction sans qu'il y ait, pas de l'argent, mais sans qu'il y ait l'économie qui comme, genre, à l'intérieur?"

In the workshop, we viewed videos that explained the whole cycle of production from beginning to end and the human and environmental impact at each stage. We began to see the inequity between various producers and consumers and the impact on people and the planet that is often invisible. In addition, we discussed three forms of transactions as presented in the TBTE framework: non-market exchanges, market exchanges and other market exchanges.

In addition, the youth engaged with an online ethical consumer's guide that gave them access to information on the impact of their purchases. The youth looked up whether their cellphones as well as different items around Press Start were ethically made and discovered the impact on people and the planet.

After the workshops, the youth developed a more complex understanding of transactions:

Samara: [...] it's about like the environment that like if you want a cellphone, you're going through all of this big process that kills the earth, just for this one little thing, just like you were saying about the cups, like for this one little thing, you're doing this whole bigger thing that is destroying the earth, and for no reason. [...]

Shane: Whenever I think of the word "market" I think of not only where things begin and where they end but, I also think about all kinds of transactions, like bartering [...]. How we are all interconnected. How this person could be on the other side of the planet, but we could be talking to them about me wanting to buy their hat because it's a nice hat, and how even if we don't think about things that we should think about, they still play a huge role on what happens {...} how things you buy, you have to look it, in depth what you buy using the ethical consumer guide. I had no idea that it ended in nuclear reactors. I had no

idea that TD was such a horrible bank. Anything that you could think of, you look it up, you look more in depth into it and you will realize that there are a lot more back-stories than what you actually know.

Imane: Le sujet des transactions est vraiment caché pour les personnes qui achètent le produit, puisque comme un produit pourrait être apporté de quelque part, mais qu'il est produit au Canada par exemple. Comme les ingrédients puis tout ça, a parti de quelque part, mais comme le logo va toujours être celui de « produit au Canada », donc il faut vraiment juste regarder plus profondément lorsque tu essayes de vraiment éthiquement acheter les choses qui sont éthiques pour l'environnement et tout ça. Il faut vraiment comme aller en profondeur pour pouvoir sauver la planète et tout ça. Je crois aussi on avait vu les conséquences humanitaires que ça a et non juste environnementales. C'est comment la distance entre le consommateur et le producteur a créé de grandes distances dans l'éthique qu'on a envers les gens et leurs problèmes que nous on cause pour eux et que comme cette distance qu'il y a entre nous permet comme juste d'oublier les soucis et les problèmes qu'on cause et les conséquences qu'on a sur toutes les personnes qui sont dans ce chemin-là.

In exploring the cycle of production on a global scale, the youth became acutely aware how opaque transactions are:

Imane: Comment de plus en plus les relations internationales ont triplé, ça a juste rallongé la distance qui est entre le consommateur, puis le producteur [...] Qu'avant il y'avait juste, comme, un fermier va produire ses légumes et ses fruits, puis, comme, le consommateur va venir les acheter. [...] Ce lien qui permettait, un lien plus humanitaire qui permet à ce

qu'on a plus d'empathie envers ces gens-là, puis aussi de savoir d'où vient notre produit. C'est un lien qui était plus sain, plus, comme, meilleur pour l'économie autant locale que juste l'économie, en général, du pays. Puis comment, le fait de rallonger ça, ça a juste des conséquences énormes parce qu'on ne sait pas où... c'est qui prend les décisions ? C'est où que ça va ? C'est comme quel produit on utilise ? Est-ce que c'est l'environnement, est-ce qu'on est en train de détruire sur le chemin ? C'est qui, les producteurs?

As Imane's quote articulates, the distance that occurs is not only physical it is also psychological. These encounters are invisibilized and the consumer at the end solely understands the items in relation to the monetary cost and not the human and planetary costs. Made visible are the rules of market exchange and that they do not result in equal exchange for all of those involved, that exploitation of humans and nonhumans occurs throughout the process.

The youth all name that Press Start must focus on direct transactions. This is one of the best ways to ensure that we know how, by whom and where the items we purchase come from to ensure that we are not engaging in exploitative or destructive practices. The thought of investing time and energy to research each item we wanted to purchase did not feel like a realistic solution. In addition, Shane confessed that although he understands the implication of some purchases, that on a personal level, there are some things that he will continue to do: "I would think again about buying another Samsung phone, but I'm so gonna buy another Samsung phone, I'm sorry." We all hold contradictions, and despite our best intentions, it is difficult if not impossible to be 100% ethical. There will often be some trace of harm that happens in the cycle of production and consumption, but rather than be apathetic, we can make choices as individuals and as a project that are more ethical and favor direct transactions and making small changes. According to Sam, "ça peut changer les choses même si ç'a l'air anodin pour certains."

### ***Encounters Between Press Start and Suppliers***

The youth discussed that we should try to favour direct transactions within the B7 ecosystem and within the Pointe Saint-Charles community both to keep money invested in our communities and to support local projects. The youth identified the community self-managed grocery store, Le Detour in B7, where we purchase our snack items. The youth understood this as a market exchange: us giving Le Detour money and receiving snacks in exchange. What was made visible is that Le Detour were charging us the cost that they were paying for the item and did not make a profit. They spent time and energy communicating, searching for the item and delivering the items to us. After, in the spirit of reciprocity, the youth determined that we should offer to help Le Detour at least once a month. As we explored the concept of reciprocity the youth began to understand that exchanges could take many forms and that we were already engaged in many reciprocal exchanges with others in our ecosystem and in our community that were not economically commensurable but rather socially commensurable such as our relationship with La Coulée.

The youth determined that most of our furniture and equipment was a non-market transaction that was gifted to us. The video games and the other equipment in Press Start were mostly donations (gift transaction). The youth felt that although the video game consoles were tied to unethical practices, that we were at least not purchasing the items new, remaining true to our environmental mission.

### ***Encounters Between Press Start and the Users of Our Programs and Services***

As a not-for-profit enterprise, transactions include those between us and the users of the space. Accessibility versus viability of the project is a discussion that frequently returns, beginning in the development phase and continues to emerge in our weekly meetings. There are frequent

concerns that we need to pay rent and that we need income in order to pay the youth's salaries. Therefore, we created a system that we felt permitted us to generate income while also offering alternative ways to ensure that everyone could access the arcade.

Users can purchase various types of passes (daily, weekly, monthly). Users gain access to the space for the whole time we are open - there is no time limit. People can come and go as many times during the same day. They have access to all of the video games, board games, etc. To ensure that all users, despite financial capacity to pay can access the space the youth devised three alternatives. Users can volunteer in exchange for passes to the arcade (reciprocal transactions). In addition, the youth developed a pay it forward system (gift transactions). Users who have the financial means to pay for passes can buy passes that are given to youth who cannot pay to come to the arcade. The youth also came up with another system. They decided that if they are more than 15 minutes late to work, that they have to make a five-dollar donation that will go towards passes for users who cannot pay.

Beyond access to the arcade, our team decided that all programming that derives from our social justice mission is free for everyone (gift transaction). For community events that occur in B7, we also offer free childcare and use of the space. One event was a community meeting on gentrification organized by housing groups and the community roundtable. We helped to set up for the event as well as provided childcare. It was an important issue affecting our community and strongly aligned with our mission, vision and values. Although Press Start does not directly receive anything in these later examples, there is a community exchange on a larger scale that contributes to the work that we are doing together.

After the workshop, the youth understood transactions beyond solely market exchanges such as the concepts of gifting and reciprocity that the youth applied to Press Start. In addition, all

of the elements of the cycle of production were made visible. Initially, the youth focused on the transactions at the point of consuming a product or a service and not the various phases before or after, including disposal. Through this, the inequity in markets exchanges emerged as well as the human and environmental harm that it produces and reproduces. The relational elements are exposed and helped to see new possibilities regarding the choices that we make and the encounters that we choose to co-construct with others.

### **Property Coordinate**

Before being exposed to the TBTE framework, the four youth concluded that property refers to something that is legally yours and that there is a payment to acquire it. Sam added intellectual property to the discussion as well as the element of “rights.” The youth understood property limited to private property rights.

In the workshop on taking back property, we discussed the various forms of property that they access on a daily basis: public, private and commons. Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) propose that all forms of property can be commoned for the betterment of communities both human and nonhuman through ethical negotiation. These spaces of negotiation that Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) refer to are part of becoming a community economy.

In the workshop, we looked at case studies that explored how various forms of property can be commoned. In the Take Back the Economy toolkit, Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) refer to the Time-Property Geography. Engaging with this concept, each youth created a visual map of their movement over a 24 hour period. Property was divided into individually owned private property, collectively owned private property, state-owned or public property and open access property. Through this process, the youth realized that there are various forms of property and that they navigate these on a daily basis. There was an interesting discussion as to whether our public

transportation system is collectively owned private property or if it is state property because there is a fee associated with access.

We discussed the various elements of commoning proposed by the TBTE Commons Identity tool kit: access, care, responsibility, benefit and use and applied it to Press Start. At the end of the workshop, a few of the youth shared how it inspired them. Samara wrote in her feedback questionnaire afterwards: “This workshop inspired me to want to do more for this community, to care and bring more people here.” Imane said: “Ça nous a permis de réfléchir et se demander sur les différents aspect qui nous rendrons plus communs.” The youth were intrigued by the concept of commoning. However, it only truly made sense when we began to apply the concept to our work concretely as we moved through the project. Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) describe commoning as a relational process versus a category, and this was and continues to be the case for Press Start as we expand our understanding of community and how we can contribute through our project as well as how much we receive from the community.

After engaging with a reframing of the economy, our team decided that although Press Start is on private rental property we should common the space during the day since we were not using it during those hours. When assigning responsibility, the Press Start team came up with general rules of access and use, which meant determining what equipment was okay to share, and what was off limits based on risk of damage and our capacity to fix or repair equipment. The Press Start team, board and volunteers are primarily responsible for the space and the equipment creating the guidelines of use and access as well as holding the legal responsibility. However, B7 is also responsible for some elements within the space, the heating and ventilation system, pipes, and other infrastructure. In addition, those wishing to use and access the space needed to communicate their needs. We are responsible for scheduling who can use the space and when the space is used

and negotiating if there are many different requests. One condition of sharing the space for the Press Start team was related to responsibility, that one of our team members was present to open and close the space and meet the organizers. Alternatively, one of the members of B7 takes charge of doing this and ensures that the space is locked up afterwards.

Care for Press Start encompasses more than physical space; it also includes socio-emotional space centered on the values of sustainability and anti-oppression. Care in this broadened definition is expected of everyone who uses and accesses the space. We outline our values and to the best of our ability ensure that those who use the space also provide socio-emotional care.

The Press Start team negotiated use and agreed that as many people as possible should benefit from the space. We began to receive requests to use the space by other projects within the B7. Access remained quite restricted at this point. The doors of Press Start were locked when the space was not open to the public. Members of the B7 ecosystem had access to the Press Start key that was left in a lock box at B7. Access slowly broadened beginning with sharing access to other projects and the B7 staff for meetings and later, with the other groups external to B7.

The concept of community later broadened as community groups external to the B7 ecosystem requested to use the space for childcare or other events. The team re-negotiated use and decided that community groups with a mission that aligns with ours would also have free (unpaid) access to and use of the space. There was some concern about using the equipment in the space and how others might care for the space and all of the objects inside that was a discussion that we engaged in every time the youth felt that giving access to the space could result in damage.

More recently, Press Start ran a mentorship program and collaborated with many CEGEP and university students. This adds an additional level of complexity regarding access and use of

the space. There are many needs that we balance and prioritize as our programming at Press Start and within B7 expands. Use and access to the space continues to broaden and requires ongoing negotiation with one another about needs and capacities and the needs of others in our community.

### ***Becoming a Community Economy***

Through this PAR process, the engagement with the TBTE framework and in the ongoing development of Press Start, we begin to identify our own community economy, B7. Through the process of reframing the economy and locating the spaces of ethical negotiation with others, we are becoming a community (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Our community economy, following TBTE, is the manifestation of diverse economic practices and the relationships formed through these negotiations. In this section, I unpack our process of realizing that we are part of a larger commons community.

Before engaging with the TBTE framework, we looked inward, focusing on our values, mission and vision; the activities and programming that we believe allow us to live out our mission; as well as our internal functioning to ensure that it aligns with our values. We were in development and survival mode. This insular process created the foundations of how we work together. Just after opening the arcade, as we began to engage with the TBTE framework, we intentionally made connections between our mission and broader social issues. For example, discussing racism in Quebec, facilitating discussions with other youth in the community, banner-making and attending the protest against hate in the fall of 2018. These various phases of the development of Press Start and our work together were important. However, it was as though we skipped a step of community building with those directly in our ecosystem, the community we chose to be rooted in and sought to collaborate and share resources with. As we began to engage with the data from the workshops, various reflections emerged including how and with whom we seek to build community. As we

looked at Press Start and our work, in relation to our surrounding community (The B7 ecosystem and the community of Pointe Saint-Charles), our capacity to imagine possibilities for other-doing proliferated and our relationships deepened as we became bound to one another.

Samara and Shane express feeling comfortable chatting with others and feel welcome in B7 but later name a deeper desire to connect. Many projects within B7 avidly support Press Start in various ways, and support our sustainability. However, because “the work” happens during the day, while our youth team are in school, they end up excluded from the spaces of deliberation. In addition, the existing connections between Press Start and other projects in the B7 ecosystem were less apparent to the youth in part because the two adult members of the team (me and the community-researcher) did a great deal of the day-to-day relational work.

### ***Deepening Democracy***

The informal spaces of socialization, although appreciated by the youth, were insufficient in facilitating the deeper connections the youth sought to have with the other members and to the larger collective project. The community they were naming that was missing was one constructed around working together through deep democracy and co-construction, one of the very reasons we toiled to have our project housed in B7 as opposed to another building. The proximity with others and the collective horizontal structure within B7 seemed more conducive to facilitating collaboration.

In many ways, the B7 ecosystem replicates the ways society engages with youth. Although a youth-adult collaboration, Press Start is perceived as the youth organization in B7. Other projects offer classes or activities for youth; however, there are no youth involved in decision-making or in leadership roles. Within the larger collective project of B7, youth, in theory, are not excluded from decision-making. However, the meetings are not culturally accessible to youth and various

other folks for that matter. The meetings are long, ideas move quickly, the content is full of inaccessible language and at times requires familiarity with certain subjects. In addition, they occur at times that do not fit the youth's schedule.

With over a hundred people actively involved in B7, there were different tensions that existed around Press Start's presence. A few of the tensions that existed include concern over youth overseeing a project and freely roaming the building. Many people did not fully understand the work of Press Start and were critical of the fact that we offered an arcade space. One of the criticisms of having an arcade was that it was encouraging youth to spend more time indoors and on screens, rather than understanding that it is a social space for youth to be together and to collectivize video-gaming. Other people commented on the youth's behaviors that they did not deem as "friendly" or "appropriate" for a work context, such as wearing a hoodie with the hood up. However, many others praised their work and saw the youth team's presence and engagement as invaluable and made intentional efforts to connect with our youth team.

Once we realized the importance of these relationships, we began to prioritize these efforts by co-constructing projects with other members of the ecosystem. Specifically, we worked with those who continually made efforts to connect with us and already had an approach to working that was conducive to collaborating with the youth team.

The youth sought to collaborate with other projects and to be immersed within B7. However, the youth team (like many other members/projects within the B7 ecosystem) struggled to understand our role within the larger collective project. B7 is a self-managed building, a commons community. Volunteers and those involved in projects housed in B7 contribute to the sustainability of the organization and in the upkeep of the building. Questions remained for the youth team, such as why we have to help clean the building when we are paying rent, or why we

need to participate in B7 meetings when we have our own meetings and planning to do. At this point, the youth were not yet integrated into the larger collective decision-making structure and did not entirely understand the need to be actively involved in the well-being of the overall organization (cleanup of the shared spaces, attend meetings). To address this, we engaged in an intentional process to explore how Press Start and B7 were interdependent and how B7 was a commons community where we held responsibility and cared for our community.

We prepared a workshop to better understand the mission and vision of B7, the history of how B7 came to be and why we are rooted in a larger project and the community of Pointe Saint-Charles. Through this formal teaching moment, we were able to concretely name reciprocal relationships between us and the other projects, explore the importance of nourishing these relationships between the youth and the rest of the B7 ecosystem and discuss those we want to build or strengthen. Interdependence was not a notion that was clear to the youth team since they understood give and take in very concrete ways. In this discussion, the elements of interdependence were made explicit and how this contributes to the survival of all organizations within B7. Part of the tension around reciprocity was that a great deal of the working together happened at different times, when the youth were not present. In addition, reciprocity needs to be explored and understood not as a transaction at the same moment, but rather as a giving and receiving that is not necessarily quantifiable and that it can take place over time. For example, the youth initially understood it as: we pay rent - that is how we contribute, and in return, we have a space. We explored it differently. B7 as an organization works with us to ensure our sustainability, in part, by co-applying for grants in addition to providing a space to us at a very low rent compared to market value. In return, we contribute to the development of various elements of the horizontal structure.

A strange but telling example is related to collective care and maintenance of the building we all share. One element of this responsibility is to clean up the common/shared spaces in the building. Part of sharing in a commons community is participating in collective care and responsibility. The other projects were also responsible for cleaning spaces, but because the arcade was open in the evenings and weekends, the youth did not see others take responsibility for cleaning. One transformative moment was a collective clean-up day where all projects participated. In this moment, the youth were not resentful of having to clean the building and even enjoyed, to some extent, the process as they had the chance to see all of the other members of the ecosystem actively engaged in the collective well-being. However, without explicitly making visible these relationships, the on-going frustrations the youth were feeling could have been exacerbated. We began to use the language of B7 as a commons to divert from the youth's understanding of property as private, which limits access, benefit, care, responsibility and use.

The youth began to recognize and name how interconnected we are with the larger collective project and the other projects in the ecosystem, as well as how we need one another to thrive as a community. Our relationships with others, when viewed through a lens of mutual survival and well-being, enabled us to acknowledge interdependence, appreciate it, and even work to strengthen it. This does not mean that tensions do not exist. There are ongoing sites of struggle and negotiation between members of the B7 ecosystem (Kruzynski, 2020). However, there is a collective commitment to navigate these struggles together.

### ***Deepening Relationships: Being Together and Doing Together***

There are numerous examples of projects that facilitated the deeper connection the youth sought. I will explore two different examples. First, I will discuss La Coulée, a metalwork facility and foundry in B7 that from the beginning has sought to collaborate with Press Start and is one of

the groups that helped the youth feel welcome in the building. Second, I will explore one of our yearly events, Hip Hop as Resistance, and its evolution from being a Press Start project to a community project.

La Coulée is a project just across the hall from Press Start. La Coulée applies for funds each year in an attempt to introduce youth to an art and skill that is often both economically and culturally inaccessible. Beyond sharing complementary values, our youth team connected quickly and easily to folks from La Coulée and would frequently interact with them in the kitchen space or La Coulée members would stop in to say hi. Our youth team developed a friendly relationship with the La Coulée team so, when they approached us to see if the youth would be interested in learning metalwork, the youth were eager. Particularly so because it was framed around completing a project based on the interests of the youth team, working with their timeline and the needs of the arcade. La Coulée met with the youth each week over a few weeks during our team meetings to co-construct the project. The youth were not solely participants - they were collaborators. Over a four-week period, the youth participated in weekly workshops with La Coulée, making metal coat racks for Press Start. The youth were learning a new skill, producing something much needed for the arcade and had the chance to spend time with the members of La Coulée, an activity structured on a non-market transaction.

The collaborations continue to grow with La Coulée – we are once again engaging in a longer-term metal workshop for the youth. In addition, we developed a youth mentorship program in partnership with La Coulée and other projects in B7.

As part of our anti-racism mandate, we hold a yearly event called Hip Hop as Resistance. It is a free public event to celebrate Black and Indigenous identities and to celebrate hip-hop music as one form of resistance. The first event was held in the spring of 2019. The Press Start team

planned the event and invited other members of the ecosystem both to attend the event and to help with various tasks. In addition to this general call out, we reached out to people the youth already had developed relationships with to help at the event. A few folks from other projects helped: Anne from the bike shop and Sabrina from Les Sans Taverne helped with sound and set up. Eva, one of the members of La Coulée, co-animated with Samara. Jules, from Les Sans Taverne, animated the panel discussion with the artists. As well, many people from the B7 ecosystem attended the event and contributed to our fundraiser for an organization in Little Burgundy, Youth in Motion.

In the summer of 2020, we were in the midst of the pandemic. The arcade had been closed since March, which meant that our Hip Hop as Resistance event planned for the end of March was cancelled. After a few months of being closed, our team longed to return to “normal.” We began to meet to prepare for our possible re-opening, wishfully planning to re-open in September. Many of the yearly activities at B7 did not happen in the spring and summer of 2020; however, everyone had the desire to hold a community event even though no one had the time and energy to oversee it. The Press Start team discussed the possibility of having Hip Hop as Resistance as an outdoor event and engage other members of the community to participate in its planning. We launched an invite to the other members of B7 and organizations in Pointe Saint-Charles to participate in planning the event or simply let us know how they wanted to participate. Numerous members of the B7 ecosystem contributed to planning and even saw it as a B7 event and not solely as a Press Start function. In addition to projects within the B7 ecosystem, there were also numerous community organizations that participated in various ways: Centre africain de développement et d'entraide (Le CADE), Action Gardien, Share the Warmth, and Travail de Rue Action Communautaire (TRAC)<sup>8</sup>. The other projects in B7 organized different parts of the event

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<sup>8</sup> Le CADE, Share the Warmth and TRAC are community organizations in the South-West of Montreal. Action Gardien is the Pointe Saint-Charles community roundtable.

autonomously. Community organizations attended the event and helped with COVID-19 measures. This event shifted from a Press Start event to a community event. Many of the groups who helped with the event were first time collaborators and we hope the beginning of many more. This moved us from being together to doing together.

Because we were holding an outdoor public hip hop event with Black, Indigenous, people of color and folks from the queer community both performing and in attendance, safety became a primary concern. Those who contributed to the event gave both time to bring the community together after struggling through the pandemic as well as care to ensure the safety of performers and guests. The latter included health and safety measures around the pandemic as well as preventing aggressive neighbor interactions and policing. We did indeed have to put up with aggressive neighbors and police presence. Various members of the ecosystem intervened, engaging with both the neighbors and the police and preventing further harm for the marginalized communities in attendance. The doing and creating together deepened our relational ties with other members of the ecosystem and community groups.

As we apply the commons identity toolkit to Press Start, we see that the youth are commoning Press Start by widening access, benefit, care, responsibility and use. While also participating in co-constructing our community economy, B7. These processes are ongoing as our needs, capacities and communities shift and grow, and “commoning is never neutral and never finished; it involves an ongoing process of making and re-making, struggling with and celebrating with messiness of surviving well together” (Kruzynski, 2020).

## **Finance Coordinate**

Prior to being exposed to the TBTE framework, finance was described by the youth as money and its management for individuals, businesses and countries. As well, they named banks as playing a role in finance.

The reflections that emerged in the workshops brought an interesting application of the finance coordinate to Press Start in our continued development of the project after the workshops. At the end of the workshop, we discussed the finance coordinate under the heading of Investing in Futures. The youth described Saint-Columba House, the organization that were the fiduciaries of our project as an ethical bank. Although the money was still held within a Caisse Populaire, the youth understood Saint-Columba House as a third party that managed our money similarly to a bank. Saint-Columba House did not charge us for overseeing our finances and even contributed to the project by dedicating ten hours a week of the Teen programs coordinator's hours to working on the project. Saint-Columba House was investing in our project, in our future and its sustainability. Saint-Columba House had a history of supporting the development of projects that would then become an autonomous entity. Two examples of this are Pointe at Work (PAW), an upholstery business developed by working class women in Pointe Saint-Charles and the Welfare Rights Committee (CourtePointeCollective, 2006).

As mentioned, the relationship with Saint-Columba House ended before we had all the elements in place to function autonomously. B7 invested in our future by agreeing to be fiduciaries of Press Start as we incorporated and opened up our own bank account and payroll system. Through this process we received two grants, one from a private foundation for almost \$200,000 over three years and another from the government for \$100,000. B7 also agreed to temporarily put our lease on hold until we incorporated so we were able to hold off on paying rent until our finances

stabilized. B7's commitment helped us to survive this difficult moment and it permitted us to move into the second phase of creating employment opportunities for youth.

### ***Investing in Futures, Appropriating Our Finances and Making Ethical Decisions***

The youth team has always been involved with making financial decisions. However, there was minimal room for them to make decisions before incorporation, as Saint-Columba House took care of the finances. The organization controlled our access to funds, everything needed to be approved by their board of directors, and we could not apply for funding that Saint-Columba House was receiving to support their programming. However, since we have become an autonomous organization responsible for our finances, the youth are slowly learning about their management. We are currently working with a person that meets with the team and I to develop tools that better allow us to appropriate our finances. We have developed tools that are accessible and adapted to our ongoing needs, giving us greater autonomy and more opportunities to make decisions together.

Another discussion that emerged was that, in the future, we may be confronted with difficult decisions regarding our sources of funding for the project. For example, do we accept funds from businesses, foundations and banks that participate in unethical practices that are misaligned with our project? There was no concluding decision. It was clear that it is difficult at times to really know what kind of unethical investments banks, businesses and foundations make. We specifically discussed banks as one of our potential sources of funding. The youth mentioned the banks that they used for their own personal finances and engaged in a discussion about how some banks were more ethical. In particular, these had more opportunities for "clients" to impact decisions made through these financial institutions such as credit unions. Upon incorporation in the spring of 2020, it was an easy decision for the youth to choose a bank that they felt was more

ethical and aligned with our values based on these reflections. We chose Desjardins as it was a cooperative bank and one of the more ethical of the options that exist.

### ***Investing in Youth and the Well-being of Our Communities***

In the TBTE framework, investments are not only centered around money but also, non-monetary forms. As discussed in the section on business, Press Start uses its social surplus to invest in youth and our communities. Almost a quarter of our funding is used to offer programming to the community. In addition, the Press Start team are paid a wage and chose to spend their time in the project to invest in the community through its programming, solidarity work and creating paid opportunities for youth. An example is one of our creative projects that took place in the fall of 2019, a mural project called Working Together Towards Decolonization (see Image 13). This project was a collaboration with various Indigenous-led organizations who provided workshops supported by elders leading opening and closing circles for fourteen youth participants from across Montreal. Our youth and adult team also participated in this process as part of our ongoing learning. Over a two-week period the fourteen youth participants learned about the violent history of colonization, Indigenous resistance and what allyship looks like. We worked with an artist from Kahnawake, the group of youth and collaborating organizations to create a mural that encompasses the learnings, the history of colonization and what decolonization looks like to those involved. The elder, the artist and the youth were paid for their investment in this process. This was an investment in co-learning as well as the co-creation of a public mural to incite discussion and a symbol of Press Start's continued investment in working towards decolonization and to make visible important social issues that are often invisibilized or hidden away. This was an investment of time, energy and care, our social surplus and the social surplus of the collaborating organization. As

well, it was a monetary investment to support the participation and engagement of youth, elders and the artist.



**Image 12. Working together towards decolonization**

### *Diverse Financing*

At Press Start, a minimal amount of our income is self-generated. We generate between \$300 and \$500 per month from programming fees. In addition to our self-generated income, we receive funding from private foundations, universities and government grants. However, these sources of funding often require a tremendous amount of time that includes writing up applications, financial and program reporting and evaluation of the outcomes. In addition, we rely on non-market sources of funding such as crowdsourcing campaigns and individual donations. At Press Start, we work to ensure that our sources of funding are ethical, the expectations of the funders are fair and within our capacities, and we can maintain our autonomy and live out our mission and vision.

Press Start invests its time and resources in a multitude of ways; however, this could not happen without the financial investment from the various foundations, government grants, and individuals that believe in our work. In the TBTE framework, diverse economic practices remind us of the importance of those who invest in the future of Press Start, the youth and our communities. One important lesson that emerges is that for the sustainability of our work, we need make an effort to co-construct relationships with our investors. Additionally, to ensure the future of Press Start, it is important to diversify our funding, secure our autonomy, live our mission and vision and be able to continue to invest in our communities. In the following section, I share some of the diverse and important sources of funding we receive and its contribution to our work.

Crowdsourcing is soliciting the public, as individuals or groups, to independently contribute financially or in various other ways to the project. These appeals for public support generally take place online and have specific funding goals. As discussed earlier, our first crowdsourcing campaign was to acquire the first \$10,000. We received small donations as well as larger sums of funds from collectives. Crowdsourcing is an ongoing source of income for Press Start that allows us to acquire funds that are not tied to particular projects and permit us more space to make decisions regarding our financial needs as an organization. As well, our crowdsourcing campaigns are how we acquire materials, equipment and volunteers. Crowdsourcing is largely a relationship building mechanism that allows us to share the work that we do that is often unknown, unseen or undervalued. During our crowdsourcing campaigns, we organize both small and large events to meet and talk to individuals, businesses and politicians. The youth take center stage in these moments and have greater control over the messaging. In terms of applications to governments and foundations, the adult collaborators primarily take responsibility and the messaging is adapted based on the requirements of the grant.

In addition to crowdsourcing, foundation grants and government funding grants, we have been engaged in a transformative process with funders and research through a collective funding process that has been foundational to Press Start's survival.

### ***Funding for Surviving Well Together and Investing in Community***

Finances are a difficult subject that frequently creates tension and competition. Whether in the profit or the not-for-profit sector, the financial sustainability of a business is crucial to its survival. Frequently, when we use the word survival, we think of Darwin and the concept of survival of the fittest. However, the TBTE framework envisions surviving as something that we do together.

At Press Start, discussions of financial sustainability have been difficult as they often feel in tension with our values and the importance of being accessible, namely to poor and marginalized communities as show in the business coordinate section. Since our development, we have intentionally worked in complement with other organizations and not in competition in both our activities as well as in our acquisition of funds. Often, we end up struggling to meet our financial needs as a result. One helpful initiative that we are engaged in is a collective application of funding with B7 and other projects rooted in B7. This project is based on working collectively towards making our projects more accessible to the broader community, a shared value that we all hold. One foundation joined this project and committed both to funding our collective aspiration as well as to trying to onboard other foundations to this unique project. For over three years now, we have been working collaboratively with other projects, with foundations and researchers to transform the relationships between foundations and their beneficiaries as well as collectively working together on meeting the needs of marginalized communities. This includes co-learning on themes related to working towards social mixing, minimizing the reporting expected of beneficiaries. As

well, all of the projects in B7 that take part in this initiative, share practices and support one another. Coherent with the TBTE economy framework, these are financial practices on the margins. These are practices that shift power and responsibility as well as permit us to respond collectively to our communities.

Although money and finances are subjects that make many people uncomfortable, it became clear to our team after engaging with the TBTE framework that this was an important space of ethical negotiation. This requires that we appropriate our finances, create more spaces to engage in these discussions and think about both how we invest in futures and how others invest in the future of Press Start and what it means to survive well together. This means thinking about a diversity of funding sources so that we can ethically and sustainability invest in our communities.

### **Post-workshop Focus Group**

In the post-workshop focus group, we reflected on what the youth learned, how they understand the economy and their place within it. As we discussed each ethical coordinate the youth focused on how their understanding of the economy shifted shown in the quotes in the section above. However, when we engaged in discussing their overall learning and explored if they believe youth should have more opportunities to participate in the economy, we saw that the youth shift back and forth from seeing themselves and other youth as critical economic subjects and youth as becoming subjects. PAR is a process that is not linear, as we see in the post-workshop focus group the youth are continuously navigating and re-navigating their reframing of the economy and their role as critical economic subjects.

In reflecting on what the youth learned across all of the workshops and the application of the TBTE framework, anger at injustices emerges as these four youth integrate what they learned and what it means in their everyday lives.

Samara: The freaking world is fucking cruel. Like, they are all evil, the world is evil. Not you guys but, you know what I mean, I was just talking about like the economy and how they are running things [...]

Although, there were many examples of hopeful possibilities, in this moment reflecting back over the entire workshop series this is what stood out for Samara. Scott et al. (2015) highlight that in PAR, feelings of alienation and indignation may arise in the process of conscientization. As outlined in the methodology section, it is the important to prepare for feelings of alienation and indignation that may arise. Creating a space to work through anger, guilt and injustice are important. Moving through the process of praxis, from reflection and action, helps move through the feelings of alienation that so many youth and adults alike sit with their entire lives (Wilson, 2016). At Press Start, we continuously engage with themes of racial, economic and environmental injustice and work towards creating more just worlds. Feelings of anger at the injustices continue to arise in particular as we humanize the economy and demonstrate that injustices are systemic and the different ways that they manifest.

Press Start intentionally engages in other-doing, working towards economic justice and in challenging the relationships between youth and adults. However, what I hope to highlight here is that this is an ongoing learning process as we challenge the status quo and continue to exist with contradictions. In the chapter on methodology in action, I give an example of a moment when I behaved in contradiction to our values. Samara was able to name this so that we can work to repair this situation and so that I can do the work of making sure that my behaviors shift.

However, not all spaces permit youth to challenge the status quo and to participate in changing the things they believe are unjust. These four youth continue to live in a society that devalues their participation and in which they are confronted with ongoing injustices that affect

their livelihood. These four youth through this process negotiate and renegotiate their role as “agents of change” within Press Start (Wilson, 2016, p. 24). However, in mainstream society, the shifting of the relationship between youth and adults (Wilson, 2016) and the youth’s roles as economic actors may be fraught with resistance and even consequences that they may not ready to be confront.

Imane also shared her indignation about the various forms of injustice. However, she also names the hope and the possibility for other-doing that emerged from the workshops:

Imane: [...] on pourrait prendre action sur ce qui est, ce qu’on trouve inégalitaire ou ce qu’on trouve mauvais. Comme, pas juste s’asseoir derrière et dire : « Ah, c’est comme ça que le monde marche, on peut rien faire. » Mais, plutôt, elle donne vraiment des exemples que les personnes ont pris action et qu’elles ont fait quelque chose avec ces exemples pour rendre leur communauté ou leur endroit plus mieux et plus, comme, vivable. Puis juste comment elle, comme, nous donner peut-être espoir sur, OK, c’est comme, y’a ces gens-là qui ont réussi à, comme, genre, à surmonter l’inégalité et de faire quelque chose avec et que, comme, nous, si y’a différentes formes qui sont possibles, on doit juste essayer de les découvrir pour rendre notre monde meilleur si on trouve que ce monde-là est, comme, genre, mauvais [...]

The youth continued to name that there were facets of the economy that they still do understand:

Shane: Well, I can definitely say that there is, like, still, a lot of elements of the economy that I don’t fully understand [...] the economy, it just feels so big. And has all these different parts [...]

[...] But I feel like some other things that you guys are talking about make sense to me. It’s about exchange and has to do with how we survive, because we live in a world now where

we rely on each other [...] It's pretty hard to get all the things that you need to survive on your own, and so you need to exchange with other people to have access to the thing that you need to survive [...].

The more tangible parts of the economy were comprehensible and ways that we can concretely influence our communities as outlined in the section above. Each youth took away important overall understandings of the workshops:

Shane: I think what I'm gonna take away from this workshop too is the, like, the idea of trying to question the way that our society functions, and the way our economy functions, because I think that, like, because we live in a capitalist world and that's just... and, like, in a lot of places, I think, like, a capitalist way of functioning is just, sort of, assumed to be, like, normal and that's just the way it is, and, you know, like, this is how businesses are, and this is how work is, and, you know, I feel like we get a lot of messages, like, you know, if you are to be successful it means that you have to have a really well-paying job, and you have to work all the time, and you have to have bought a home, and all these types of things. Or, you know, if you wanna save for the future, you have to put it into a bank, like, I think there's a lot of ways that demark of the capitalism way of doing things is seen as, sort of, the best way or just kind of the only way, and that's just the way the world works[...]

Imane: [...] on avait vu comment l'économie ne tourne pas autour de l'argent, comme, y'a différentes manières de gérer, on va dire, la survie d'une population sans avoir recours à l'argent [...]

Samara: [...] I learned that there are so many things that we can do in Press Start... I don't know how to explain it... when you're talking about what Press Start and finance can relate to each other, but I learned that we can do a lot, and think about what we want to invest our

money into in a positive way, and in a way to make it like... I don't know what's the word you guys keep using that good fancy words, but it's like you know, ethical. Yeah, ethical. You know like to make it ethical for us, and to make sure that we're taking good care of the environment. And yeah, I just basically learned that we can do a lot with Press Start, and without you teaching me about these things, I wouldn't think of these at all. But yeah, I learned a lot of things.

Sam: Ben, c'est en faisant, comme, c'est quoi j'ai perçu dans tous les ateliers c'est que en faisant de petites choses, comme jardiner, comme s'occuper d'un un potager, vendre des légumes, tout ça, puis faire plein d'autres petites affaires, comme aider dans la communauté, ça peut changer les choses même si ç'a l'air anodin pour certains.

When we asked the youth who has an impact on the economy, all four youth named everyone:

Imane : Je crois que c'est comme tout le monde qui peut influencer l'économie, mais je crois ce qu'elle vise à faire, c'est plutôt nous faire réaliser que c'est le moment de prendre action parce que les choses deviennent de plus en plus pires et comme elle est en train de nous démontrer les différentes façons d'y arriver. Donc oui, c'est comme elle est en train de nous dire : tout le monde peut y arriver et que c'est le moment de faire quelque chose [...]

However, when asked when youth should have more opportunities to participate in the economy three of the four responded that youth should learn more about the economy but should not participate in it:

Imane: Je crois qu'on devrait avoir l'opportunité d'apprendre plus sur l'économie [...] Ça devrait être comme juste une leçon dans l'école. On devrait apprendre juste plus sur

l'économie parce que c'est un aspect qui va nous suivre toute notre vie. Il va juste être plus omniprésent lorsqu'on va devenir plus grand. Puis d'avoir comme l'option de pouvoir, vouloir influencer l'économie oui ou non. C'est comme ça que je la vois. Juste parce que comme avant de pouvoir mettre un geste, je crois que c'est toujours bon de juste s'instruire sur ce que tu peux faire. Comme si tu n'as pas les bases et que tu ne comprends pas ce que c'est, tu ne peux rien faire. Mais comme tu peux croire aussi influencer d'une bonne façon, comme genre l'économie, mais si tu ne sais pas les bases et si tu ne sais pas sur quoi tu es en train de t'initier, tu ne peux pas vraiment savoir les conséquences que tu es en train de poser. Tu ne peux pas comme comprendre les gestes que tu pourrais faire pour mieux améliorer ou pour rendre les choses plus pires [...].

Samara: I definitely don't think that teenagers or even younger should participate in the economy because I feel that it is way too dangerous. I feel like we should have opportunities, like Shane was saying, we should have opportunities to talk about it and learn about it, but not really participate in it. Because I think that the younger you participate in it, you... like you might think so many different things, and end up making it worst, if you understand what I mean. Like we're young, and we don't know all yet. So I rather actually being an adult knowing how the world works in order for me to actually participate in the economy.

Not only did Samara name that it could have a negative impact on the economy if youth participate, she also felt that it could negatively affect young people:

Samara: [...] I wouldn't want to learn at a young age because it's like I'm weak at a young age, like my mentality is weak at a young age. You know what I mean? I'd rather develop, grow older to see what's around me in order for me to say: OK, you know what? The world

is fucked up. What can I do to change it? What can I do to change myself? Things like that because I think just at a young age, it's too dangerous.

Sam on the other hand believes that youth should have more opportunities to participate in the economy and even gives an example of his friends who started their own small businesses.

On the whole, the economy as a complex system was not demystified. In fact, these four youth understood that many aspects are invisible; however, the youth also acknowledge that adults do not necessarily know more – Sam even refers to adults as “sheep.” Through the on-going documentation, we see that the four youth did not stay “stuck”, they moved past their feelings of indignation and feeling that they lack agency. These four youth, in dialogue with one another collectively challenge and re-challenge the hegemonic discourses deeply embedded in each of us. Their understanding of the economy and their capacity to act upon the world continues to expand as we create the spaces to reflect and act. Through the shift in their discourse and through the enactment of emancipatory economic practices we see the transformative potential of creating spaces with youth to discuss the economy, challenge the hegemonic discourse and enact these practices in our everyday lives.

## Chapter Six: Discussion

Prior to being exposed to the TBTE framework, all four youth, to varying degrees, did not see themselves as critical economic subjects. Rather, they saw themselves primarily as “becoming” subjects, only achieving full subjectivity once they reached adulthood. In addition, their understanding of the economy was centered on capitalocentrism with very few mentions of the relational elements of the economy. After participating in the co-design and co-facilitation of workshops based on the TBTE conceptual framework (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013), we see the four youth develop a more nuanced understanding of the economy that broadens beyond the capitalocentric discourse. Through their engagement with the TBTE framework, they learn about diverse economic practices and the possible spaces of ethical negotiation. Through the on-going development of Press Start, we see their criticality and agency proliferate. The more spaces we created to discuss the economy and to reframe it, the further their learning deepened, as did their capacity to apply the various concepts to their lives and to Press Start. As they apply these principles in the development of a youth-led cooperative arcade, a diverse range of economic practices are instituted. Not only do they develop a new language of diverse economies they also begin to see themselves as critical economic subjects as they enact other-doing. It is important to highlight this process is not linear and throughout, as seen in the post-workshop focus group, the youth at times feel a sense of indignation when confronted with the many harsh realities and injustices in their own and others’ lives. Participating “actively” in what continues to be an economic system that is difficult to understand and navigate is overwhelming. Whereas, in our everyday economy or our community economy, it is less daunting and these four youth are already shaping and reshaping their own lives and the development of Press Start.

In the following sections, I return to the findings from chapter five while engaging with the literature and revealing how through this research we 1) challenged the dominant discourse as we engaged with the TBTE framework and enacted other-doing. We engage with how these dominant discourses contribute to hindering youth's capacity to see themselves as critical economic subjects and create an inequitable terrain of participation and how within Press Start we are 2) navigating this inequitable terrain through this research and within the development of Press Start including through co-constructing 3) the economy of our everyday. I continue by discussing my key learnings centered on the role of care and its importance in our work together. Lastly, I share the limitations and implications of this research.

### **Challenging the Dominant Discourses**

In both the research and while engaging with the literature, we see two dominant discourses that shape how these four youth understand the economy and their place within: capitalocentrism and the traditional construction of youth as a social category that frames youth as a problem to be managed. Moreover, in each of the dominant discourses, layers of messaging hindered these four youths' capacity to see themselves as critical economic subjects with agency to act upon the world.

Youth as a social problem, needing to be managed and various discourses that align with this framing shape how societal institutions and the adults that occupy those institutions engage with young people and consequently how youth see themselves. Within this project and the research, the biggest challenge has been to challenge this discourse. A great deal of our work in the development of Press Start and throughout the research has been to challenge the youth-adult divide and to support youth in recognizing their agency. In the beginning of the research and the development of Press Start, the youth continuously turned to Akki and me to tell them what to do or to validate what they were saying. Akki and I continuously reinforced their capacity to do the

work. With time and the ongoing spaces of decision-making that reinforced this notion the more confident they became in taking responsibility and in voicing their ideas, needs as well as their dissent. This process re-emerged during the research. During the pre-workshop focus group, the youth interacted primarily with me, as the researcher, however, the more that they understood the process the more that they began to engage with one another. Throughout the research, the various traditional constructions of youth that position youth as less capable than adults, youth as “becoming” subjects rather than as subjects in their own right returned as we continued to learn together and co-construct Press Start. All four youth, prior to the workshops, named that they would become part of the economy once they reached adulthood and completed school. It is interesting but not surprising that with age-segregated institutions, namely schooling, that youth see themselves as a separate part of society, youth as “becoming” subjects that upon reaching adulthood will enter the “real world.”

Samara shared an experience in the pre-workshop focus group that shed light on ways some adults interact with youth that may be well-intentioned yet ultimately hinder their autonomy and agency. In defining work, Samara shared that her social worker encouraged her to get a job to “keep out of trouble.” Additionally, her social worker did not see her work at Press Start as valuable and encouraged her to take on a full-time job doing cleaning for the city of Montreal. As we see in the post-workshop focus group, Samara mentions being tired and overwhelmed by the many different parts of her life that she needs to balance. Samara knew that she wanted and needed more work-life balance, but an adult in her life who had some control over Samara’s autonomy claimed to know what was best for her with possible consequences if she did not comply. In addition, the adult devalued Samara’s work within this project as it was not seen as “real” work.

Youth interact with institutions that reinforce this notion that they are not yet critical subjects limiting the space for creativity, resistance and genuine autonomy in their developing livelihoods (Elmore, 2017; Freire, 2012; Giroux, 2009). The stigmatization of youth as irresponsible and adults as responsible, youth as inferior and adults as superior and so on (Côté, 2014) emerged once again in Shane, Imane and Samara's responses in the post-workshop focus group. When asked if youth should have more opportunities to participate in the economy, Shane, Samara and Imane all say that youth should learn about the economy but should not "actively" participate in it.

The youth's understanding of the economy and their place within did not shift entirely after the workshops. However, it became more nuanced as they began to see the spaces within their lives and with Press Start that they can and do engage actively in the economy. The experience of the four youth with the various institutions positioned them as "becoming" subjects that devalued their participation and created problematic divides that we continuously navigate within Press Start as we co-construct this project and our community economy, B7. Within B7 this was more challenging as some of the adult members of the ecosystem seemed to carry some of the traditional discourses about youth.

The hegemonic discourse of capitalocentrism has permeated various cultural institutions. In capitalocentric discourse, economic relationships are centered around money (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). The more recent generations of youth are absorbed into a culture of capitalocentrism. This is a hegemonic discourse that creates an image of the economy as an external system, a machine too complicated to understand and in need of "experts" to explain it to laypeople (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). The messages often permeated through the various cultural institutions is that our role in the functioning of this machine is to be good producers and consumers (Bowles &

Gintis, 1976; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). This image of the economy devalues relationships and the well-being of people and the planet while prioritizing profit. It is a discourse that values humans in relation to their capacity to produce and consume that contributes to commodifying both human and non-human alike (Giroux, 2009). Youth, in particular, those who struggle to integrate in the education system or the workforce and cannot compete in the market economy consequentially end up feeling disposable (Giroux, 2009; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). In addition, the hegemonic discourse of capitalism hides away interdependence, relationships and the diverse practices that keep economies going and help people to survive well together (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

The various phases within the cycle of production are invisibilized and the consequences of production/consumption distanced from the far away people and the planetary destruction that is increasingly impossible to ignore. The youth define the economy prior to the workshops, primarily centered on money. As Imane highlights after the workshops, the distance between consumer and producer is not only physical, but also psychological. After engaging with the TBTE framework, the youth begin to see the relational aspects of the economy and all of the spaces of possibility. Shane in particular emphasized the interconnectedness of the economy. Both physically and psychologically, these relationships are brought closer to the lives of the youth and their everyday as we engage with the TBTE framework. Samara and Imane were angry at the injustices as they learned about real people that were harmed as they tried to gain their livelihoods.

The physical and psychological barriers that Imane names in reference to the cycle of production hold true for distancing youth from seeing themselves as critical economic subjects. Youth are not legally permitted to participate in various democratic processes or are simply not invited to participate in decisions that impact their lives. These barriers are often accepted as the way it is, as truth, and the status quo continues with very little or no resistance. In the context of

B7, we created alternative spaces and continue to work to make the existing spaces more accessible.

All four youth had some exposure to discussions on the economy prior to the research. These discussions primarily focused on how the economy affects their lives and the lives of their families. The conversations they were a part of made a unidirectional link between people and the economy, describing how the economy acts upon them such as mentions of the rise and fall of prices on certain commodities. As these four youths engaged in reframing the economy, the economy ceased to be unidirectional and became a complex web of social relationships.

The youth describe themselves primarily as consumers, prior to the workshops, aligned with Côté (2014) and Calvert (2008) who argue that youth are the new focus of marketing. Consumer culture as we see through this research influences how youth see themselves. Beyond promoting overconsumption, consumer culture links youth's identity to material wealth (Giroux, 2009). It is important to note that not all youth have the capacity to participate in consumer culture, which contributes to further marginalizing these young people. Shane and Samara both acknowledge that their friends have differing capacities to purchase the things that they want and need. Samara in particular appeared upset by this inequity and access to these privileges. Calvert (2008) names the need to develop critical awareness in youth to counter the culture of consumption. Although the four youth in many ways buy into this culture, they also name and recognize their own exploitation by media and marketing.

While engaging with the transaction coordinate their role as consumers in the economy became even more evident as we explored the cycle of production and the exploitation that occurs in various phases. By making visible these transactions, the youth moved from discussing consumption based solely on their capacity to pay for the objects that they need and want, to

thinking about the ethical implications of their decisions on people and the planet. In addition, enacting these practices within Press Start, they began to understand transactions as encounters between suppliers as well as between Press Start and the users of our programs and services. The relational elements emerged as well as how we can remain accessible by including non-market and alternative forms of exchange.

The four youth in this research did use the income that they generated through work to purchase things that they wanted, and they considered these funds disposable income. However, when we explored beyond what was visible, we learned that three of the four youth also work to provide for their basic material needs (schooling, bus passes, etc.) and at least one of the four youth contributes to her family's survival needs. The youth in this research name that they do not have the same responsibilities as their parents such as paying rent, for groceries or for other necessities. However, only one of the four youth works because he wants to, which is a choice versus a necessity. The three other youth to various extents work because they need to and must find ways to balance school and the other parts of their lives. This new awareness both shifted how the youth navigate their lives as well as Press Start's policies and practices that consider the different needs and capacities of the team. Youth affluence and the homogenization of youth does not consider their very different social and economic realities (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2014).

All four youth moved from being passive consumers to critical subjects. They are not only consumers; they are also producers and contribute to the well-being of their communities through various forms of work within Press Start and in their day-to-day lives, reconstructing their identities to embody the different ways that they engage in the world. The culture of individualism, the commodification of youth and the disposability of youth was challenged when we reframe the

economy as well as work to shift the youth-adult divide that is prominent in various cultural institutions.

The framing of youth as self-absorbed in popular discourse was challenged in this research. The youth expressed care for each other, others and the community in particular as we began to engage with the TBTE framework. All four youth want to contribute to the well-being of the community and, in addition, desire to be actively engaged in the spaces of negotiation with other members of our community at B7. They did not wish to be separate; they sought to build community in a deep and meaningful way and do so through numerous projects. These four youth within the capacities of the project and our own individual capacities learned to leverage the resources we hold, through the property, business, transactions, finance coordinates and their work, for the betterment of our communities. As the youth learned about the various forms of property that exist and that they interact with on an everyday basis, they also understood that any form of property could be commoned, including Press Start. The decision to common Press Start was an easy choice as it was one way that we can share our resources and contribute to our communities. Beyond Press Start, exploring B7 as a commons linked the survival of Press Start to B7 as a not-for-profit and the other projects functioning out of the building. This allowed us to move from an individualistic vision or project centered vision of survival to a collective vision, expanding the sites of collaboration while building the important relational links.

### **Navigating Inequitable Terrain**

Participation expands opportunities for young people. It helps youth to develop autonomy and to carve out their own space in society as we have sought to do within this research and within Press Start. As we see in the literature review, opportunities for participation are not evenly distributed among all youth (O'Brien et al., 2018; Sium, 2014). Poor and marginalized youth are

not permitted the same opportunities as those who already have access to wealth and social and cultural capital (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Formal schooling is believed to be the “great equalizer” (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). However, this is not the reality for many racialized and marginalized youth. This was demonstrated in Livingston & Weinfeld’s (2017) multivariate analysis of high school completion rates, in addition to Sium’s (2014) research that exposes the policies and practices that demonstrate the failures of education for poor and marginalized youth. This is consistent with the ways in which various facets of society interact with youth, namely racialized and marginalized youth who experience more punitive consequences than their more privileged counterparts and encounter institutions that are not adapted to meeting differing needs (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gillen, 2014; Sium, 2014). Three of the four youth in this research struggled through schooling and various other systems. Shane and Samara, however, had the chance to receive alternative schooling and were exposed to alternative practices and educators that resist the status quo.

Shane, Samara and Imane articulate they did learn about the economy and critiques of the economy within schooling. Important to name is that there are numerous social justice educators; they are creating the “cracks” and “ruptures” (Holloway, 2016) of the everyday. Shane, Samara and Imane’s exposure to critiques of capitalism from their teachers laid a solid foundation for our work together.

As explored in the literature review, youth employment is not attributed the same value as adults who work, in part, because it is seen as a disposable income. However, as we see in the research and in the literature review – many youth need to work (Barbegelate, 2012; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). Low wage jobs require that youth work more hours to meet their needs, taking away from the other parts of their lives. This connects to the pull factor that Jordan et al. (1994)

and Watt & Roessingh (1994) highlight contributes to high school dropout. Youth with many other responsibilities that “pull” them are more likely to struggle in school or to drop out.

Samara names in the pre-workshop focus group that people should be seen for all the parts of themselves. Youth are not only students, nor are they only workers as we see within this research. There are multitudes of other factors that influence the lives of youth. The literature shows that poor and marginalized youth frequently have an accelerated passage to adulthood with fewer resources (Mondor et al., 2014). Families facilitate participation and the transition to adulthood via financial, social and cultural capital that they hold, often helping in accessing opportunities (Mondor et al., 2014). Samara, Sam and Imane need to work for their material well-being; however, there is also another element of needing to “deserve” success and happiness. This pertains to the internalized values of a market economy that falsely proclaim that if you work hard, you will be successful and happy. Success and happiness in this discourse center material wealth and status. However, upward mobility is rare in the current context, and wealth and access to opportunities are transmitted from one generation to another (Côté, 2014; Sengupta, 2014; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2014; Torche, 2013). If we seek to create equitable terrain for participation and for youth to “succeed” this requires that we consider the differing lives and responsibilities that each person holds and make adaptations to support their participation.

Imane’s reflections about work and needing to “deserve” happiness and success is a harmful by-product of the discourse in various cultural spheres, including formal schooling that equate happiness and success to being able to integrate into a life of production and consumption. She began to see the importance of nourishing other parts of her life and that paid work was not the only way to contribute. In addition, she began to understand that not everyone begins on equitable terrain as far as schooling and access to employment opportunities. This challenged the

notion that people should be valued based on their contribution in society via paid work and that those that were “not successful” simply did not work hard enough.

Despite the social, occupational and community well-being that the youth derive from Press Start, their material well-being was not satisfied and required that they have other jobs to meet their needs. As discussed in the literature review, various government youth employment programs provide minimum wage or sub-minimum wages that both devalue youth’s contribution to the economy as well; it makes it difficult for youth, namely those living in poverty, to have a work-life balance (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

Imane’s perspective shifted drastically after the workshop as she began to acknowledge the importance of other parts of well-being beyond material well-being and the importance of rest and recreation. Samara’s understanding also shifted as we explored other forms of work inclusive of unpaid work. In addition, important discussions that influenced this shift were challenging the notions of productivism and the valuing of other forms of participation. As well as the importance of nourishing other parts of our lives and creating space for rest and recreation, the work-life balance is something that we all need and deserve. For both Imane and Samara, this piece was important in challenging the sense that they are never doing enough and need to work harder and do better. For both Samara and Imane, there was a change in how they prioritized rest and recreation in their lives. Samara realized that she spends a great deal of her time working when she considered the various forms of unpaid and informal work that she does. The youth went from centering work as a part of their present and futures to centering their overall well-being and livelihoods.

Alternative discourses as well as economic initiatives and practices that center people and the planet over profit exist and are presently creating more equitable worlds for both human and

non-human alike. These are the cracks and ruptures of the everyday (Holloway, 2014), the other-doing (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016) that must be multiplied; these are the foundations for building a post-capitalist future. In addition, the spaces in which to engage collectively in critical reflection and action are limited (Giroux, 2009). Those that exist are not always accessible (Sengupta, 2014; Sium, 2015), as we experienced integrating the Press Start youth in the existing structures within B7. We therefore created alternative structures so that the youth could engage in the being together and the doing together within the community economy that we are a part.

As we see in this research, it is possible to carve out spaces that seek to be radically democratic, intentionally work to address inequity and challenge the dominant discourses that hinder criticality.

### **The Economy of the Everyday**

Throughout the research, the youth describe two almost separate economies a more capitalocentric version of the economy as a complex external system, made up of faraway faceless people, places and things – corporations, governments, competition, exploitation and so forth. Unravelling the economic from the political in addition to how these two spheres interact is part of what the youth attempt to do in dialogue with one another. They endeavor to untangle the complex web identifying where the government's and corporations' implication in the economy ends and the other begins. Namely, the youth attempt to identify who is responsible for the ongoing inequities and injustices in the world, and why and how these are permitted to occur. After the workshops, “the economy” as a complex system was not entirely demystified; in many ways, it became even more complex.

The second economy the youth describe is the economy of their everyday that consists of the familiar and even mundane parts and of the economy: work, consumption, banking (but not

banks) that expand as we delve into each of the five ethical coordinates making visible economic relationships and the spaces of negotiation in our own communities. The more tangible parts, or the economy of the everyday, were comprehensible in terms of ways that we can concretely influence our communities.

In learning and discussing alternative, non-capitalist or invisibilized practices, it appears that to some extent, these facets of the economy are seen as not “real.” When asked whether youth should have more opportunities to participate in the economy, they all responded that youth should learn more about the economy but not engage in the economy as “active” participants. “Active” engagement, as I understand, is with “the economy,” the capitalocentric vision of the economy. Not only did Samara name that it could have a negative impact on the economy if youth participate, she also felt that it could negatively affect young people. Whereas, the economy of the everyday, of *their* everyday, is an alternative economy they are already a part of enacting.

The capitalocentric vision of the economy is difficult to move away from, as Shane names outright. It is so ingrained in how we understand the world, the economy and our role within it. The sheer complexity of the economy is incomprehensible, scary and alienating to youth and adults alike. In addition, youth are socialized to understand themselves as separate from the economy and other elements of “adult” life which exacerbates youth’s political and economic marginalization (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). This sort of discourse creates a fabricated image that participation or, rather “active” participation is related to legalities around age (voting, property rights, and signing rights) that legitimates participation. The many ways societies are structured around age-segregated institutions (schooling, youth centers, and youth employment) and much of the traditional, functionalist discourse around youth shapes an image of an “adult world” that all four youth in this research name, that they are not yet a part of the economy. The ways in which adults

interact with youth constructed around power and authority influence how youth see themselves and their agency in political and economic spaces. Three of the four youth in the research have struggled in mainstream societal institutions, namely schooling. Samara more specifically has had many negative interactions with various systems. Her comment that youth are “weak” falls in line with the discourse of youth as inferior and in need of adult guidance. In addition, she says that participation can be “dangerous” and that youth participating in the economy poses a threat to their own well-being. The discourse of youth as a social problem and as weak and inferior to adults contributes to the belief that youth do not belong in “adult” spaces where “important” decisions are made for the well-being of society and to protect youth from the dangers of the world. Whereas, this alternative vision of the economy, the TBTE framework, the PAR process and Press Start’s non-hierarchal functioning does not hold those same associations. They began to see the spaces in which they can and do participate in the economy and challenge the various discourses that hindered their ability to recognize their own agency. It is important to name is that these youth were always actively engaged in the economy in various ways, in particular through the development of Press Start.

However, the PAR process and the TBTE framework revealed hopeful possibilities for other-doing. It permitted us to see the complex ways in which we are connected and how we must continue to weave these relationships of interdependence and care with other people and with the planet. Understanding the existing relationships, the challenges and the ways in which we can make decisions helps us to move towards constructing community economies and towards creating worlds that are more equitable. These four youths created a project that is on the margins, constantly challenging the status quo and centering the well-being of our communities. Each decision that is made by our team is made intentionally with care for each other, our communities

and the planet and lived out through our work together and seeks to challenge the systems of domination.

### **Key Learnings for Our Ongoing Work Together, Care as a Transformative Practice**

This research process, as I learned alongside the Press Start youth, was transformative for me and for the on-going development of Press Start. One profound element that emerged is the importance of care and its presence in our work. Press Start from the beginning was constructed around care; however, naming it and intentionally thinking about how we can institute care within Press Start and our relationships has expanded our capacity to continue to transform ourselves as individuals, as a collective and as an emancipatory economic initiative.

In the pre-workshop interview, the youth in describing the economy focus on individual survival. As we reframed the economy and the relational elements emerged, the economy (of our everyday) seemed less daunting, in particular as we began to reveal the people and projects within our community economy that work to support our survival.

If in the spaces of other-doing we are not challenging these conceptions, then where and how do we re-center care and connection and acknowledge that we are responsible for one another and the collective well-being of our communities? Work, for many of us, is a big part of our lives and occupies at least a third of our days. The spaces in which work takes place and in which we come together with others seems like a necessary location to institute care and connection.

In the article *For All We Care*, the author writes that “a struggle that doesn’t understand the importance of care is doomed to fail. The fiercest collective revolts are built on a foundation of nurture” (CrimethInc). Care work and caring are fundamental to our survival, “human life as we know it would be inconceivable without relations of care” (Robinson, 2011, p.2). The TBTE framework is constructed on an ethics of care: respect of self, others, the planet and of future

generations to come. Surviving well together as a concept in TBTE resists individualism and introduces a collective and holistic vision of ensuring that communities care for one another inclusive of humans and non-humans alike. All of the facets of well-being (material, social, community, occupational and physical) challenge the notion of well-being beyond the physical and material aspects and suggest possibilities to facilitate connection and care. Working collaboratively with youth has required that we function differently as an organization and develop a culture that is continuously evolving and adapting. This has required us to develop different ways of functioning that prioritizes creating non-hierarchical and accessible spaces for the youth to participate. In addition to, policies and practices that adapt to each person's capacities and differing realities. As an initiative that seeks to be transformative and emancipatory (Durand-Folco, 2019), this requires that we engage with the relationships of domination that are often replicated, and that we undertake intentional work to transform them and transform ourselves in the process.

Care, much like love, cannot exist within contexts of domination (hooks, 2000; Freire, 2012). Within the economy, we see various relationships as "natural" that we do not challenge. For Press Start, this means rooting our work in challenging the existing systems of oppression and the practices and behaviours that reinforce these systems. This includes being cognizant of the youth-adult dynamic that is present in schools, in families, and in work in which adults hold authority. There is also a power dynamic between the different adult members of the team, even if we acknowledge and work to share power and responsibility based on our different positionalities. Instead of replicating the power dynamics in much of society between youth and adults, between bosses and workers, between people with different levels of privilege within a given context, we intentionally work to shift this. However, this does not mean that it is not present and that we must not continually reflect on our own behaviors and their impact on the different members of our team

and on the collective project. Our work towards functioning horizontally does not erase many of the existing power dynamics and our different positionalities in the world. Rather, we attempt to bring these to consciousness and intentionally work through these power dynamics by understanding the different realities of each person as we did during the pandemic and centering each person's need to feel safe.

At Press Start, challenging systems of domination is part of our social mission. This includes participating in social movements to fight racist policies as well as to participate in anti-gentrification organizing in Pointe Saint-Charles. However, they are not only external systems that act upon us they are reproduced in relationships. They have become part of the culture that we are socialized in and difficult to recognize as we embody the beliefs and behaviors that manifest in both policies and practices. We see this within education and employment. Therefore, in creating the “crack” and “rupture” of the everyday (Holloway, 2016), it is important to intentionally create spaces to undo this within ourselves as individuals and within the organizations and institutions that we are a part of. At Press Start, part of our work together is ongoing learning about the various forms of oppression and to the best of our capacity instituting policies and practices that do not reproduce and reinforce existing power structures and harm. This work is ongoing and means that we make mistakes but that we need to be willing to recognize and accept that we make mistakes and transform. This is the work of undoing and other-doing.

### **Limitations**

PAR should engage with “multiple populations that are often excluded from the formal research process” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 108). The scope of this research is limited to the experience of these four youths, not a representative sample nor do we engage fully with the various stakeholders. This research captures some of the complexities of the relationships with

other stakeholders; however, is concerned principally with the perspectives of the youth directly involved in the project and the engaged researchers. This is a case study and the content and analysis do not claim to be universally applicable but rather document our process of reframing the economy and our experience of developing Press Start.

I am an engaged researcher actively involved and committed to this project; I hold my own biases that shape what I observed during the 5 years of the evolution of the project. Another researcher would not have had the same access that I had to the youth, and therefore the results are not likely able to be replicated. However, as named in the methodology section, the objectives of this research are exploratory and do not seek to be universally applicable nor does it claim to be.

## Conclusion

As we see in the context of this PAR project, after engaging with the TBTE framework, these four youth learn a new language to begin to imagine the economy beyond the capitalocentric vision and find their own space in it – the economy of our everyday and our community economy, B7. In addition to shifting their discourse around the economy, they begin to see themselves as critical economic subjects as they enact other-doing with Press Start and their communities.

Through this research process and the development of Press Start, the youth and adult team alike are experiencing the process learning and re-learning together and from one another. As we move through the process we simultaneously, reconfigure power relations between youth and adults in which we are all implicated in the becoming of this project, in becoming critical economic subjects and engaging as knowledge producers. The four youth in this research not only begin to see their capacity to engage in the economy, they begin to enact emancipatory practice in the development of Press Start that resulted in transformational impacts on the communities in which we are a part.

We see the transformative potential of youth-led emancipatory economic initiatives and the results of engaging youth in reframing the economy as a way to work towards building post-capitalist futures, now. These forms of hopeful possibilities are emerging in response to economic practices and policies that fail both people and the planet. Yet, there remains limited research, in particular deeper investigations into how decisions are made and by whom, the discourse and practices that frame these projects and the impact on those implicated and on their communities. This research demonstrates the need for critical approaches in youth studies that document the ways in which youth act upon the world and in particular within the economy. There are some reports on social economy initiatives led by youth; however, they tend to give a

vague glimpse into the practices and how youth are engaged in the various facets, specifically in decision-making. For this reason, we use thick description, as it is “a political choice to enact a revolution of sorts, one that makes faint glimmers into prefigurative elements of becoming” (Gibson-Graham, 2014a, p. 151) in hopes of sharing our work and inspiring others to begin creating more just and equitable worlds, now. This research makes visible this emancipatory economic initiative on the margins of the mainstream while also contributing to documenting youth enacting other-doing and simultaneously transforming themselves and their communities in the process.

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## Appendix A. Sample Workshop Outline

PAR RESEARCH Workshop #1  
 July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
 Reframing the Economy & Reframing Work  
 Planned and animated by Michelle and Samara

### **PART 1:** The Economy–Michelle

- Diverse Economies perspective
- Garden
- Iceberg

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### **PART 2:**

**Work**–Brief explanation on the reframing of work Michelle and Samara

Exercise #1 Work Chart (Samara, supported by Michelle)

### **PART 3: Discussion on the five different elements of surviving well**

1. *Material well-being*
2. *Occupational well-being*
3. *Social well-being*
4. *Community well-being*
5. *Physical well-being*

**First:** Explain what each element means (Samara)

**Second:** Explain the 24-hour clock (Michelle 5-10 minutes)

Exercise # 2

Break into two groups

Group # 1: Shane, Samara, Akki

Group # 2 Imane, Samuel, Michelle

#### **Materials:**

Two stories: Maya & Josef

Chart of each element of well-being

1-Read each story and chart examples from the story of each element of well-being. Example: In one story, Josef through his volunteer work builds meaningful relationships - the social element of well-being.

2-Check off what level of well-being the people in each story achieve: 1. They DO NOT really achieve this element of well-being, 2. Somewhat 3. They have satisfied this element of well-being

3-Chart the 24-hour clock

4-Come back together as a group & review each group's response

\*\*\*\*15-minute break\*\*\*\*

#### **PART 4: Surviving well collectively activity (Michelle)**

#### **PART 5: Ethical Actions**

1. Fair work and wages
2. Government input
3. Redefining work
4. Sharing what we need to survive well
5. Directly contributing to the well-being of others

#### **PART 6: Final Activity**

Think about PRESS START in relation to the five elements of well-being, our ecological footprint and possible ethical action. What can we do?

#### **Feedback questionnaire**

## Appendix B. Guiding Questions for Focus Groups

Research Question: *How do youth define the economy and their role in it?*

A visual scale will be created as well as different color post-its representing each group in question. After each question, the youth will be asked to place their post-it along the scale.

- i. On a 5-point scale, 1 being not at all important, 3 being somewhat important, and 5 being very important, how important is the economy to you?
- ii. On a 5-point scale, 1 being not at all important, 3 being somewhat important, and 5 being very important, how important is the economy to your friends?
- iii. On a 5-point scale, 1 being not at all important, 3 being somewhat important, and 5 being very important, how important is the economy to your family?

When I say the word economy, what words come to mind?

When I say the word:

**Enterprise**, what does it mean to you?

**Work**, what does it mean to you?

**Property**, what does it mean to you?

**Finance**, what does it mean to you?

**Transactions**, what does it mean to you?

1. Where do you hear people talk about the economy?
2. What do they say?
3. Are you part of the conversation? How?
4. Who is part of the economy?
5. After the group has listed those they believe are part of the economy, go through the list and ask them: What is the role of \_\_\_\_\_ in the economy?
6. Who has an influence on the economy? How?
7. What about youth, how do they have an impact on the economy?
8. Should youth have more opportunities to participate in the economy? If no, why should they not participate? If yes, do you have any ideas on how you would like to see youth participate in the economy?
9. How do each of you participate in the economy?
10. Take a minute to write down in your own words what the economy is to you. You can then share with the group or just if you prefer post your answer on the wall and someone else can read it out loud.
11. What about the arcade and your work in it, how is it connected to the discussion we have been having?

### **Appendix C. Workshop Feedback Questionnaire**

1. What did you learn from the workshop today?
2. Did the workshop inspire any ideas for the arcade? If yes, please explain in as much detail as possible.
3. Are there parts of the workshop that you did not understand? Please try to describe the things that you did not understand.

In preparation for the next workshop:

4. What can be done differently to make the next workshop better?
5. What worked well to help you participate and learn this time?

## Appendix D. Consent Forms

### Youth Consent Form



#### INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:** Becoming Economic Subject: a participatory action research project with youth

<p><b>Researcher:</b></p> <p>Michelle Duchesneau, Master's student, Special Individualised Program Michelle.duchesneau@economiesdecommunaute.org <b>2149 MacKay</b> <b>CI Building</b> <b>Montreal, Quebec, Canada</b> <b>H3G 2J2</b></p>	<p><b>Faculty Supervisor:</b></p> <p>Dr. Anna Kruzynski Associate Professor and Graduate program director, School of Community and Public Affairs (514) 848-2424 ext. 5194 <a href="mailto:anna.kruzynski@concordia.ca">anna.kruzynski@concordia.ca</a> <b>2149 MacKay</b> <b>CI Building</b> <b>Montreal, Quebec, Canada</b> <b>H3G 2J2</b></p>
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**Source of funding for the study:** SSHRC, Insight Grant- faculty research led by Dr. Anna Kruzynski: Community economies for social and environmental justice in Québec: mapping diverse economic and political practices proliferating at the margins.

You are invited to participate in the student research, ***Becoming Economic Subjects: a participatory action research project with youth*** that is part of a larger faculty-led study ***Community economies for social and environmental justice in Québec: mapping diverse economic and political practices proliferating at the margins.***

This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate as well as the limitations of your participation. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

#### A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to learn about how youth involved in Press Start understand the economy and their place in it.

In the research, you will learn a new language and way of understanding how the economy works. We want to understand if and how this new language and new way

of understanding the economy changes as you develop and run the youth-led cooperative arcade, Press Start.

In the research you are more than participants, you are also teachers and co-researchers along with Michelle Duchesneau (Masters student-researcher) and Akki Mackay (Community-researcher). This is about shifting power, we want to change the way that youth and adults work together.

Lastly, this research aims to bring attention to this unique project, the youth-led cooperative arcade.

## **B. PROCEDURES**

If you decide to participate, you will have a say, along with other members of the group, on how we will conduct the research. This includes:

- thinking about what we want to learn and how;
- understanding and interpreting the information at the end to help us answer the questions;
- sharing what we learned with people and organizations who might be interested in our findings and the research process.

You will participate in the following activities:

### **1) Two workshops on research skills.**

**2) Pre-focus group** (video-recorded): With the other youth, you will participate in a discussion on your understanding of the economy and of your role within it.

**3) Five workshops:** You will learn about one of the points listed below and co-teach (with Michelle) a workshop for the rest of the youth involved in the research. You will be a participant in the other four workshops lead by your peers. At the end of each workshop, you will be invited to complete a feedback questionnaire.

To develop the content of the workshops, we will use the **five ethical coordinates put forth by J.K. Gibson-Graham:**

- work (surviving well)
- business (distributing surplus)
- market (encountering others)
- finance (investing in futures)
- property (commoning)

**3) Post-focus group** (video-recorded): With the other youth, you will view the video from the pre-focus group and reflect on information from feedback questionnaires.

This will help us see if your understanding of the economy has changed since participating in the workshops.

In total, participating in this study will take 40-50 hours over a four-month period. Dates and times of meetings will be determined together.

### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

There are no foreseeable risks of participating in this research.

Potential benefits include:

- Acquire basic research skills and experience.
- Gain a better understanding of what elements make up the economy.
- Develop tools that will help in developing the cooperative arcade.
- Be part of an innovative research project where your name will be included in the list of co-researchers.
- You will receive payment for your work as a co-researcher.

### **D. DISCLOSURE OF NAME AND PARTICIPATION**

We intend to publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications as a co-researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my name published in the research as a co-researcher

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to have my name published in the research as a co-researcher

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree under the following conditions:

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## E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is entirely up to you. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. There are no negative consequences for not participating or stopping at any point in the research. However, information provided during the group activities (pre-focus group, five workshops, post-focus group) cannot be excluded from the research due to its influence on the rest of the information provided by the other youth.

As a co-researcher, you will receive financial compensation for participating in this research. If you withdraw before the end you will receive compensation for the time that you participated.

## F. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print name)

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## G. CONSENT TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR TWO POST-SESSIONS

As this Masters project is embedded in a larger study, there may be focus groups that you will be asked to participate in if certain research questions have not been answered through the process described above. Financial compensation will also be given for your participation in focus groups.

\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate in focus groups in the larger study.

\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to participate in focus groups in the larger study.

\_\_\_\_ I agree under the following conditions:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print name)

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or [oor.ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca).



## Parental Consent Form



### INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM Parental consent for youth under 18 years of age

**Study Title:** Becoming Economic Subject: a participatory action research project with youth

<p><b>Researcher:</b></p> <p>Michelle Duchesneau, Master's student, Special Individualised Program Michelle.duchesneau@economiesdecommunaute.org <b>2149 MacKay</b> <b>CI Building</b> <b>Montreal, Quebec, Canada</b> <b>H3G 2J2</b></p>	<p><b>Faculty Supervisor:</b></p> <p>Dr. Anna Kruzynski Associate Professor and Graduate program director, School of Community and Public Affairs (514) 848-2424 ext. 5194 <a href="mailto:anna.kruzynski@concordia.ca">anna.kruzynski@concordia.ca</a> <b>2149 MacKay</b> <b>CI Building</b> <b>Montreal, Quebec, Canada</b> <b>H3G 2J2</b></p>
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**Source of funding for the study:** SSHRC, Insight Grant- faculty research led by Dr. Anna Kruzynski: Community economies for social and environmental justice in Québec: mapping diverse economic and political practices proliferating at the margins.

This is a student-led study, *Becoming Economic Subjects: a participatory action research project with youth* that is part of a larger faculty-led study *Community economies for social and environmental justice in Québec: mapping diverse economic and political practices proliferating at the margins*.

This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

#### A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to learn about how youth involved in Press Start understand the economy and their place in it.

In the research, youth from Press Start will learn a new language and way of understanding how the economy works. We want to understand if and how this new language and new way

of understanding the economy changes as youth develop and run the youth-led cooperative arcade.

In the research youth are more than participants, they are also teachers and co-researchers along with Michelle Duchesneau (Master's student-researcher) and Akki Mackay (Community-researcher). This is about shifting power, we want to change the way that youth and adults work together.

Lastly, this research aims to bring attention to this unique project, the youth-led cooperative arcade.

## **B. PROCEDURES**

Participant in the research will have a say, along with other members of the group, on how we will conduct the research. This includes:

- thinking about what we want to learn and how;
- understanding and interpreting the information at the end to help us answer the questions;
- sharing what we learned with people and organizations who might be interested in our findings and the research process.

Youth participant-researchers will be involved in the following activities:

### **1) Two workshops on research skills.**

2) **Pre-focus group** (video-recorded): With the other youth-researchers, they will participate in a discussion on their understanding of the economy and their role within it.

3) **Five workshops**: Youth-researchers will learn about one of the points listed below and co-teach (with Michelle) a workshop for the rest of the youth involved in the research. They will be a participant in the other four workshops led by their peers. At the end of each workshop, they will be invited to complete a feedback questionnaire.

To develop the content of the workshops, we will use the **five ethical coordinates put forth by J.K. Gibson-Graham**:

- work (surviving well)
- business (distributing surplus)
- market (encountering others)
- finance (investing in futures)
- property (commoning)

3) **Post-focus group** (video-recorded): With the other youth, youth participant-researchers will view the video from the pre-focus group and reflect on information from feedback questionnaires.

This will help us see if the youth participant-researcher's understanding of the economy has changed since participating in the workshops.

In total, participating in this study will take 40-50 hours over a four-month period. Dates and times of meetings will be determined together.

### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

There are no foreseeable risks of participating in this research.

Potential benefits include:

- Acquire basic research skills and experience.
- Gain a better understanding of what elements make up the economy.
- Develop tools that will help in developing the cooperative arcade.
- Be part of an innovative research project where each youth-researcher's name will be included in the list of co-researchers.
- Youth participant-researchers will receive payment for their work as a co-researcher.

### **D. DISCLOSURE OF NAME AND PARTICIPATION**

We intend to publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept for your child to be identified in the publications as a co-researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my child's name published in the research as a co-researcher.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to have my child's name published in the research as a co-researcher.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree under the following conditions:

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We intend to use the information you provide to write-up articles, book chapters and for conference presentations. This includes information from the pre and post focus groups, the information from the workshops and the questionnaires filled out at the end of each workshop. This includes information about how youth (participant-researchers) participated in the research process documented by the student-researcher, Michelle Duchesneau, and the community-researcher, Akki Mackay.

\_\_\_\_\_I agree that the information provided appear in publications of the results of the research.

\_\_\_\_\_I agree however, I wish that a pseudonym be used(a made up name)

\_\_\_\_\_I do not agree

\_\_\_\_\_I agree under the following conditions:

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**F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION:** Youth from Press Start do not have to participate in this research. It is entirely up to them with your permission to participate or not. If youth (participant-researchers) do participate, they can stop at any time. There are no negative consequences for not participating or stopping at any point in the research. However, information provided during the group activities (pre-focus group, five workshops, post-focus group) cannot be excluded from the research due to its influence on the rest of the information provided by the other youth. As a co-researcher, youth will receive financial compensation for participating in this research. If they withdraw before the end they will receive compensation for the time that they participated.

**G. PARENTAL CONSENT FOR YOUTH UNDER 18yrs. of age**

I give permission for my child (print name) \_\_\_\_\_  
to participate in this research under the condition described.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 (parent's name-print)

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or [oor.ethics@concordia.ca](mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca).

### **I. CONSENT TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR TWO POST-SESSIONS**

**As this Master's project is embedded in a larger study, there may be focus groups that youth will be asked to participate in if certain research questions have not been answered through the process described above.**

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for my child to participate in focus groups in the larger study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree that my child participate in focus groups in the larger study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree under the following conditions:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Print name)

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_