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UMI
RESEARCHING WITH ORDINARY PEOPLE:

RACE AND REPRESENTATION
IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH DISCOURSE

by

Wendy Louise Fischer

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts
Department of Adult Education,
Community Development and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

Researching with Ordinary People:  
Race and Representation in Participatory Research Discourse

Master of Arts, 1997

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This thesis interrogates participatory research discourse to reveal essentialized categories and modernist assumptions that have exclusionary and racist effects. Liberal humanist discourse that underpins such claims as listening to people's voices, validating their experience, and invoking their participation are examined from critical race and poststructural perspectives. The centrality of the 'autonomous individual' to the conceptualization of empowerment in participatory research is revealed.

Autobiographical material, key participatory research texts, and interviews with four participatory researchers provide sites for exploring the discursive and material practices that keep systems of power and privilege intact. Essentialized and racialized identities like 'the researcher' and 'ordinary people' are shown to mask relations of power in the research context. I argue that discursively reproducing these relational identities secures a move to innocence for the participatory researcher. Strategies for resisting privilege and being vigilant about discursive practices are proposed in guidelines for anti-racist participatory research.
First, I would like to thank my husband, Brian Slack and my son, Camilo Cueva-Fischer. So many times over the past two years they have waited for me, and been forgiving when I came home hours late. They have boosted my confidence and always insisted that I keep a balance between different parts of my life. Without their support, I would be a different person and this would be a different thesis. It has been a very rich and satisfying experience for the tremendous love they have shown me.

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I wish to warmly thank the participants in this study for giving their time and sharing parts of their lives with me. Their interest in this topic gave me faith that it would be a useful contribution to the literature on participatory research. Sandra Tan’s expert transcribing was of great assistance and thank you, Sandra and Garth Shook for your hospitality. In the final lonely stages, I am so thankful to my mom, Anne Fischer, as well as Ann Stewart and Leslie Wolcott, for their helpful readings of the manuscript. And thank you, mom, for offering me a place to work.
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CHAPTER ONE

The Promise of Participatory Research

Participatory research caught my attention as I searched for a role to play in linking academic activities to social justice struggles. Traditional social science research approaches seemed to be very inaccessible to people outside of academia. As I understood the process, research was initiated primarily by experts. Their proposals, methodologies and findings were circulated, discussed and challenged within tight academic communities. The role of people outside these circles seemed minimal; they merely provided data and had very little control over its use. Policy-makers would interpret findings and policy change occurred through inaccessible bureaucratic government structures. Only then might there be an impact on people's lives. This process seemed to me more elitist and top-down than was necessary. What was the guarantee of positive change for the vast majority of people who were so alienated from virtually every stage of the research process? I saw a need for more participation.

Of course, mine was not a unique perspective. In the early 19th century, British working class radicals sought to establish counter-hegemonic forms of education guided by the concept of 'really useful knowledge.' They were concerned with self-education, and oppositional educational practices that served practical ends (Jordan and Yeomans 1995:400). In the late 1970's, Richard Johnson (1979, 1988) revived this concept for critical ethnographers in educational research. In social psychology, Kurt Lewin (1946) coined the term 'action research' that called for groups to define common problems and work together to overcome them (Perez 1997).\(^1\) Paulo Friere (1972) influenced the adult education field with his literacy work that empowered poor people to analyse their own reality and free themselves from oppression through "conscientization." In the 1970s and

\(^1\) Action research has been defined as "a form of research carried out by practitioners" (Kemmis 1993). Its theoretical evolution can be traced through the work of Schon (1983) on the reflective practitioner and Kolb (1984) on the experiential learning cycle.
1980s critiques of the lack of participation in development projects eventually led to the formalization of Participatory Research and Participatory Action Research. A parallel movement in agricultural research called Farming Systems Research was started in the late 1960s to ensure that newly developed technologies would be used by small farmers in developing countries (Perez 1997). In the late 1970s, Rapid Rural Appraisal attempted to overcome the shortcomings of long-term ethnographic research approaches by using participatory workshop analysis along with other methods. Participatory Rural Appraisal, which also sought to involve farming households in research, developed independently in Kenya and India and spread in the 1990s (Chambers 1994). Researchers in many fields, including anthropology, sociology, adult education, teacher education and community health, continue to concretize, implement and debate a wide variety of participatory research methodologies. Participatory research can not be traced to a single source, but is a name commonly used in the fields of adult education and community development. I use the term 'participatory research' in this thesis because I have chosen to focus upon writings I originally came across in community development literature that used this term.

What follows is a very brief description of participatory research to introduce the reader to the term as I use it and find it is most commonly used. There is certainly a multiplicity of understandings of what participatory research might entail, both in principle and in practice, as virtually all authors who discuss it agree (Maguire 1987, Hall 1994, Taylor 1995). Rather than compiling an accurate or all-encompassing understanding of this research approach, this project is

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2 These two movements are so similar that they often can not be differentiated (Perez 1997).

3 Participatory Action Research is the other term commonly referred to in educational research and community development. I am not concerned with distinguishing participatory research from other related research trends, though this would be a fruitful endeavour. Here, I wish to look at a discourse of participation that I believe is common to them all. My interrogation of this discourse would likely be of interest to researchers who engage in participatory forms of research under a different name.

4 For an introduction to this literature see Hall 1975, 1993, 1994; Park et al. 1993; Gaventa 1988; Maguire 1987.
concerned with the meanings and concepts that circulate in a variety of texts in ways that become arguably characteristic of what is meant by participatory research. Although I present a description below, this is a process that is not containable within the introductory chapter but instead evolves cyclically throughout the thesis.

**Participatory Research Described**

Participatory research refers to a set of principles and related practices that are intended to distribute power more equitably in the research process:

Participatory research proposes returning to ordinary people the power to participate in knowledge creation, the power that results from such participation, and the power to utilize knowledge. (Maguire 1987:39)

Research that follows these principles is intended to protect the interests of less powerful groups in society. Those who were formerly the participants in research now become the researchers. In practical terms, they identify the research problem, design the research process, and control the uses and distribution of the research findings. The research problem arises out of a collective process that identifies the needs of people who share this problem. People's own knowledge and experience is valued and holds authority over the direction the research takes. Their voices are listened to and their experience is validated. They can access the resources necessary to collect data, analyse it and communicate the results. The findings lead to strategies for action which is the final link in an ongoing process of empowerment. There is a role for outside researchers who can

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5 One participant in an interview made the point that a group of businessmen could also research collectively and call it participatory research. In another interview, the participatory research project discussed actually resembled marketing research in many ways. Nothing prevents powerful groups from engaging in participatory research to further their own interests, either as a separate group or as one stakeholder in a project. However, there is little attempt in the literature to address this. More attention is paid to researchers co-opting participatory research to further personal academic career goals (Heaney 1993, Jackson 1993). My approach is to look at how the discourse of participatory research might facilitate the co-optation of its principles and practices for the benefit of those who already hold power in society, rather than benefitting those who do not hold power.
be called upon to lend their particular expertise at various stages in the research. This is meant to be an opportunity for researchers to act in solidarity with oppressed groups.

These ideas made a lot of sense to me at the time. To someone trained in academic perspectives on the beneficial role of participation in community development, the idea of participating in research appeared exciting and full of promise as a tool for social transformation. I wanted to know more about participatory research and incorporate it into my academic work, both as an instructor and graduate student. In short, I wanted to be a participatory researcher like the authors of the books and articles I was reading. The factors leading to this decision are rooted in my autobiography. By elaborating some aspects of my personal history, I reveal the discourses in which my thoughts about participatory research have developed. As I proceeded to excavate these discourses, I began to identify some key assumptions in participatory research.

**Autobiography as a Methodology**

Autobiographical data has been increasingly recognized as an important source of data in qualitative studies (Anzaldua 1988, Walkerdine 1993, Rockhill 1995). If all knowledge is socially produced then it becomes important to look at the discourses and practices that inform how we come to understand our experience. Scott says experience is not unmeditated access to truth but is "always already an interpretation, and is in need of interpretation" (1992:37). Analysing

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*I use discourse to refer to Foucault's understanding of how power and knowledge are constituted in and through each other to produce what he calls a 'regime of truth' or master narrative (Foucault 1980). A master narrative privileges certain knowledges and masks or disqualifies other knowledges. This is a process of constructing 'truth' about participatory research that limits what we can think about it.

7 I use the term 'excavate' in reference to Foucaultian methodology for revealing, dissecting, and interrogating how power and knowledge constitute the discourse of participatory research. This involves historicizing, or placing in an historical context, key conceptual elements of the discourse and tracing the social relations of power that produce these concepts. Foucault's books excavate a number of scientific discourses including the human sciences, medicine, criminology and sexuality, and he discusses his theories in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1972).*
autobiographical data is self-reflexive; it demands careful consideration of the particular context in which interpretation of our experience takes place.  

It is disconcerting, and very revealing, to trace how eagerly and uncritically I took up participatory research. I now identify my desire to do research ‘better’ as structuring my interest in participatory research. It seems I wish to disassociate myself from the trappings of power in traditional research models and appear as a ‘power-sharer.’  

Accounting for my social location serves to anchor my political practice as I interrogate life choices I have made. By social location, I mean that my membership in various social groups, namely the white race, middle-class, with a Canadian accent, heterosexual, middle-aged, and able-bodied, constitutes the power I have in society. This power comes from the privileges I enjoy and the ways that I am protected from oppression.  

Examining the social relations and multiple constructed identities that position me in locations of power and privilege (and sometimes subordination) is part of critically evaluating my interest in participatory research (Dei, 1996:28).  

A Background in Social Justice Activism  

My undergraduate experience in androcentric, male-dominated university settings made me feel personally connected to the struggles of women whose concerns and bodies are under-

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8 Delhi (1991) discusses the need to look critically at how location in a graduate school is mediated by social relations of dominance and exclusion. She discusses how the hidden curriculum of higher education rewards middle class (and white) students through procedures that normalize social regulation and reproduce class relations (1991:64).  

9 I was not alone in Canada (and elsewhere). Increasingly, research designs in critical ethnography, feminist research, adult education, sociology and community health are incorporating participatory research principles. In the public sector, many research projects follow these principles: a provincial health care decentralization process in British Columbia; Yukon social science research grant proposals; the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; many Canadian International Development Agency projects and countless community research projects.  

10 McIntosh (1995) offers a long list of the privileges of being white as things that one permanently carries around in a knapsack, such as always being able to see members of your own race being represented favourably in the media.
represented in all aspects of academic research. During those years I learned some of the ways to act in solidarity with the struggles of gays and lesbians and racial minorities. After studying and working in Ecuador, my awareness of sexism and racial injustice in Canada and across national borders deepened. I tackled Canadian immigration regulations in order to unite with my Ecuadorian partner, Carlos, for the birth of our baby. Not long after Carlos received landed immigrant status, I became a single parent in the wake of his disillusionment with Canadian systemic racial barriers. The barriers to licensing for health professionals trained in ‘third world’ countries prompted Carlos to return to his optometry practice in Ecuador. I chose to settle in Canada with our son and finish my studies.

Participatory research seemed a good vehicle in which to channel my energy and ideals for a more just, less racist society. I wanted to scrape away at the fortifications of professional ivory towers and find the cracks where ordinary people could secure coveted research resources to use for their own ends. At the same time I had personal goals and material needs. I wanted to earn a graduate degree and secure a livelihood in teaching.

Charting a path of action for oneself in a larger anti-subordination struggle like anti-racism is an emotionally and intellectually demanding process. As a member of the white dominant racial group, it is sometimes more comfortable to shift attention to social relations in which one is oppressed and then build upon this as a link to anti-racism struggles. It is reassuring to hold onto feelings of shared oppression with women’s experiences of sexism and patriarchy. Here, I am one of the oppressed so I am more easily convinced that my work must be contributing to social justice. But in anti-racism struggles, what reassures me that my actions will contribute to anti-subordination?

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11 The process of actively seeking the margins to secure one’s own innocence in the relations of domination has been discussed in Fellows and Razack, "The Race to Innocence," Iowa Law Review. forthcoming and in Razack, Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, in press).
This hesitation is the seed from which my interest in participatory research started to grow. I realized I was positioned dominantly on many of the vectors of social power. But if I were committed to research that always returned power to, or shared power with, subordinated groups, perhaps my work would more likely contribute to social justice. This was the promise participatory research held for me.

Beginning to focus on this new way to research felt very familiar and comfortable for a while, largely because it seemed a logical progression from my background in global education and community development, both in Canada and Ecuador. When I returned to school I sought out anti-racism theory in my course work for the purpose of strengthening the anti-subordination impact of the participatory research I hoped to undertake. Critical race theories, as well as poststructural theories, steered me to critically examine some assumptions in participatory research.\(^\text{12}\) I started to recognize the racialized exclusions necessary to maintaining the liberal notion of an autonomous, free and stable individual. The concept of individuals and groups having power returned to them relies upon liberalist ideology that has racializing and racist effects.\(^\text{13}\) Participation in research no longer seemed so straightforward.

I began to question the role of 'benevolent facilitator' of popular participation in research that I was imagining for myself. My thinking was limited by notions of the inherent goodness of participatory research and my place in it. The legitimacy I was seeking for the use of participatory research strategies, as a white person in solidarity with anti-racism struggles, started to erode.

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\(^\text{12}\) Here I refer primarily to the work of Said (1978, 1993), Fanon (1967), hooks (1992), Goldberg (1993), and Stoler (1995) that all trace racialized exclusions in modern bourgeois liberalism. The poststructural theories that initially influenced me were Foucault’s (1980) theories of power and knowledge in discourse and their application in the work of theorists such as Butler (1993) and Britzman (1991, 1995b). The contributions of these and other theorists to my interrogation of participatory research will be elaborated in Chapter Two.

\(^\text{13}\) This statement introduces the central thesis of this work, but it is not until Chapter Two that I elaborate this thesis in a systematic manner. My purpose here is to reveal to the reader the theoretical source of "nagging questions" that begin to permeate my reflections on my teaching practice and adoption of participatory research as a tool of choice, a story that is presented in the rest of Chapter One.
There was a questionable enthusiasm with which I embraced the 'research facilitator' role. This shift in awareness helps me to look beyond the seductive promises of giving up or sharing power, to the contradictions and limitations of participatory research. Liberal modernist assumptions are at the heart of how race and representation structure the discourse of participatory research. By this I mean that race and constructed identities are intricately linked in common-sense understandings of who gets involved in participatory research and how. My personal history shows how I came to participatory research through my involvement in popular education, overseas community development and adult education. This narrative is a rich source of data to begin tracing the links between these interconnected fields. The theories of power and participation, the methods, and even the facilitators or educators themselves translate and travel quite easily between each field. In this chapter I briefly demonstrate these connections for what they elucidate about liberal discourse in the notion of participation. In the making of a popular educator or a participatory researcher, there are material relations and discourses that sustain the privilege of some social identities and penalize others.

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14 See Chapter Two for a discussion of the theoretical debates on the usefulness of race as an analytical concept or see Dei (1996:40-50). By representation I am referring to the socially constructed nature of analytical categories such as the 'real,' or 'identity,' that is the object of inquiry for critical race theorists (see Mohanty 1990, 1991; hooks 1992; McCarthy and Crichlow 1993; Dei 1996) as well as for feminist poststructural theorists (see Butler and Scott 1992; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Britzman 1991, 1995a).

15 I have chosen to trace the connections between popular education, community development, adult education and participatory research as they emerge in my narrative. Both theoretically and in practice, these links are very evident: they share a similar theory base in Freirian and Habermasian (Frankfurt School) thought and the participatory methodology they each propose is similar. I have not attempted in this thesis to thoroughly examine each field individually or in comparison with the others. I focus on participatory research and introduce the others when they help to illustrate my central thesis of liberal discourse having racializing and racist effects in participatory methodologies with social justice as their goal.
Links to Popular Education

In the early 1990s under a New Democratic Party government in Ontario and before the drastic federal budget cuts in 1995 to the Canadian International Development Agency, funds were available for global education projects through a province-wide network of learner centres. In Peterborough, Ontario, my home town and where I was currently attending Trent University, the Kawartha World Issues Centre was one such centre where as a volunteer I was first able to gain skills that might link my studies in comparative development to local community organizing efforts. I was trained in the rudiments of popular education as it was then being introduced in Canada through the outreach activities and publications of the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action, Between the Lines, and the Jesuit Centre for Social Justice in Toronto. I was motivated to compliment my university education with practical skills and involvement that might make a difference for social justice in my own community.

This work immersed me in many local initiatives ranging from popular theatre on food issues presented in high schools, to community awareness-raising about the North American Free Trade Agreement, to popular education workshops for youth development conferences. I was excited to see what could be accomplished when groups of diverse people worked effectively together, confronting social issues that concerned us all. I had often felt self-conscious about what I perceived as my tendency to over-participate and dominate group discussions. I was eager to

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16 For readers unfamiliar with the study program of comparative development, it is very similar to undergraduate programs in international development.

17 "Popular education" describes education for social change which emerged from the literacy work of Paolo Friere in Brazil in the 1960s. Popular education questions schooling that is part of oppressive political, social and economic systems and it aims to empower poor people and those who had been kept out of decision-making structures (Mackenzie 1992:48; Arnold et al. 1991:5).

18 What this meant for me was that inequalities between groups of people in different countries and global environmental destruction needed to be addressed at the local level. This meant lobbying and educating ourselves and others to see our own connection to inequalities, poverty and destruction and make changes to counteract it in our own lives. Popular education for me was also about building community with members from all the different racial, cultural, class and sexually oriented groups in Peterborough.
incorporate popular education methods that were aimed at ensuring equal participation of all group members whenever I was involved in these events.

My faith in the potential of Popular Education to democratize learning environments diminished my incentive to ask necessary questions. For example, why was I inclined to speak out so readily, taking space that inevitably excluded others? Why did I think small group participatory methods were the answer? Who was most active in leadership roles and financially reimbursed in the popular education activities in which I participated? Instead of pursuing these kinds of questions, I adopted sets of convenient and ever more creative recipes for encouraging participation. These methods did not adequately examine the social and material barriers that were excluding some people and allowing others to benefit from their exclusion. Nor did they question the liberal assumptions underlying the notion of equalizing and democratizing participation.

Popular Education literature explains that people learn in different ways, they retain more when they can actively apply what they have learned, and they often can access and express their ideas and analysis more profoundly through creative mediums.19 Formal education systems are criticized for suppressing cooperative group problem-solving skills and discouraging any critical analysis of social forces. In the 1990s popular education manuals began to include discussion of the unequal power that white heterosexual able-bodied people hold in society as being a factor in why some social identities hold more power in groups.20

19 See Arnold et al. (1991:40).

20 In 1991 the Doris Marshall Institute and Between the Lines published a book by Arnold et al. called Educating for a Change in which the authors, all long time popular educators, began to look more critically at questions of power and privilege among themselves and the groups they work with. Exercises such as the "power flower" were attempts to trace how different vectors of social identity place us closer or further from power in Canadian society. In practice, these exercises are often used to begin workshops. But the critical analysis of power inequities that may result is rarely integrated throughout the workshop in ways that might radically transform it or transform the underlying structures of a popular education organization. The focus is rather on developing awareness of how the power held by different social identities can affect the success or failure of a workshop aimed at advancing social change: "It doesn't help if anyone of us feels guilty for being a Toronto-based, English-speaking educator in a workshop with Innu people in Labrador. On the other hand, it is crucial to be aware of the overriding privileges of central
In popular education, personal experiences of social difference are incorporated as a source of knowledge about how power is held unequally in society. But how these power differences regulate who is present at the workshop, who is not, who is speaking and what is said rarely receives the same priority as getting on with the 'larger' issues that 'oppress us all'. Awareness of these issues is raised through "who's here" warm-up exercises and introductory statements of assumptions about respecting differences. But then groups of largely white able-bodied people, claiming to collectively represent 'the peoples' voice in Canada's multi-racial society, proceed with participatory knowledge-creating activities. Reflecting on the social composition of the room often happens in the organizers' wrap-up evaluative sessions when typically "more diversity", and "more inclusive" publicity and recruiting will be proscribed. White-dominated hiring practices often escape scrutiny when the arguments of 'individual merit' and 'best person for the job' are employed (Dei 1996:124). This can happen even when the stated goals of the organizers are to encourage more participation in the workshops from immigrant communities.

As my experience with popular education organizing in a small Ontario town accumulated, I was being offered more opportunities at the design and advisory level for which I was sometimes paid. This included global education liaison work with a school board, organizing bias awareness workshops for a campus and community radio station, and advising for an international development youth conference. Race and racism were emerging as issues that were structuring the discussions and organizational processes at fundamental, often unspoken levels. Students of colour Canadian, English-speaking experience, and of how the group perceives such experience. A failure to have this awareness will ensure failure of the workshop." (Arnold et al. 1991:15)

21 See Razack (1993a, 1993b:51) for a discussion of "story-telling for social change" that shows how these stories are solicited without accounting for the unequal risks that are taken by minority participants and in ways that can reinforce relations of domination.

22 This image may not accurately reflect the composition of many groups engaged in education for social change in the Canadian context, especially in larger urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. However, I believe it will be a familiar image to anyone who has been involved in these events in smaller centres.
at the youth conference demanded to redesign our pre-planned orientation session in order to centre racism, as well as heterosexism, on the agenda. I began to see the propensity of popular education methodology to identify forces of oppression that divide the group only for preliminary and superficial discussion, or to suppress them all together by focusing on themes of shared oppression. I could not fully articulate how racism structured the discourse and practices of popular education, but I sensed this happened even when the literature, manuals and facilitators were claiming to recognize and challenge racism. Returning to school, I resolved to develop analytical and facilitation skills to adequately confront racism in my contribution to community education and research projects. It was also during this time that I encountered literature on participatory research.

A Participatory Research Honeymoon

In preparation for my last teaching assignment before starting my studies, I collected reading lists for the courses at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT) that I planned to take the following year. I added the following texts to my community development course outline: Maguire (1987) Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach and Park et al. (1993) Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada. From Dr. Razack's syllabus for the course "Race and Knowledge Production," I added sections of

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23 This three week residential conference called "Discovering Our Future" brought together one hundred visa and Canadian students to discuss international development issues. Over its four year life, the sessions were increasingly participant-directed, calling upon the resources of students from the so-called 'Third World' or 'South' (the constructed nature of these terms and the risks of such labelling are of concern throughout the thesis). Cessation of significant funding support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Youth Initiatives Program coincided with the conference's progressive politicization around issues of racism and heterosexism. It also coincided with the termination of CIDA post-secondary scholarships that the conference had relied upon for their invitations to visa students from the South who were already in Canada. CIDA's revision of their priorities for youth education included a preference for programs that sent smaller groups of Canadian youth to the South for experiential learning.

I had been hired by Trent University to teach two courses for the Trent in Ecuador Program, a year abroad program focusing on community development. I had been a student in this program four years before and now held responsibility for the learning experiences of fifteen Canadian students. I readily incorporated participatory research into the curriculum and highlighted it in my lectures as offering the most substantive critique of the power inequities characterizing most academic research and community development projects. At the same time I assigned theoretical readings on race, imperialism and knowledge production. My students were now faced with the dilemma of volunteering with Ecuadorian and Indigenous non-governmental organizations, while struggling theoretically and practically with their implication as primarily white Canadians in the relations of imperialism and racism.

What led me to so enthusiastically promote the principles of participatory research over traditional anthropological and sociological research methodologies was my conviction that they identified and attempted to redress power inequities between researcher and researched better than any research methodology I had yet encountered in undergraduate studies in the humanities. I thought that power imbalances in the research endeavour were similar to the power imbalances between project planners and the participants in community development projects. In their volunteer placements, the Canadian students were usually supervised by someone from the management side of a project or agency. I imagined that my students would appreciate the critical lens of participatory research for evaluating the structures and practices of the project in which they were volunteering. They were encouraged to seek opportunities to incorporate participatory research principles into their work assignments.

Many students were not as enthusiastic as myself to embrace participatory research methods. They taught me through their discomfort with adopting a ‘facilitator’ role in participatory
research that there were gaps in the analysis I was presenting. I encouraged reflection on race and knowledge production as part of a theoretical framework and acknowledged the unequal power relations embedded in our positions as Canadians in Ecuador. But when it came to the serious question of what we were actually doing there, I sought to legitimize our position. If not us, I rationalized, other Canadians would be there. At least if we aspired to following participatory principles, we were attempting to take power away from ourselves and return it to communities. I proposed that we serve as watchdogs for the activities of other Canadian agencies or corporations operating in Ecuador and then try to make change back home by educating Canadians. Underlying my response was that our position in Ecuador might have been problematic but we were there for eight months and we would have to make the best of it.  

Advocating participatory research for my students in their work placements was my way of attempting to unfix the entrenchment of unequal power relations inherent in the structures of community development.

The Theory of Anti-Racism Education

When I returned to Canada and tried to design my study program at OISE I was again faced with the dilemmas that my students and I had encountered in Ecuador. I was determined to learn how race and racism structure knowledge production and what tools could challenge and resist this, hoping to fill in gaps that participatory research left unresolved. I was also exploring

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24 Even while accepting the teaching position, I had questioned the assumptions underlying the year abroad program, aided by reflecting upon my experience as a student participant. Using the model of "cultural exchange" to legitimize sending Canadian students to Ecuador seemed misleading in the wake of unrelenting cultural, economic and political neo-imperial invasions of the South American region by Euro-American powerholders.

25 There is a definite connection between the attitude I was adopting and the fact that I was being paid to do a job. I now seemed more willing to rationalize aspects of the status quo than some of my students. There was a lot at stake for me to be interpreted by my supervisor as undermining the program's rationale and appeal to future students.
the implications of feminist and poststructural theories for qualitative research, which presented an additional challenge in the thesis process. I intended to pursue my interest in participatory research as a methodology, actually hoping to make my master's thesis a participatory research project.

This did not happen. I was unable to resolve some fundamental questions that even an introductory exposure to the principles of anti-racism theory and practice raise for any research methodology. For example, how is all research implicated in racist colonial and imperial systems of Eurocentric knowledge production? Or, how do social relations in research perpetuate systemic and institutional racism, relations that participatory research can not simply "avoid." I was clearly unequipped to embark on a research project without grappling first with my identity investments in the role of participatory researcher and the racialized constructs this role depended upon. In order to better understand the concept of race, the social identity of whiteness, and the principles of anti-racism, I turned to the work of Dei (1996) in *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice*. Here are seven of the ten basic principles of anti-racism education that he describes: (1) recognizing lived experiences of the social effects of the concept of race, despite its lack of a scientific basis; (2) comprehending the intersection of all forms of social oppression and how race is mediated with other forms of social difference such as gender, class and sexuality; (3) interrogating White power and privilege, as well as Whiteness as a social identity; (4) problematizing the marginalization and delegitimation of the knowledge and experience of subordinated groups in the social construction of knowledge; (5) providing for a holistic understanding and appreciation of the human experience, comprising social, cultural, political, ecological and spiritual aspects; (6) linking the notion of "identity" with schooling, particularly

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26 I was unwilling to proceed under the kind of imperatives I had imposed upon myself in Ecuador, such as: if I want to graduate, I must research, so it might as well be participatory.
race identity formation and the associated struggles at both individual and collective levels; and (7) acknowledging the need to confront the challenge of diversity and difference in society (Dei 1996: 27-34).

Armed with these principles, I began reflecting upon my past practice as a student of comparative development studies, a community worker and a year abroad instructor who had so enthusiastically introduced participatory research to my students. There are very established links between participatory research and trends in international development assistance so it is fitting to examine the material and social relations that produce the identity of 'community development worker.' Community development workers are ideally placed to learn about participatory research and promote it as a tool of choice for 'progressive' researchers.

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27 The three remaining principles are: (8) acknowledging the traditional role of the education system in producing and reproducing racial and other inequalities in society; (9) stressing that school problems cannot be understood in isolation from student's material and ideological circumstances; and (10) challenging pathological explanations of the "family" or "home environment" as the source of youth's schooling "problems." These final three are more relevant to the particular context of schooling.

28 Maguire makes a clear connection to international development in her discussion of the origins of participatory research (1987:32), and see also Perez (1997:2). Maguire also identifies the 1970s reframing of adult education as empowerment as another source of participatory research's emergence (Maguire 1987:33). The writings of Hall (1975) based on his experiences teaching and practising adult education research in Tanzania are attributed with bringing participatory research practices to the attention of adult educators worldwide (Maguire 1987:34). Participatory research's origins in the international development context is referred to on the jacket cover of a collection highlighting North American projects edited by Park et al.(1993) called Voices of Change: "the book is an eloquent demonstration that the same approach to social change is needed in industrialized countries as it is in underdeveloped countries."

29 Participatory research is the theme of a recent issue of Practising Anthropology (19(3) Summer 1997) and five of the six articles discuss case studies that involve international development projects and organisations such as CARE, as well as American-based academics. Every article is written or co-written by someone working in a community development capacity and in all cases, at least one of the contributors was of white Euro-American origin. This is partly a reflection of exclusionary processes determining what kind of participatory researchers get access to publishing opportunities. It is key to how the discourse of participatory research gets constituted in exclusionary and racialized ways.
Reexamining the role of a year abroad program in producing an identity of 'community development worker' tells another part of the story of the making of a participatory researcher. International exchanges and year abroad programs often become the 'training ground' for professional careers in the community development field and social justice work back in Canada. I am suggesting that the material relations and constructed identities that make it possible for certain groups of young Canadians to 'volunteer abroad' are very connected to the material relations and constructed identities that produce certain people as 'participatory researchers.' There is an obvious contradiction between talking about 'participatory researchers' as an exclusive, quasi-professional group, when the principles state that ordinary people become the researchers. My analysis reproduces this paradox, and this paradox permeates the participatory research literature I examine in subsequent chapters. This contradiction is key to the formulation of my research questions about constructed identities in participatory research.

My next step is to elucidate the construction of identities by returning to my story of the making of a participatory researcher in the international development context. This takes me to a critical evaluation of the centrality of race in the production of identities through the structures and practices of a year abroad program.

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30 When I speak of the year abroad program producing an identity of community development worker I am drawing from Foucaultian theories of how subjects are constituted through discourse. This means that a 'community development worker' does not exist a priori. We 'know' this identity because some knowledges have been masked and others privileged to produce a 'regime of truth' about what is a 'community development worker.' The year abroad program is one site where the disqualifying and privileging of knowledges happens. I refer to produced identities and constructed identities interchangeably in the thesis.

31 In arguing that institutional structures and practices single out groups of people for differential treatment on the basis of racially-defined characteristics, I am not suggesting that these racial groups exist as stable, separate and homogeneous entities. Rather I hope to illuminate how these practices limit and constrain identities in ways that secure white superiority and reproduce racialized exclusions.
A Year Abroad Program: Trent in Ecuador

I first seriously considered the potential of participatory research while teaching for the Trent in Ecuador Program. This is a year abroad program run by Trent University in Ecuador on an annual basis. It is an eight month program in which students study Spanish, live with a host family for at least two months, undertake academic course work, and participate in volunteer community development work placements for three months.

The program is characterized as a 'cross-cultural experience,' offering students an opportunity to learn the 'realities' of living and working in the 'developing world.' It is an opportunity for students to acquire valuable practical experience applicable to professional careers or post-graduate studies in international development, anthropology, sociology or social work to name a few. My autobiographical narrative presents a prime example of the 'international experience' as a rite of passage for students en route to high-paying and powerful positions.

Understanding my role in social justice struggles evolved from identifying as a community development worker abroad, and then as a facilitator of emancipatory research at home. These identities are produced in the discourse of community development and in the discourse of participatory research.

Progressive trends in development discourse promote ideas of partnership and solidarity that legitimize 'Canadians' travelling to study, work and volunteer abroad because "we have so much to learn from them." Learning from the 'other' is embedded in the discourses of anthropology and sociology that were both disciplinary sources of international development studies. Development discourse employs the construct of 'ethnicity' for naming social difference. Race is consistently subsumed by the concept of ethnicity in a move to theorize race as culture. The model of a cross-cultural exchange is part of a multi-cultural approach to inter-group

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32 The racializing, sexualizing and 'othering' effects of using the "native informant" has been critically addressed by Said 1978, 1993; Trinh 1989; Spivak 1988; Fusco 1994; and John 1989.
relations in which issues of power are absent. Racial domination is downplayed in favour of focusing on global patterns of inequality brought about by capitalism. Students learn about ‘global inequality’ and the oppression of ‘culturally different’ groups in ways that evade questions of white privilege and complicity in racialized processes of nation-building that are foundational to the ‘development model’.

Meanwhile, by participating in an international exchange program, students such as myself often acquire a second language, gain marketable ‘cross-cultural’ experience, volunteer and work experience, and subsequently access more graduate programs and employment opportunities both abroad and at home. Ecuadorians are not subsidized to participate in this ‘mutually-beneficial’ exchange by travelling to study or work in Canada.

A Racialized Selection Process

Some of the selection criteria for choosing participants show how white privilege operates in determining who is favoured as students of community development. Just to attend post-

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33 A university program that positions itself as a bridge between cultures, or "culturally discontinuous spaces" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992:6), is operating within the "cultural critique" model in anthropology that tries to redress power inequities in representation. This desire for dialogue between cultures indicates a spatialized understanding of cultural difference that produces natural associations between culture and places, and between culture and people, ultimately entrenching ‘us’ and ‘them’ categories. Gupta and Ferguson call for examining cultural difference as the product of a "difference producing set of relations" situated within "historical processes of a socially and spatially interconnected world" (1992:16).

34 We must ask why class struggle and gender inequality are more comfortable places from which to launch a critique of global inequality. Is there resistance to an anti-racism framework in development discourses? Dei (1996) distinguishes anti-racism principles from liberal ideology that fails to challenge the creation of cultural "others:"

Anti-racism is a challenge to colonialist discourses and practices in schools, workplaces and other organizational settings that create racial and cultural "others" by negatively evaluating difference. Anti-racism discourse questions the organization and transformation of non-European spheres and spaces into "fundamentally European constructs" (Dei 1996:123).
secondary education, students have travelled through school systems whose structures and practices favour some students and disadvantage others according to race, class, gender, sexuality and ability (Dei 1996). The high cost of tuition, the requirement of high grades, and prior foreign travel being considered an asset all serve to further marginalize students along gender, class and racial lines.

Students are advised to apply after their second year, however at the director’s discretion, they have been accepted after only one year of study. I was aware of a first year visa student from Hong Kong who was denied acceptance to the program, despite having an exemplary grade point average. Some of the reasons given were that the student had "just arrived" in Canada, that it would be too unsettling to do his second year in Ecuador (unsettling for whom?), that he may not adapt easily to another new culture so soon. There was concern about his ability to learn Spanish, it being his third language. These concerns are rarely raised when the applicants are French-Canadian, in fact it is assumed they will learn Spanish more quickly than unilingual Canadians. There seems to be an underlying conception of the ideal participant that intersects with ‘Canadian’ to exclude some students and favour others on the basis of race. Obviously the notion of previous travel experience is understood in very particular ways. A white student can have ‘cross-cultural’ travel experiences, but living in Hong Kong’s colonially organized multi-racial society and then travelling to Canada does not count.

Making prior travel experience a significant determinant for selection favours students who have participated in non-academic exchanges such as Canada World Youth or Canadian Crossroads International. If these cultural exchanges, based on the logic of sending Canadians to experience development overseas and then raise awareness among Canadians at home, were examined from an anti-racism perspective, it would likely reveal racialized and racist understandings of who is a Canadian.35 Prior experience in the ‘developing world’ did not.

35 I have not made this examination and would encourage others to do so. My familiarity with these programs comes from working with many of their alumni. My suggestion that race and racism structure their practices has been supported in conversation with former employees and participants and by the recent efforts of these organizations to make anti-racism change.
however, work in favour of a Latin American visa student who was at first denied acceptance for the reason that she already had community development experience in her home country of Bolivia. Fellow students lobbied on her behalf arguing that the skills, experience and Spanish proficiency she could offer to the group were just as important considerations in the selection process as how she would benefit herself. She was then accepted and has since gone on to represent her country at a United Nations conference.

Underlying the selection process is the assumption of 'equality of opportunity' that does not recognize how white students are privileged. It is wrong to assume that the selection process is fair because students are evaluated in a 'standardized' way, using 'objective' requirements, and on the basis of 'individual merit.' These are subjective constructions based on liberal values that privilege the white middle class norm of Canadian society. Selection committees are made up of faculty and former students who overwhelmingly represent dominant racial and class groups. Also operating in the selection process are notions of sending student ambassadors to represent Canada. Every year a primarily white middle class group of students who demonstrate abilities to 'succeed' in 'cross-cultural' environments travels to Ecuador.

The program's community development course was originally developed in collaboration with the Native Studies program at Trent University, and the program places significant numbers of students in projects with Indigenous communities in Ecuador. However, the program does not cooperate or combine resources with the Native Studies Program, despite some initial interest in collaboration from a white Native Studies faculty member. Although there is a larger native

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36 Dei's eighth principle of anti-racism addresses the role of the educational system in reproducing state hegemony (1996:34) What are legitimized as ‘objective’ selection processes based on ‘merit’ actually reproduce patterns of racial domination, when teachers who look and talk like the majority are most likely to be hired in the absence of equity hiring policies (1996:124).

37 Racialization that privileges white Canadians in the constitution of the Canadian missionary identity is another factor operating to penalize non-white identities in the selection process. My discussion of the relationship of whiteness to the missionary identity in international development is informed by the work of Barbara Heron, Department of Sociology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, (personal communication).
student population at Trent relative to many universities, no native student applied or participated in the program during its first five years of operation. The Native Studies program has since developed their own year abroad program in Thailand which attracts a very similar (and often the same) group of non-native students as the Ecuador program, as well as some native students.

Examining material relations and discourses in the Trent in Ecuador Program shows how a dominant class or racial group becomes the gatekeeper of a meritocracy (Dei, 1996:124). Discouraging, for example, a disabled student’s participation in the program due to the ‘challenges’ of living in Ecuador denies that ableist barriers exist in Canada too. Someone who has resisted them to attend university has proven themselves capable of surviving ableist systems worldwide.38

Racism in Orientation Sessions

In orientation sessions, students are encouraged to prepare themselves for dealing with the racism they will encounter in Ecuador toward Blacks and Indigenous peoples. The implication is that Ecuadorians are more racist than Canadians, and that students might find themselves in challenging situations due to their more ‘tolerant’ views. Racism in Ecuador is linked historically to processes of colonization but marginal effort is made to draw links with contemporary racisms so that white students locate themselves within these relations of dominance and subordination. The focus for preparing students remains on the tensions between (White) Canadians confronting racism in Ecuador while remaining ‘culturally sensitive.’ A similar tactic to avoid recognizing complicity in oppressing others is pursued by focusing on homophobia as a part of Ecuadorian ‘machista’ culture and providing advice on how gay, lesbian and straight students might negotiate this oppressive ideology. Orientation sessions do not explicitly address

38 There is still a problem with this kind of analysis that sees ‘disability’ as the problem to be accommodated, rather than seeing the problem as the ‘inaccessibility’ of societal structures, practices and environments. Constructing the problem as one of individuals rather than a problem of the collectivity has implications for how solutions are pursued.
homophobia within Canada or within the group by looking at how heterosexism shapes the institutions and daily practices of which the year abroad program is a part.

The discursive framework of the students’ orientation does not encompass the simultaneity of oppressions. Discussions of safety centre around the dangers associated with being a white female in Ecuador and how to be safe, with an unspoken racist premise that a white female is in most danger of rape. The black woman is made invisible both by not acknowledging the danger she faces as a woman, as well as not addressing the racism that she experiences within the Canadian group of students during the stay in Ecuador.

Rather than contracting Ecuadorians in Canada to help prepare students, the program relies significantly upon past participants sharing their experiences. This insular approach continued even in Ecuador when a Canadian trained nurse employed by CIDA prepared students on health issues. The positioning of a white Canadian nurse as an expert on health in Ecuador serves to perpetuate notions of white superiority that associate the ‘other’ in the colonial context with notions of disease.39

Race again becomes an issue when students are billeted with Ecuadorian families. If the student is Black there are generally two responses: find a Black family for the student; or attempt to billet the student in a ‘non-racist’ home. By implication, a ‘normal’ Ecuadorian family would be racist while it is assumed that a white student will be readily accepted into any home. Racist practices of white students that are experienced by Ecuadorian families are not addressed. There is a fine line to negotiate between confronting racism and supporting black students’ needs on the program. The persistent perception of Black students as having the ‘problem’ is one of the many ways racism is evident in the program.

39 This insight came from the seminar contributions of Sheryl Nestel. Department of Sociology. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
Constructing ‘Community Development Workers’

The community development course that I instructed highlighted community participation. Students were required to live and work in communities with very few tools for critically evaluating their subject location in the relations of racial and class domination. The identity of ‘community development worker in training’ is one that they must negotiate through daily interactions with supervisors, co-workers and other community members. This identity is constructed in opposition to that of ‘recipient’ or ‘beneficiaries’ of community development programs. The group of Trent students is selected and prepared through structures and practices that subordinate non-white identities. This means that the relational identities of development worker and beneficiary secure privilege and superiority for whites and marginalize other identities.

Race also plays a part in shaping the process of student reintegration into Canada. Students frequently claim to be more sensitized to racial, gender, and class inequalities in Canada as a result of their experience abroad. Significant numbers of graduates, including myself, conceptualize their future work as being with ‘marginalized’ communities in Canada, by which is meant women, the poor, immigrants, and aboriginal peoples. Social forces that privilege a vast majority of these students enable them to be previously less marked by these Canadian social realities in the first place. A development worker model is transposed to new settings and communities where the discourses and practices of ‘helping professions’ continue to stake out the privileged preserve of white middle-class missionary identities.40

Examining the Trent in Ecuador year abroad program from an anti-racist perspective was an important step in the evolution of my questions about participatory research. By applying an anti-racist analysis to my past volunteer and teaching experiences I began to see how the progression of my interest and eminent involvement in participatory research was in fact very... 

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40 My thoughts on the construction of students of development as racialized, classed and gendered are informed by Barbara Heron’s work on Whiteness and the development worker identity (personal communication).
organized and embedded in the relations of racism and the privilege of whiteness. Being selected to participate in a year abroad program and being able to afford it, having spare time for volunteering that led to paid jobs, the possibility of pursuing graduate studies; these were all necessary pieces of the participatory researcher identity that I was gradually forging. I remember first reading Maguire’s *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach* with tears of relief in my eyes from finding an academic research approach that I could finally believe in, something I wanted desperately to do. Patricia Maguire developed a participatory research project with a group of formerly battered women in Gallup, New Mexico, that formed the core of her doctoral research. She described the group she worked with as including nine Navajos, three Anglos and two Hispanics (Maguire 1987:137). I identified with her approach to power-sharing as a white university-affiliated researcher working with primarily poor, less-educated, non-white women.

From her work, I thought I could learn what my role might be with marginalized communities in both Ecuador and Canada. I have since re-read Maguire’s book with a different set of priorities informed by anti-racism theory. I want to interrogate whiteness in the construction of the participatory researcher identity and trace the racializing and racist effects of liberalist discourse that is at the heart of participatory research.

**Interrogating Whiteness**

What does positing one’s writerly self, in the wholly racialized society that is the United States, as unracial and all others as raced entail?

-Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*

Interrogating whiteness in my autobiographical story is a necessary step in anti-racism practice when one is positioned dominantly in the relations of racism (Frankenburg 1993:242). The social identity of whiteness must be seen as a set of locations that are racialized for material and
social privilege (hooks 1992; Morrison 1992; Roman 1993; Dei 1996a:52). Harris (1993) shows how material and social privilege are sociohistorically determined and interdependent: Whites control material resources and operate under expectations of white privilege as property right. West (1991) describes the social identity of whiteness as "parasitic" on Blackness to sustain collective identifications with expectations of privilege (1991:29). This is embedded in notions such as ‘world traveller’ (hooks 1992) or ‘cross-cultural exchange’ (implying between white and ‘other’ cultures). These are constructs produced by discourses that rely upon a modern liberal tradition of the universalized subject. Liberal discourse relies upon notions of equality, rationality, freedom and autonomy to make sense of an ‘individual.’ This constructed category of the universalized individual has the effect of normalizing identities that are dominant (white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied) and subordinating other identities. hooks (1992) reminds us of the need to disrupt genealogies of representation, like the autonomous individual. This is a first step to interrogating the production of both received and suppressed knowledge about whiteness.

White privilege is masked behind the white missionary identity that is rooted within the orientalist civilizing mission of colonialism (Watney 1992). Constructs of progress, development and social change are also rooted in the civilizing mission of colonialism and continue to inform many social movements and so-called progressive ideologies. Participatory research inherits this long tradition of liberal humanist constructs through its emergence within the context of community development and adult education. Interrogating whiteness uncovers the internal contradiction of a research approach or an academic program that claims to critique colonialism and global capitalism, yet whose structures and practices may be institutionalizing racism, cultural imperialism and recolonization.41 If the social identity of whiteness and white privilege are embedded in the discourses of international and community development, then a participatory

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41 For a related critique of the colonialist roots of community development see Lee (1993).
researcher identity constructed from these constitutive discourses needs to be interrogated from the perspectives of race, whiteness and representation.

**The Research Design**

My questions about participatory research are not of a positivistic nature. Therefore I do not follow a research approach that is directed towards supporting truth claims about an objective and observable reality. Instead I am concerned with what constitutes truth claims about participatory research and what their validity is founded upon. This means that rather than listening for factual information about what participatory research can and cannot do, I listen for how the discourse is constituted. I do not directly ask if participatory research accomplishes what it proposes, how it does this, where it fails, and how it could be done better. Instead, I seek to identify the central arguments fashioned to show how participatory research promises to be different. What ideas and belief systems structure the claims of the liberatory potential of participatory research, and what remains unsaid? What does this reveal about the embeddedness of this discourse in a particular paradigm, that of modern liberal humanism?

In Chapter One I have recounted how my interest in participatory research emerged out of my involvement in popular education and community development in the context of international development. This autobiographical inquiry introduces the anti-racism and poststructural theories that led me to question how I was being constituted in the discourse of participatory research. I have begun to identify the racially constructed identities and concepts that underpin the humanist liberal thinking and are very embedded in participatory research.

In Chapter Two I present in more depth the ideas of critical race and poststructural theorists that have informed my methodological framework for excavating racialized constructs in

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42 "Positivism recognizes only 'objective' facts and observable phenomena ('if I can see it, measure it, record it, it's true'), and is uninterested in the causes or ultimate origins of these facts" (Maguire 1987:2). One critique of positivism from the Frankfurt School and critical theory exposes the myth of value-free social science research.
modern liberal humanist discourse. These theories have provided the tools I use to critically examine assumptions integral to participatory research, such as the integrity of experience and voice, the value of participation and the possibility for empowerment.

It was necessary to choose sites at which to examine the discourse of participatory research for the racialized constructs that underpin liberal humanism. Guided by theories pointing to the social constructedness and subjectivity of any research inquiry, my own narrative became one source of data which I began to explore in Chapter One. The literature of participatory research theorists, critics and practitioners that had both inspired me and prompted my misgivings became another obvious source of discourse. In Chapter Three I present excerpts from participatory research literature to show that the discourse relies upon the racialized construct of an autonomous individual as the vehicle for individual and community empowerment.

While examining my own narrative and reviewing participatory research literature, I decided to interview four people who had experienced participatory research in a variety of settings. In Chapter Four, selections from these four narratives and my reflections on the interview process become a third site for examining race and representation in the underlying foundations of participatory research. Tools of discourse analysis and deconstruction, that originated in the field of literary criticism and have been adopted by the social sciences, assist in this excavation.

Chapter Five tackles the implications of engaging in an anti-racist interrogation of a research approach. It is a necessary response to the question "so what?" For researchers committed to anti-subordination struggles, critique should lead to guidelines for action. I attempt to makes links between racism in the contradictions and limitations of participatory research discourse and the kinds of anti-racist strategies that might challenge and resist this. Participatory researchers might consider these strategies for transforming their practice toward integrative anti-racist participatory research.
CHAPTER TWO

Integrating Methodological Approaches

You join the demonstrations, you join the groups, etc., etc. That's how one becomes an activist, I mean, to escape the text as you understand it—the verbal text. There are these various ways, in which you become "involved." But, once you do that you won't get away from textuality. "The Text," in the sense we use it, is not just books. It refers to the possibility that every socio-political, psychosexual phenomenon is organized by, woven by many, many strands that are discontinuous, that come from way off, that carry their histories within them, and that are not within our control. We are inserted in them...

-Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, The Post-Colonial Critic

I take a multi-disciplinary approach to exploring participatory research that incorporates different and sometimes contradictory explanatory frameworks. My primary concern in the thesis is to document the liberal humanist discourse at the heart of participatory research. This chapter expands upon the racialized and racist exclusions in modern liberal discourse, as shown by critical race theorists. To show how these exclusions are embedded in participatory research, I examine 'The text,' a strategy that draws extensively from literary criticism. Following Spivak's suggestion in the opening quotation, I explore how we are inserted in the 'text' of participatory research and how it structures our thoughts about research, activism and social change. Poststructuralism offers tools to begin excavating essentialized constructions in the discourse of this research approach.¹

¹ Distinguishing between the wide array of theories that are grouped under the terms 'poststructuralism,' 'postmodernism' and sometimes 'deconstruction' is beyond the scope of this thesis. For this discussion see Butler (1992). I refer primarily to the term poststructuralism to refer to theories that interrogate the constitution of power through discourse. Butler writes: "...power pervades the very conceptual apparatus that seeks to negotiate its terms, including the subject position of the critic;...the task is to interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations authorizes, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses" (1992:6-7). When I use the term 'postmodernism' in the thesis it is because the authors I am referring to describe their theory base in this way. For example Ristock and Pennell write: "We have chosen to emphasize the postmodern perspective in this volume because it draws attention both to the larger cultural shifts that are occurring at community and global levels (postindustrialism, postcolonialism) and to the theoretical shifts that are taking place within academic arenas" (1996:5). They intend readers to
There are important concerns to address whenever poststructural questions are incorporated into a methodological framework for examining issues of race and knowledge production. The challenge of integrating methodologies is what drives this chapter.

As was outlined in Chapter One, participatory research is distinguished from traditional research practices by its underlying assumption that if ordinary people have power in the research process, then social change and empowerment can result. This means the beneficiaries of the research should be involved at all stages of the research, from determining the research focus, framing the questions, designing investigation tools, analysing, reporting, and acting on the results. The research problem should emerge from community processes and be independent from an academic community’s agenda.

This brief re-examination of participatory research principles reveals the assumptions that are central to this research practice. The assumptions are as follows: there is an identity called ‘ordinary people,’ whose own experience of a problem is thought to be the best place to investigate and look for solutions. The importance of validating the people’s ‘voice,’ rather than prioritizing expert opinions, is stressed. It is assumed that this research approach successfully dissolves the constructed dualities of the expert/the people and knowledge/experience. The notion of giving voice to the experience and knowledge of disenfranchised people is a central pillar. Enabling all stakeholders to participate equally in the research process is a fundamental objective underlying the wide range of research principles, procedures and tools advocated. Finally, the empowerment of individuals and communities is assumed to be an important impact and central goal of participatory research.

What becomes apparent about these principles is that they depend upon the modern liberal notion of an autonomous individual. To imagine equal participants in the research process, it is necessary to use the constructs of freedom, choice, contract and equality that constitute the

understand the term ‘postmodernism’ as encompassing the poststructural theories they draw from.
universalized individual. Only starting with individuals can we conceive of the positivistic notions of experience, voice and participation that define the participatory research approach and accord it legitimacy. Empowerment and liberation are presented as logical extensions of ensuring or enhancing the freedom, choice and equality of the individual.

In claims about empowering ‘the people’ are gaps and silences that work to keep the constructs of ‘the people,’ ‘participation,’ and ‘empowerment’ stable and intelligible. In other words, they become essentialized categories. This means that concepts such as ‘the people’ or ‘participation’ are presented as if there is a set of essential unchanging properties or characteristics that define them.\(^2\) This process of essentializing excludes and erases identities that do not easily fit into a normalized construct of the individual. These exclusions and erasures produced in the discourse of the ‘universal individual’ limit the potential of participatory research to contribute to the goals of anti-racism and anti-subordination.

**Participatory Research Literature**

Discussions in the literature primarily focus upon the how to’s of participatory research and their emancipatory potential relative to traditional social science approaches to research. Theories of critical knowledge in the work of Habermas and the Frankfurt School in the 1970s and ‘conscientization’ as described by Friere (1972, 1982) are foundational to these discussions (Maguire 1987; Hall 1994; Park 1993; Comstock and Fox 1993). Gramsci (1971) highlights the capacity of every person to be an intellectual and develop popular organic knowledge. Fals Borda (1979, 1987) urges the growth of a popular or common people’s science that resists Western industrialization. These authors are both part of the intellectual roots of participatory research (Hall

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\(^2\) Essentialism in relation to feminist theory and practice is discussed at length in Scott 1992; Haraway 1991; Spivak 1993; Lather 1994; Razack 1998, forthcoming. Ristock and Pennell discuss the challenges to an homogenizing view of women’s empowerment that come from women at the margins who do not fit easily with a fixed category of ‘woman’(1996:3).
1993; Park 1993; Comstock and Fox 1993). Their theories are grounded in modern liberal humanist thought that defines and validates the capacities of free and autonomous individuals.

Some recent literature suggests that incorporating participatory research into their methodology could increase the emancipatory potential of socially engaged research traditions like critical ethnography (Fine 1994, Jordan and Yeomans 1995). There is also a body of feminist critique that emerged with Maguire's (1987) attempt to negotiate participatory research from a feminist perspective (Ball 1992, Taylor 1995). Only recently have authors begun to propose a dialogue between postmodern/poststructural theories and the practitioners of participatory research (Taylor 1995; Jennings 1995; Ristock and Pennell 1996). This line of inquiry suggests that although postmodernism and participatory research have very distinct starting places, participatory research could benefit from opening up to postmodern concerns, such as the multiplicity of truths, and the de-essentialized subject (Ristock and Pennell 1996:97-98).

There is some literature that examines participatory research and issues of race and racism (Burtonwood 1990; Kelly 1993; Cushman 1994). These authors are primarily concerned with specific research projects that have taken a participatory approach to investigating racism. In one case, racism is examined as an obstacle to successful participatory research. The author relates how unprepared she felt when racism and other systems of oppression were structuring the relations of the research group and how the participatory research literature inspiring her to take this approach did not address this.1 These issues are relevant to my own concerns about participatory research, however these authors generally begin from an underlying faith in the basic tenants of participatory research. Inequity resulting from systems of oppression is viewed as something to be vigilant about and addressed when it emerges as a problem. Racism is seen as a problem of process, not as inherent to foundational assumptions in participatory research. I have not found

1 This was described in an unpublished manuscript presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, GA, 1993) in which the author requested to not be quoted.
published materials that start from a critical anti-racist stance of examining liberal humanist exclusions that structure participatory research principles. This is the contribution I hope to make.

**Theoretical Positions on Modern Liberal Humanism**

In this chapter I introduce the primary theorists that inform my critique of liberal humanism. Foucault (1980) led me to recognize the underpinning discourses whose archaeologies need to be excavated. Said’s critique of Orientalism (1978) guides my articulation of representations of the ‘Other’ and my understanding of institutions that rely on imperialist social relations. Goldberg (1993) identifies racialized expression and racist exclusions that define liberal modernity. Stoler (1995) explores the relationship between discourses of sexuality and colonial power to show that the politics and language of race shaped the history of sexuality and the emergence of bourgeois liberalism. These theorists show that race and racism are ordering principles in the emergence of modern liberalism. This is an important tool for defining how racism structures the discourse of participatory research.

My methodological questions are primarily shaped by theorists who focus on the implication of imperialism and race in knowledge production within the liberal humanist paradigm. But to interrogate constructions of identity, validity and agency I have also appropriated ideas from feminist poststructural theorists (Lathers 1988, 1994; Butler 1993; Britzman 1991, 1995a, 1995b). These authors recognize race as a social trajectory of power, however they do not consistently foreground race and imperialism in their analysis. What they offer are ways to

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4 In response to criticism that her work does not adequately address race, Butler suggests that trying to encompass every vector of power is a type of ‘epistemological imperialism,’ that no one writer can fully explain the complexities of contemporary power. She says: "one writes into a field of writing that is invariably and promisingly larger and less masterable than the one over which one maintains a provisional authority, and that the unanticipated reappropriations of a given work in areas for which it was never consciously intended are some of the most useful" (1993:19). I appropriate Butler’s idea of performativity in my excavation of race and representation in participatory research discourse.
problematize identity, subjectivity, validity and agency that have been useful to my inquiry. They have guided my use of autobiographical data and my interrogation of the constructs of experience and voice as they are deployed in participatory research discourse.

The Archaeology of Participatory Research

I first used the word ‘discourse’ in my thinking and writing about participatory research to evoke Foucault’s description of how power and knowledge are constituted in and through each other to produce ‘regimes of truth.’ Certain knowledges are masked or disqualified while others are privileged in a hierarchy of knowledges and sciences (1980:82). Research as the genealogical task that Foucault describes would require entertaining

the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects. (1980:83)

Foucault calls for ‘historical knowledges’ being ‘emancipated’ so they can struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary and formal discourse (1980:85).

The objective of participatory research is to validate and bring into focus subjugated knowledges so they can compete with dominant ways of knowing. This might appear compatible with a Foucauldian analysis of how genealogies of practice must wage a struggle against the master discourses of science. However, as Foucault demonstrates in his studies of sexuality, discipline, and biological sciences, there are multiple layers of ‘regimes of truth’ to be peeled back (Foucault 1980). Rather than uncritically accepting participatory research as an oppositional discourse (challenging the master narrative of traditional research methods). I examine the embeddedness of its assumptions in the master narrative of modern liberalism.

Said’s use of Foucauldian analysis to excavate Orientalism has also inspired my critique of liberal humanism in participatory research. He says: "the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the
West” (1978:5). The emergence of any idea is an historical event configured by relations of power.

Said describes this power as having political, intellectual, cultural and moral shades. He says of Orientalism:

it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do).

(1978:12)

Said’s description of how Orientalism gets produced inspires my tracing of the exchanges of power that are constitutive of participatory research. Power political is exchanged when participatory research is initiated and funded by government and development agencies with links to colonial and imperial systems. Power intellectual is exchanged when academics from disciplines such as community development or anthropology start projects or become consultants. Power cultural circulates in the canon of participatory research texts that I examine in Chapter Three. Finally, power moral (that draws boundaries between ‘we’ and ‘they’) is constitutive of identities like the ‘researcher’ who facilitates the empowerment of the ‘oppressed.’ Said’s critique of Orientalism is a frame through which to view uneven exchanges of power in participatory research.

The construction of identity, according to Said, “involves the construction of opposites and ‘others’ whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of

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5 This includes the naming of ‘participatory research’ by neo-colonial development ‘experts’ who have access to publishing in international journals. For a discussion of how ‘professionalism’ sustains and masks superiority within participatory research discourse see Orifice (1988:40) and Heaney (1993).

4 This includes how the notion of ‘participation’ emerged in a colonial context where the ‘civilizing mission’ served as a rationale and justification for the genocide and subjugation of peoples constituted as ‘Others.’
their differences from "us" (1978:332). Representations of the Other are part of the contest that produces cultures and polities through unequal power exchanges that maintain imperial systems of hegemony, such as the control the ‘West’ exerts over the ‘Orient.’ I argue that representations of the ‘Other’ are very integral to participatory research discourse and implicate it in maintaining relations of domination. An example of othering is when the beneficiaries of participatory research are represented as ‘the oppressed.’ ‘The oppressed’ is constructed in opposition to the ‘emancipators;’ a ‘they’ who can be helped by ‘us.’ This raises a necessary question: why would researching with ‘Others’ mean that they are no longer produced as ‘Others?’ Claiming to democratize power relations within the research process does not make participatory research any less implicated in an imperial project than other qualitative research methods.  

My methodology is informed by Said’s call for contrapuntal reading. I examine texts and textualized identities, both individually and as they relate to each other in a discursive formation, in order to understand how they enable a cultural system of domination. Similar to the notion in Orientalism of the ‘east as a career,’ participatory research discourse produces the identity of ‘participatory researcher’ and a representation of social justice as a career. A whole network of material interests (salaries, funding) and intellectual interests (publishing rights, policy-making power) authorize discourses and practices of social justice that maintain systems of privilege. 

Critical Race Theories

Little attention has been given within participatory research literature to critiques of liberalism by postcolonial and critical race theorists. I draw primarily from theorists who have

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7 For discussions of power and representation structuring the ethnographic research context see Britzman 1995b; John 1989; Van Maanen 1995; Agar 1995; Fine 1994; Lather 1994; Foster 1994.

8 In the literature I have reviewed, I have not encountered any consideration of Said’s discussion of Orientalism, Goldberg’s work on racist discourse, or other works that explore racism and knowledge production (Anzaldua 1987; Trinh 1989; Mohanty 1991; Bannerji 1991; Razack 1993a, 1993b; Stoler 1995; Dei 1996) Some authors make cursory reference to very well known
shown that racialized discourses are formative of the discourses of modern bourgeois liberalism (Goldberg 1992; Stoler 1995; McClintock 1995). But before I outline these theories, I will briefly position them within larger debates about the concept of race.

There has been much debate on the usefulness of race as an analytical category (Miles and Torres 1996; Dei 1996; Goldberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1993). Recognizing the concept of race as a social construction is a necessary disruption of Social Darwinist and socio-biological perspectives on race that are rooted in biologicist determinism. Marxist perspectives on race highlight how historical processes of material production shape social group relations (Miles 1989, 1993). Miles (1993) argues that the race concept is an ideological effect of processes of capitalist formations and labour migrations. While to distinguish race as a separate conceptual category is a necessary step, to isolate it as an ideological effect of material processes leads Miles and Torres (1996) to deny the explanatory power of the concept of race. Privileging racism over race as the object of analysis ignores how the concept of race continues to structure discursive formations that have both discursive and material effects (Goldberg 1993; Stoler 1995; McClintock 1995).

Exclusionary practices can be linked to both material and non-material (spiritual, emotional) factors in ways that resist a causality model (Dei 1996). Dei asserts that:

> the centrality of the race concept speaks to the importance of understanding how society is racialized through historical and contemporary conditions that give rise to and sustain the production of racial boundaries. (1996:51)

Critiques of racism in the academy such the work of bell hooks (see Maguire 1987; Hall 1993). However, they do not critically interrogate how participatory researchers are implicated in maintaining relations of racism through the discourse that constitutes them and the material relations that sustain them.

For an example of Social Darwinist perspectives on race see Banton (1977) and for socio-biological perspectives see Van den Berge (1985). Race has also been conceptualized in terms of sociological processes (Dollard 1959) and through a socio-economic analysis (Myrdall 1944). For a discussion of these historical perspectives see Dei (1996:44-5).
Theories that identify race and processes of racialization as more than the effect of material relations, as actually formative of liberal bourgeois discourse during the period of the Enlightenment, form the lens through which I examine participatory research.

**Racialized Discourses of the Enlightenment**

Subjugation perhaps properly defines the order of the Enlightenment: subjugation of nature by human intellect, colonial control through physical and cultural domination, and economic superiority through mastery of the laws of the market.

-David Goldberg, *Racist Culture*

Goldberg in *Racist Culture* shows that racialized discourse and racist expression is constitutive of modern subjectivities. He does this by delineating the historically specific discursive formations of the Enlightenment (1993:26-30). The ideals of rationality, autonomy, freedom, equality, and the resurrection of classical values of beauty that characterize the autonomous individual are produced in opposition to a racial other: "The rational, hence autonomous and equal subjects of the Enlightenment project, turn out, perhaps unsurprisingly, to be exclusively white, male, European, and bourgeois" (1993:28). Racialized constructions of the autonomous individual rooted in Enlightenment philosophy reemerge in the notion of 'equal participant’ in participatory research.

In *Race and the Education of Desire*, Stoler identifies race and sexuality as ordering mechanisms of the postenlightenment world:

Such a perspective figures race, racism, and its representations as structured entailments of postenlightenment universals, as formative features of modernity, as deeply embedded in bourgeois liberalism, not as aberrant offshoots of them. (1995:9)
Like Goldberg, Stoler details how "racial configurations of the imperial world were constitutive to the cultivation of the nineteenth century bourgeois self" (Stoler, 1995:8). To do this, she traces how the Dutch bourgeois identity was secured through interrelations of mixed race identities and sexualities. 'native' nursemaids and childrearing practices as they were negotiated across the domestic and public spheres in the colonial West Indies. This enables her to show why the civilizing mission in the metropole and the colony cannot be considered as independent projects:

> These reconfigured histories have pushed us to rethink European cultural genealogies across the board and to question whether the key symbols of modern western societies--liberalism, nationalism, state welfare, citizenship, culture, and "Europeanness" itself--were not clarified among Europe's colonial exiles and by those colonized classes caught up in their pedagogic net in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and only then brought "home." (1995:16)

The civilizing mission that Stoler describes is entrenched in racialized discourse that establishes a hierarchy of power among the colonizers and the colonized. The mission to raise standards of cleanliness, conduct and morality among a racialized and subordinated population, finds new voice in social welfare programs back in Europe. In modern times, race reemerges to define the citizen whose social habits must be controlled: "racial thinking harnesses itself to varied progressive projects and shapes the social taxonomies defining who will be excluded from them" (Stoler 1995:9).

This leads to the conviction, shared by Goldberg and Stoler, that the modern liberal nation is based upon principles of racist exclusion. Bhabha also describes this in his discussion of colonial racism:11

> To take this perspective would mean that we see 'racism' not simply as a hangover from archaic conceptions of the aristocracy, but as part of the historical traditions

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10 The notion that imperialism and the invention of race are fundamental aspects of the emergence of a 'Western' identity and bourgeois modernity is also central to the work of Said (1978,1993).

11 In the passage from which this quote is taken, Bhabha is addressing what he sees as gaps in the articulation of colonial racism in the work of Foucault (1972) and Anderson's (1983) work on nation as 'imagined community.'
of civic and liberal humanism that create ideological matrices of national aspiration, together with their concepts of 'a people' and its imagined community. (1994:250)

The inextricable relationship of racism to the formation of the modern nation is an example of how 'racisms' reemerge in the discourses of modernity.12

Stoler's work illustrates how racist discourses are recuperated throughout history. She reconstructs Foucault's arguments in The History of Sexuality to highlight what she considers his concern with the discontinuities of history; the ruptures and breaks in discursive formations and their subsequent reinscription and recuperation (Stoler 1995:61). Stoler describes how the older discourse of imperialism is recovered, modified, encased, and encrusted in new forms of racialized discourse that are constituitive of modern 'racisms.' The silent or explicit, inadvertent or intended exclusions and violences effected by sociohistorically situated "racisms" interlock with corresponding sexist, ableist, classist, ageist and sexualized normalizations to produce representations of 'Subjects' and 'Others.' The categories of colonizer and colonized are secured through notions of racial difference and constructed in gendered terms (1995:100).13

I have used the work of Golberg and Stoler to understand how race and racism is constituitive of modern bourgeois liberalism. This confirms that the liberal values underpinning

12 Recent studies of nation stress the interconnectedness of nation-state formation and racism although they do not always agree on theoretical and methodological approaches (Gilroy 1991; Miles 1993; Goldberg 1993; Stoler 1995; and Rattansi and Westwood 1994). There is some consensus that historically specific 'racisms' arise out of the matrix of socio-economic relations of nation-building. However, there are distinctions in emphasis between the study of material relations and the study of discursive formations. Miles (1993) explains both exterior and interior European modalities of racism in the relations of class domination, the political economy of labour migration, and the formation and reproduction of the nation-state (81). Stoler (1995) complicates this exterior/interior distinction with her historical analysis of the 'porous parameters' of the European bourgeois order (16). Goldberg (1993) traces how the discourses of imperialism are recovered in new forms of racialized discourses that are constitutive of modern 'racisms' independently of socioeconomic and political exploitation and exclusion (Goldberg 1993:92-6).

13 Fanon (1967,1986) and Memmi (1965) are foundational texts on the psychology of domination and dehumanization that characterizes colonialism and the identities of colonizer and colonized.
participatory research are in fact constructed through racialized discourse and practices. In other words, they are the effect of modern racisms. There are links between race, the representation of the ‘oppressed,’ and processes of nation-building. The ‘oppressed’ in need of ‘civilizing’ intertwines with symbols of the progressive ‘nation’ in the discourse of community and international development from which participatory research emerged. For participatory research to be part of a truly liberatory anti-imperial resistance, it would seem necessary to resist its enmeshment in liberalist discourse and the nation-building project. The tensions inherent in this proposition are multiple and interlocking, as becomes evident in Chapter Three when an examination of participatory research texts reveals how intrinsic Enlightenment ideals are to its ‘progressive’ ideology.

What I am arguing is that the same racialized discourse that constitutes the colonizer and the colonized is also played out, or ‘recovered’ in Stoler’s words, in the production of who is the ‘researcher’ and who is ‘the oppressed’. Participatory research discourse is incorporated into research strategies by traditional instruments of domination such as government and academic institutions, and particularly in Western Nations’ international development programs. This points to a ‘reemerging’ of racialized and racist discourse that serves the interests of dominant groups in modern contexts of neo-colonialism and white supremacy.

Interlocking Categories

A central claim of McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* is that "imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity" (1995:5). Building upon this idea, she introduces the inseparability of a theory of "gender power" from a theory of imperialism. This theory is founded upon her understanding of the interlocking nature of race, gender and class as "articulated categories that come into existence in and through relation to each other" (1995:5). She reminds us to be vigilant about how categories such as race, gender and class work together
and complicate one another as sites of interlocking oppressions and multiple and shifting identities.

In my analysis of the construction of identities in participatory research discourse, I attempt to hold on to the categories of gender and class as I excavate a racialized identity like 'the oppressed.' McClintock's work is also directed at interrogating the invention of whiteness (1995:8). This points me to investigating how whiteness shapes research identities in participatory research. As McClintock says, social power imbalances may be 'overdetermined' for a particular category like race or class in a certain context (1995:9). However, in her analysis of empire, she intends that no social category remain invisible. This is a daunting, but necessary, analytical goal to aspire to.

In her explanation of how gender power is needed to sustain imperialism, McClintock outlines a three part theory of imperial domination (1995:112). This theory is useful for beginning to trace how forces of imperial domination are 'reincased' in participatory research. First, McClintock describes white male power as arising through the control of colonized women. In participatory research, women, as well as Aboriginal people and Third World people, are identified as suitable 'targets' of the research (Park 1993). Next, McClintock describes the emergence of a new global order of cultural knowledge. Many authors show that participatory research incorporates indigenous knowledge in problematic ways that are experienced by Aboriginal communities as the reemergence of an homogenizing global order of cultural knowledge (see Flaherty 1995; Colorado 1988; Jackson 1993). McClintock's final element of imperial domination is the imperial command of commodity capital or commodity racism. In participatory research, the politics of funding tie researchers and communities into state negotiations of the global market.
economy that prioritize profit and deficit reduction over meeting basic needs and supporting livelihoods.¹⁴

The above authors present methodological approaches that enable me to recognize participatory research as a discourse deeply embedded in modern liberal humanism. The racialized and sexualized exclusions that produce the autonomous individual in the narrative of liberalism reemerge in a racialized discourse of participation and empowerment. Gender, race and class articulate in interlocking systems of oppression that constitute and are constituted by racialized social categories like 'the oppressed' (and in opposition, 'the researcher.') Of course in participatory research, the research 'problem' is never framed as the foundational categories that sustain the liberal fiction of researchers and participants sharing a neutralized space of equal exchange. Exploring the relations of domination operating in the discursive and material production of these categories reveals the exclusions and erasures that these constructs enable.

Critical race theories brought my inquiry to a critique of liberal modernity. But poststructural theories, starting with Foucault and including recent feminist and queer theorists, also inform my methodological approach to the discourse of participatory research.

Poststructural Perspectives

Just as the known is defined by the characteristics of the knower, the knower's very identity is altered by the process of coming to understand the known. The reconstruction of knowledge is inseparable from the reconstruction of ourselves.

-Susan Williams, "Feminist Legal Epistemology." Berkeley Women's Law Journal

¹⁴ At this point I am concerned with demonstrating how McClintock’s methodology leads me to recognize how the discourse and practices of participatory research reflect the relations of domination that are rooted in imperial social configurations. I elaborate upon these examples and others when I examine excerpts from specific participatory research texts in Chapter Three and the interview transcripts in Chapter Four.
Poststructural critiques of essentialized understandings of the 'subject' and the 'real' are helpful for rethinking participatory research and its foundational constructs. However, along with their usefulness, poststructural theories need to be vigilantly held up against the overriding goal of furthering anti-subordination. I struggle with resisting essentialist understandings of identity and power while still accounting for real experiences of oppression.

Ristock and Pennell have discussed their attempt to merge feminist research frameworks with postmodern perspectives:

as feminists we have found that incorporating postmodern insights into our political stance has allowed us to move our conceptualization of empowerment beyond an individualistic or humanistic notion of empowering others—of doing ‘to’ or ‘for’ them. It has made it possible for us to acknowledge complexity, diversity and incompatibility without losing sight of the feminist objective of advancing women as a group. (1996:97)

I also wish to incorporate postmodern insights into my examination of participatory research discourse in order to surpass the limitations of humanist conceptions of empowerment. But what I do not see explicit in their work is a recognition of the racializing and racist implications of humanist assumptions about the autonomous individual. Racism is discussed primarily in the context of barriers to creating ‘inclusive communities’ and for researching equitably across social differences. Focus is put on strategies to account for and bridge the gaps that racism creates (Ristock and Pennell 1996:16-33). By starting, as I did in this chapter, with an examination of the racialized constructs underpinning liberal discourse in participatory research, I hope to take the work of challenging white privilege in empowerment research strategies a step further.

Theories of Discourse and Performativity

Feminist poststructural theories argue for an understanding of subjects as the "effects of language, knowledge, power, and history rather than their essential authors" (Britzman. 1995b:239). This is one of my entry points to theorizing identity and discourse in participatory research. I explore the aspirations and limits of participatory research as they are constituted
through discourse, and through the ways in which participatory research is practised. Britzman uses Foucault’s notion of the ‘structures of intelligibility’ to describe how regimes of truth regulate the thinkable (1995b). She provides a way of thinking about discourse that informs my interrogation of how participatory research becomes intelligible:

Every discourse constitutes, even as it mobilizes and shuts out, imaginary communities, identity investments, and discursive practices. Discourses authorize what can and cannot be said; they produce relations of power and communities of consent and dissent, and thus discursive boundaries are always being redrawn around what constitutes the desirable and the undesirable and around what it is that makes possible particular structures of intelligibility and unintelligibility. (1995b:239)

This formulation describes the authorizing power of discourse and how it produces relations of power. Participatory research authorizes the desirable in social justice—equal participation through the active involvement of the oppressed in researching their own problems. And it shuts out the undesirable—that equality is a liberal myth that fails to account for the racializing and racist effects of a constructed identity such as ‘the oppressed.’ The discourse authorizes models of ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ that glorify and reward the socially engaged researcher. Identities are constructed and maintained within material relations: the oppressed, ‘needing empowerment,’ and the researchers ‘facilitating the empowerment.’

In her discussion of the productive nature of discourse, Butler (1993) calls for a move from thinking about ‘construction’ to thinking about ‘materialization.’ This distinction is an effort to avoid replacing the human subject with some other force such as power or discourse that becomes personified as the origin of a unilateral process (1993:9). Butler prefers to think of power not as something that acts but as a reiterated acting; persistent and unstable. Working at the site of the body, she proposes thinking about ‘matter’ as a “process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (9). Materialization is a temporal process that operates through the reiteration of norms (10). Discourse is then understood
as formative of the materiality of bodies, not because it originates or causes them, but because "there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body" (10).

This leads to Butler's theory of 'performativity.' I introduce performativity to describe how categories of gender, sex and race come to be normalized, regulated and resisted. A performative is "always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the convention of which it is a repetition" (1993:12). Bodies, identities and actions are knowable through the reiteration of a norm that in fact has no originary, or original source. This is a shift from thinking of discourse as 'productive' of normalizing practices, to thinking of discourse as gaining "the authority to bring about what it names through the citing of the conventions of authority" (Butler 1993:13). The idea that there is no originary norm for constructed identities in participatory research opens up possibilities for these identities to be resisted.

15 Butler's work is focused upon the regulation of gender and sex. I add race in my appropriation of Butler's theory.

16 In Butler's terms we might think of participatory research as a performative in which the identities of researcher and oppressed are normalized and regulated. A 'participatory researcher' materializes in the reiteration of 'empowering' the oppressed, and the 'oppressed' materialize in the reiteration of being 'empowered.'

17 The conventions of authority that are cited in discourse that 'brings about' participatory research might be: "ensuring equal participation of all stakeholders in the research;" "honoring lived experience as giving access to the truth about the research problem;" and "research, education and action lead to empowerment."
Butler's theory of performativity evolves to a theory of agency that is key to my conceptualization of how racist liberal discourse in participatory research might be resisted. Resistance in Butler's work is conceptualized as 'slippages' in reiteration. Cross dressing and drag are two sites of performativity in which Butler explores the discursive limits of 'sex.' She locates agency (or the ability to act) in the shifting and slippages of these reiterative moments, in repetitions that are never exact replicas (1993:226). These slippages transgress the 'normal' in sexual and gender identities; they resist constraints on the intelligibility and materiality of bodies. In the slippages of cross-dressing and drag, Butler finds agency for the disruption of essentialized identities and the emergence of resistant identities.

For Butler, agency lies in the instability and deconstructing possibility of the process of repetition. Britzman works from a similar notion of voice and agency as "fashioned in practices" (1995b:239), and calls upon ethnography to theorize how "subjects spring from discourses that incite them" (1995b:240). This entails thinking of identity in ethnographic narrative efforts as "representation" and "sites of crisis" (239-240). How is 'participatory researcher' a site of the crisis of representation? What might reiterative slippages in participatory research make possible? Identity as a site of crisis and moments of slippage are explored through the interviews in Chapter Four. Possibilities for agency in these slippages are presented in Chapter Five.

Participatory research is multiply regulated in and through imagined identities of nation, peoples and communities: "articulations of human togetherness, as they are related to cultural difference and discrimination" (Bhabha 1994:191). Bhabha writes:
a solidarity founded in victimization and suffering may, implacably, sometimes violently, become bound against oppression; or a subaltern or minority agency may attempt to interrogate and rearticulate the ‘inter-est’ of society that marginalizes its interests. (191)

The ‘interest’ of society to include ‘ordinary people’ in research, noted by the increased adoption of participatory research in state sanctioned projects, is a performative of equal participation in research. Slippage comes in the tracing of *inequalities*, when material histories indicate that different identities do not sit equally at the research planning table. Or perhaps agency occurs when the performative of ‘single mothers’ or ‘immigrant community’ engaging in ‘participatory research’ becomes a strategy for accessing research dollars.

Conceptualizing agency through a theory of performativity is risky if we do not vigilantly keep our eye on relations of domination. Oppression is a lived experience. Theories of transgressing the intelligibility of oppression can get in the way of the need to theorize the replacement of oppressive systems with less oppressive ones. Understanding identity through performativity and agency through resignifying practices are poststructural tools for resisting essentialism. Spivak’s understanding of deconstruction is helpful for navigating what is thought of as the ‘dangers’ of essentializing:18

Deconstruction, whatever it may be, is not most valuably an exposure of error, certainly not other people’s error, other people’s essentialism. The most serious critique in deconstruction is the critique of things that are extremely useful, things without which we cannot live on, take chances; like our running self-identikit. (1993:4)

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18 It is important to note that the critique of essentialism that is central to poststructural theorizing was also originally made by feminists of colour who challenged the category of essential ‘woman’ in white feminist literature (see Anzaldua 1987; hooks 1988, 1992; Collins 1990).
Spivak argues for decentering the anti-essentialism/essentialism debate in favour of a focus on 'strategy.' She reminds us that "to think about the danger of what is useful, is not to think that the dangerous thing doesn’t exist" (1993:10). Rather, Spivak calls for looking at the "dangerousness of things that we cannot not use" (1993:5). This is a way to begin thinking about the dangerousness of things like ‘experience,’ ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ in the discourse of participatory research. Rather than completely discarding them because of the racialized constructs that underpin them, their potential as a strategy in specific contexts can be considered.

My investigation is in part an opportunity to pay attention to social strategies of regulation and normalization. Conventions of authority constitute the intelligible and the unintelligible, the desirable and the undesirable of participatory research. Representing these conventions in the discursive practices of participatory research is a tool for trying to imagine the possibilities and limits of participatory research.

‘Identity strategies’ in participatory research need to be problematized. They may be very necessary and useful in order to argue for structural change of oppressive relations that affect a particular group. However, this group identity will regulate and constrain the boundaries of that ‘group’ in ways that exclude and erase identities in their multiplicities and contradictions. This inevitably happens in a process that privileges consensus within the ‘oppressed’ group over internal tensions, in the interest of providing a united front to the ‘oppressor’ group.

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19 Spivak attempts to distinguish between a critique of essentialism and anti-empiricism in this way: "one says that the careful construction of an object of investigation in a field is essentialism. This has something of a relationship with confusing essentialism with the empirical. All we really want to claim is that there is no feminine essence; there’s no essential class subject; the general subject of essence is not a good basis for investigation. This is rather different from being anti-empirical" (1993:16).
Theories of Identity

This discussion of agency and strategy leads back to the question of identity. Many authors have discussed identity as a relational concept that is fluid, continually changing, and multiple (see Anzaldúa 1987; Trinh 1989; Haraway 1991; Scott 1993). Britzman has named identity a "crisis of representation" and calls for a study of the limits of intelligibility that structure our identity investments (1995b). By this she means that the discourse we have available to us for constructing a 'thinkable' identity puts normalizing limits on what we can think of ourselves as being and doing.

Bhabha (1994) explores identity through its psychoanalytic relation with the Other. He describes "the art of guiding one's body into discourse, in such a way that the subject's accession to, and erasure in, the signifier as individuated is paradoxically accompanied by its remainder, an afterbirth, a double" (184). Drawing extensively from the work of Fanon (1967,1986), Bhabha refers to the "phobic image of the Negro, the native, the colonized, deeply woven into the psychic pattern of the West" (1994:63). There must be an image of the other deeply embedded in the psyche of a participatory researcher that inspires a desire to help the 'oppressed' overcome their oppression.

According to Bhabha, the oppressed "readily assume the mask of the black, of the position of the minority, not to deny their diversity, but audaciously to announce the important artifice of cultural identity and its difference" (1994:64). When the identity of groups and communities materialize through the citing of participatory research norms (like the oppressed must participate), do they readily assume the 'mask' of the oppressed, and does it serve as an artifice of their identity and difference? 'Difference' is an important artifice, or convention of authority, for defining the purpose and goals of social justice. It is through 'difference' that the 'oppressed' in need of social justice are knowable. How difference is constituted and critiqued in feminist debates
on essentialism is discussed as part of the next section, which deconstructs ‘experience’ in participatory research.

Relying on ‘Experience’

Participatory research requires a category of ‘experience’ that gives unmediated access to the ‘real’ from which oppositional and ‘from-the-field’ truth claims can be made. The instability of these underpinnings is revealed by questioning the social construction of experience, the authority of testimony and the objectivity of science. This critique is relevant to the collective knowledge production ‘techniques’ that are the mainstay of participatory research methods. Another critique of humanist assumptions about experience and testimony has surfaced in ‘new ethnography’ that are applicable to the life histories and testimonies employed as data collection methodologies in participatory research projects (see Fine 1994; Lathers 1995; Van Maanen 1995; Prell 1989).

Haraway (1991) and Stephens (1990) offer places to start excavating the category of experience. This is a critical step in tracing the geneology of participatory research, a process that claims to be centred in the ‘knowledge’ and ‘experience’ of those for whom the research ‘problem’ is constructed as ‘their’ problem. Debates on the representation of experiences have implications for the framing of research problems, methodological strategies, data collection and analysis.

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22 See Ristock and Pennell (1996) for an indepth discussion of how postmodern interruptions of assumptions about experience, identity and language can be used to inform and transform research practices in ways that are directed toward social transformation.
Haraway (1991) questions the grounding of ‘truth’ in claims of authority from a subjugated position or from ‘experience’. Her idea of the ‘privilege of partial perspective’ complicates the notion of a collective perspective that is championed in participatory research. Stephens is sceptical of the notion of experience she identifies in contemporary feminist discourse. She remarks that: "a deliberate attempt is made to bypass theoretical frameworks in favour of the ‘direct experience’" (1990:93); that fieldwork is used as a device to legitimate narratives (94); and that in these texts the link between fieldwork and reality is forged by a category granted a peculiar objectivity in the discourse: the ‘direct experience’(95). This cautionary position has relevance to participatory research where the principles and techniques are oriented almost exclusively to privileging the ‘real’ experience and ‘knowledge’ of the oppressed.

When deconstructing the notion of experience it is important to remember the material bodies, and the material conditions of those bodies, whose ‘experience’ or ‘truth claims’ poststructural discourse is interrogating. Neither essentializing nor de-essentializing happens outside of discursive and material relations. Who is interrogating what, where it is happening and who is listening determines when it contributes to anti-subordination and when it does not.

Narayan (1988) introduces the notion of ‘epistemic privilege of the oppressed’ which recognizes that the experience of oppression can not be adequately theorized in a poststructural framework that does not acknowledge real effects on real bodies. Privileging the ‘real’ experience of oppression over calls to interpret what is "...always already an interpretation and is in need of an interpretation" (Scott 1992:37) is hotly debated in feminist academic circles. Fanon asserts the "fact of blackness" (1967) which Razack understands as implying "the fact of difference." She challenges the postmodern anti-essentialist debate because it evades the question of how an anti-essentialist stance on identity actually contributes to anti-subordination (in press).23

23 Dei maintains that race, gender and class are fundamental to how we engage in social practices. He cautions against the oversimplification of defining identity in isolation that dwells on the individual self and ignores its connection to the outer self (Dei 1996:31).
Razack has outlined the principle tenants of this debate in Chapter Six of *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (in press). She concludes that poststructural preoccupations with interrogating constructs such as experience and identity are questionable in their motivations when they come primarily from white feminists who are concerned about their own marginalization within academe as a result of what they perceive as a privileging of essentialized (and oppressed) identities and subjectivities. Always, Razack argues, these concerns about the dangers of essentializing should be subjected to the measure of how they are contributing to anti-subordination struggles.

Razack has also discussed the disastrous implications of deploying ‘experience sharing’ within social justice activism circles to critically analyze social reality. The implication is that the oppressed share their stories in a forum that welcomes the ‘native informant’ without accounting for the forces of domination that already structure these activism groups (1993a,1993b). Her argument for the need to historicize and contextualize de-essentialist projects requires humility and caution on the part of those involved in participatory research in any capacity who do not share the subject location of those who have identified the research problem.

**Conclusion**

Participatory research is described by its theorists and practitioners in refereed journals and published collections as emerging in response to colonial and neocolonial research practices that are constituted as ‘scientific.’ It proposes that research be about, for and by ‘the people’ in a process that combines research, education and action. It relies on research subjects constructed as silenced and marginalized and ‘co-researchers’ that act in solidarity with the subjects of their research. It is assumed that by bringing together the experience of the homogenized ‘other’ with
the properly sensitized and politically aligned researcher. 'emancipatory' framing of research problems will result.

A poststructural critique of participatory research interrogates its reliance on essentialized identities that experience a pre-existing 'real' and produce 'authentic voices.' The notion of multiple, shifting and contradictory subject positions within interlocking systems of racism, sexism and classism is informed by thinking of identity as a site of the crisis of representation (Britzman, 1995b). Butler proposes a theory of agency in the resignifying practices of identity as performance. However, she also acknowledges the need to mobilize the necessary 'error of identity' (Spivak's term) in tension against its deployment in racist and misogynist discursive regimes (1993:229). An anti-essentialist position on the foundational assumptions of identity and experience in participatory research discourse is a political move that needs to account for the configurations of social power that contextualize its deployment. Poststructuralist perspectives in one context can undermine anti-subordination struggles as quickly as they support them in another.

The central task I have set out in my deconstruction of participatory research is to excavate the liberal humanist paradigm that frames it. Postcolonial and critical race theorists have provided a methodology for identifying the racialized and racist discourse that underpins 'individualism' in liberal modernity. In the next chapter I look closely at the text of participatory research literature that reconfirms its entrenchment in liberal values and the racist exclusions they enable. Integrating methodologies, by which I mean incorporating poststructural perspectives into a framework for excavating racist discourse, stretches my poststructural concerns further in the direction of anti-subordination practice than they would go on their own.
CHAPTER THREE

Race and the Production of Identities

Now I turn to actual examples of participatory research text drawn from articles written about it. These articles, primarily written for an academic audience, tend to have the primary goal of introducing participatory research to social science researchers and community development practitioners. They are the texts that would be commonly found in an introductory bibliography on participatory research. These authors generally have been involved in projects and also have affiliations with academic institutions. Their writing, generally from the late eighties, comes at a time when participatory research as a legitimate research approach was beginning to gain currency in academic circles. Many of the actual research projects in which these authors are involved have much longer histories and have been evolving toward participatory frameworks over time, particularly the projects in the ‘third world.’ However, one of the books I focus upon, *Voices of Change*, is the first collection of articles to be published that chronicles participatory research specifically in North America. This choice provides the opportunity to examine how a research approach that emerges out of the praxis of community development processes in the South is then packaged for a North American audience, with particular appeal for the academic industry.¹

This book was the primary resource text for a graduate course on participatory research. I was told by one of my interview participants that she had come to know of the book during university studies in her home country in Asia. One of the Canadian editors was affectionately referred to by her colleagues as "Mr. Participatory Research." Once published, these materials are sold back to southern countries, generally accessible only to those who can access institutions of post-secondary education. The particular set of texts examined in this chapter combines well with the four narratives I examine in Chapter Four because the people I interviewed are all affiliated

¹ The first uses of the term participatory research are described as coming from the work of Marja-Liisa Swantz in Tanzania in the early 1970s (Hall 1993:1).
with an academic institution and like myself, must negotiate a position for themselves and their work in a context that is informed by this kind of literature.

**Key Assumptions in Participatory Research**

What I look for in these texts are the essentialist constructions and modernist assumptions that mask power relations in the research context. I start by interrogating the 'autonomous individual,' a construct that is central to how participation is constituted in this discourse. Critiques of the sovereign subject in critical race and feminist theory shed light on how a discourse that combats oppression with the concept of 'autonomy' links itself with the racialized and sexualized exclusions of the liberal paradigm. The genealogy of 'the oppressed' is excavated from its roots in Frierean theory and traced through contemporary texts. Its oppositional identity, the 'revolutionary leader,' is reinscribed as the 'participatory researcher' whose interventions are legitimized in "moves to innocence". ² A move to innocence refers to theorizing and rationalizing that obscures one's implication in the relations of domination or fails to recognize one's position of dominance. The theme of 'innocent intervention' is further elaborated in the two final sections of the chapter on participatory research with aboriginal communities and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge.

**The Empowered Individual**

I begin with some prominent definitions of participatory research. The autonomous individual emerges in the discourse as active, in control, capable, and the origin of transformation. These ties to humanism are revealed in the early literature:

A deep and abiding belief in people's capacity to grow, change, and create underlies this democratization of research. Participatory research assumes that

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² The idea of "moves to innocence" is discussed in Fellows and Razack, "The Race to Innocence," *Iowa Law Review* (in press) and Razack (in press), Chapter Five.
returning the power of knowledge production and use to ordinary and oppressed people will contribute to the creation of a more accurate and critical reflection of social reality, the liberation of human creative potential, and to the mobilization of human resources to solve social problems. (Hall 1975:39)

This definition secures the identity of a researcher who believes in "people's capacity," in opposition to these 'Others' who must have the "power of knowledge production" returned to them. Human potential is constructed as pre-existing, needing only to be liberated. This category of subject exercises freedom and choice:

people have become active, self-conscious of their own knowledge...they can also participate fully in decisions about the production of new knowledge, for themselves and for society. The domination arising from the people-as-objects of research is transformed to the people-as-subjects. (Gaventa 1988:25-26)

Through their active participation, 'people' are constructed as transforming the relations of domination in which they are located. This ignores the social relations of racialized exclusion that constitute and are constituted by a foundational category like 'the people.' The principles of humanism link rationality to control and in participatory research literature this secures the category of 'capable adult.' Tandon describes how this emerged out of the practice of adult educators that "placed learners in the centre and focused on learners' control over their learning process...based on the premise that adults are capable. They are capable of learning, of changing, of acting, and of transforming the world" (1988:5).

The capable adult or autonomous individual is produced in binary opposition to the 'oppressed.' Here is an example of a definition:

The final aims are: (1) to enable the oppressed groups and classes to acquire sufficient creative and transforming leverage as expressed in specific projects, acts and struggles; and (2) to produce and develop socio-political thought processes with which popular bases can identify. (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991:4)

The "oppressed group" is produced as originally lacking in creative and transforming abilities by virtue of their need to acquire it through specific acts. Not yet possessing that 'self that can be created,' they require the assistance of those who can empower them; guiding them through thought processes that nurture their rationality and their ability to act and command choice. The
category 'oppressed' is defined by its lack of all that the subjects of this definition, the emancipators, possess. Yet these discursive identities are, as McClintock reminds us, only coming into existence in and through each other (1995:5). We come to understand these categories as mutually self-sustaining and performed identities (Butler 1993) and must ask what they secure.

'The People' Participate

Participatory research sustains the vision of a world capable of being transformed by the acts of individuals and groups. This vision relies on the democratic ideals of popular participation:

Genuine popular participation in the production of knowledge has implication...for the realization of classical notions of democracy but also for the body of knowledge that will be produced....[The] believer in popular participation must hope that the vision and view of the world that is produced by the many in their interests will be more humane, rational and liberating than the dominating knowledge of today. (Gaventa 1988:26)

Popular participation is presented as the key to liberation from domination. Research methodology within the humanist framework of participatory research relies upon establishing the conditions that enable participation. Strategies that promise equal participation and opportunities for collective decision-making are modified by researchers or 'facilitators' to suit a particular local context. The possibilities and limitations of participatory research are theorized in terms of the extent to which power-sharing happens at all stages of the research process. Within this framework an individual or group's access to the 'real' through 'experience' is not problematized. Documenting people's experience and integrating traditional knowledge is constructed as an emancipatory form of knowledge production. But if individuals are seen as contradictory, multiple and shifting identities (Haraway 1991) and their life histories, testimonies and narratives as sites of discursive struggle (Britzman 1995b), then the promise of cohesive narratives to describe the 'real' is unsettled. Instead, testimony would provide places for "competing regimes of truth" to circulate (Britzman) and collective work in participatory research would become the site of discursive struggle.
One critique of participatory research is launched from a recognition of the racist and class biases embedded in theories of participation. These theories developed in the community development movement of the 1950s and 1960s whose origin is historically linked to colonial administrations. Lee quotes from a 1948 colonial document that defines community development as:

> a movement to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation and *if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement.* (Lee, her italics, 1993:25)

Participation in the creation of a rational and humane world is solicited, without accounting for the colonialisst origins of ‘participation’ in community-building. The binary and relational categories of rational/irrational, autonomous/oppressed, are holding together the construct of ‘participation’ and who ‘participates.’ These binary categories exclude and erase identities and bodies that do not fit into the rational model of individual participation.

**Feminist Critiques of the Sovereign Subject**

Stephens critiques feminist discourse for seeking validation in the sovereign female subject:

> The concept of a separate and identifiable feminist consciousness relies on the discourse’s capacity to demonstrate that women are capable of being the creators of history; that they are active, autonomous subjects ‘in their own right.’ Yet it is in its search for the sovereign female subject and in its attempts to define the autonomy of the Third World woman that feminism gets entangled with nationalism and Orientalism. (1990:100)

Participatory research discourse relies upon the category of ‘the people’ as ‘sovereign subjects.’ Like much feminist discourse, it is similarly engaged in a quest to transform the structures of domination by constituting "people-as-subjects" of research who are "active, self-conscious of their own knowledge...and participate fully in decisions about the production of knowledge (Gaventa..."
But this can lead to exoticization of "popular knowledge" that must be 'saved' and 'restored' by virtue of its intimate connection to nature:

There is widespread interest in the recovery of ancient ways of knowing that seem more fully integrated into the world and nature as opposed to those ways that view nature as separate and needing to be conquered for human beings to prosper. There is a role for participatory research with people and by people who still have links to ancient knowledge. In this case can participatory research be part of such a recovery or restoration process. (Colorado 1988:63)

This is an 'othering' process that sets up groups such as women, Third World and native peoples as the 'bearers' of ancient wisdom, to be saved by researchers who 'value' and incorporate their participation in 'knowledge restoration' projects. This Orientalist discourse masks the relations of power producing and maintaining these categories through racialized and gendered exclusions.

Mani addresses notions of autonomy when she grapples with the politics of representation of the category 'woman':

In the short term, then, it seems safest to counter the notion of woman as free agent by emphasizing her victimization. However, unless we include in this a complex sense of agency, we run the risk of producing a discourse that sets women up to be saved. This would situate women within feminist analysis in ways that are similar to women's positioning within colonialist or nationalistic discourses. (Mani 1990:22)

The same tension and risk exists in participatory research literature. The 'oppressed' are produced as 'victims' within the dominant positivist North American and European research paradigm and then as 'free agents' within the participatory research paradigm, acquiring "creative and transforming leverage" (Hall 1994:3330). Inherent in the notion of a 'free agent' is the bestowing of freedom on a formerly excluded but deserving subject by a benevolent, autonomous entity, the participatory researcher. The 'people' are set up to be saved in a way that secures the superiority of those who will be the saviours.
Emergence of the 'Oppressed'

The emergence of any identity, including that of the 'oppressed,' is an historical event in need of an explanation (Scott 1992:33). Barlow (1994) refers to the historical specificity of 'powerless' in her genealogy of the category 'woman.' Modernity's social subjects, founded upon racialized exclusions, rely on the notion of an 'other' that is neither rational nor moral (see Goldberg 1993; Stoler 1995; McClintock 1995). Excavating the category 'oppressed' is crucial to interrogating a foundational principle of participatory research; the breakdown of separation between researcher and participant.

Participatory research claims to collapse the notions of researcher and participant: all are equal participants; all participants are researchers. What in traditional social science research is considered to be the subject and the object of inquiry is united in the single category of subject.

Freirean theory at the foundation of this notion is quoted in Gaventa (1988):

If I perceive the reality as the dialectical relationship between subject and object, then I have to use methods for investigation which involve the people of the area being studied as researchers; they should take part in the investigation themselves and not serve as the passive objects of the study. (Freire (1982) quoted in Gaventa 1988:19)

Another passage from Voices of Change that draws heavily from Frierean theory reaffirms this:

Both social transformation as well as transformation of knowledge can only occur through an encounter between the exploited and oppressed classes, the intellectuals and the authentic revolutionary leaders. Within this process, a new kind of knowledge able to overcome the dichotomy of popular knowledge vs scientific knowledge will arise and be systematized so that they become instruments for the humanization of man. (Quoted from Uma Pedagogca da Revolucao in Francisco de Souza 1988:32)

Participatory research discourse is rooted in a positivist paradigm that relies upon dichotomies of knowledges and subjectivities. Freire articulates this underlying premise from the perspective of the revolutionary leaders who

must enter into dialogue with [the people], so that the people's empirical knowledge of reality, nourished by the leaders' critical knowledge, gradually becomes transformed into knowledge of the causes of reality. (1972:129)
Freire refers to this process as 'conscientization' which he describes as "a meeting of subjects to 'name' their world and transform it" (1972:123). Through dialogue the oppressed and the revolutionary leaders become "actors in intercommunication"; "co-authors" of the transformation (123).

Ball emphasizes the divergence between Freire’s educational theories and "those programmes of progressive education which remain embedded within a liberal democratic framework which celebrates individual freedom, 'learning by doing' and classroom autonomy" (1992:4). Participatory research that stresses the importance of active involvement is another example of how Frierean theory is easily incorporated in practices that embody liberal humanism. I would argue that constructions of the oppressed and the revolutionary leaders (or participatory researchers) in Friere’s theory is largely responsible for its liberal humanist applications in education and research.

Maguire provides an explicit indication of how the category 'oppressed' gets produced in opposition to 'researchers:'

To purposefully embark on a research approach that promotes oppressed people’s empowerment as an explicit goal requires a belief that people need empowerment, or conversely, that people are oppressed and powerless. A participatory researcher must find a balance between assuming that oppressed people fully understand their own oppression and the researcher does not, or conversely, that the researcher fully understands the truth about people’s oppression, and they do not. (1987:37)

A belief that people are oppressed is what Maguire understands as a prerequisite for engaging in research that empowers. But the category ‘oppressed’ is also what secures the identity (and superiority) of the researcher, who is knowable only in opposition to the oppressed in this discussion of who can truly understand oppression.

In the following passage from Tandon, the category ‘oppressed’ in need of liberation secures participatory research proponents in the category of liberator:

participatory research has contributed to the forces of liberating the minds of the poor and the oppressed by helping them to reflect on their situation, regain their capacities to analyze and critically examine their reality and to reject the continued
domination and hegemony of the elite and the ruling classes. By encouraging critical reflection, questioning and the continuous pursuit of inquiry, participatory research liberates the minds of the poor and the oppressed, and challenges dominant forces. (Tandon 1988:11)

The notion of liberation prevalent in participatory research discourse requires an encounter between the oppressed and 'revolutionary leaders' that further secures the category of the autonomous individual as the sovereign subject and originator of social change.

The 'Revolutionary Leaders'

Within the participatory research framework, the authority of experience is appropriated as a way for sociologists (and other researchers) to negotiate and legitimize their research interventions:

As Freire points out, oppressed peoples have often internalized the oppressor and fear freedom. The PR educator tries to combat these tendencies by helping the community investigate the larger social forces at work, always listening carefully to what the people have to say about their own experience. Another way to put this is that PR is a process whereby sociologists take the experiences of oppressed peoples and help them to develop the theory to understand and combat their oppression. (Stoecker 1992:8)

Carr is critical of a similar process in anthropology where the tradition of 'testimonio' involves a speaker from an exploited community working with someone who can gain access to the managers of mass media to produce a commodity that can be marketed (1994:156). Participatory research becomes a legitimizing tool of intervention that seeks to align professionals with the marginalized in a 'helping' or 'saviour' capacity. The essentialized categories that sustain this 'helping' framework secure the superiority of the category 'professional' and mask its dominant position in the relations of subordination.

Orefice's description of participatory research in Europe exemplifies how intervention is legitimized and the superiority of the researcher is maintained:

participatory research has taken the flavour of a socio-educative theory and of an unconventional methodology of intervention, aiming at freeing the most disadvantaged populations....For the democratic movement representing populations
most affected by subordination and marginalization, it provided an innovative yet simple approach. For the professionals, it provided a specific means of intervention, and an effective methodology capable of being generalized. (1988:40)

Participatory research is often situated within larger projects of social change. However, those who are to identify the problem (the 'oppressed') have actually been pre-identified as having the problem by those who propose to help them. This framework masks the relations of power that produce the categories of 'marginalized' and 'professional.' The complicity of those in dominant positions, who maintain their privilege before, during and after the research, is masked by legitimizing their intervention. The utilization of participatory research methodology to serve the interests of those who represent the marginalized, re-entrenches the social relations that maintain white supremacy as an ordering principle in the universalized humanist paradigm.

Moves to Innocence

Proponents of participatory research, especially those located in dominant positions within social hierarchies, must vigilantly trace the moves to innocence that are accomplished when social categories are essentialized. These moves to innocence entail locating oneself as either one of the oppressed or else clearly working on the 'good side.' Seeking the margins by working for the oppressed can mean failing to see or be accountable for one's complicity in the domination of others.

Maguire makes one such move to innocence in her explanation of assumptions in participatory research:

Participatory research assumes that there is a political nature to all we do; all of our work has implications for the distribution of power in society. Given this assumption, there can be no neutral or value-free social science. Participatory research requires that researchers be clear about where they choose to stand regarding the daily struggles of oppressed people. (Maguire 1987:35)

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1 For an discussion of the concept of innocence, particularly in scholarly production, see Fellows and Razack (in press); Flax 1992:447; Haraway 1993:192-7; and Van Mann 1995.
While I agree with the assertion that there are political implications to our actions, this passage implies that one can make a 'choice' to be on the 'good side.' There is no acknowledgement of how our multiple and shifting social locations place us complicity within the forces of domination that are discursively and materially organized to privilege and to punish. It is clearly not as simple as making a choice to be on the side of the oppressed; it is also a matter of being accountable to how we oppress as that choice is made. Relying upon the notion of 'choice' to explain political alliances ignores the interrogation of white privilege required of white anti-racism activists who want to be accountable to communities of colour.

The framework of choice is part of liberal humanism that secures the category of autonomous individual through a racialized exclusion of the 'other.' Relations of power are masked by the notion of 'choice.' People are produced as 'victims' prior to their involvement in participatory research and then as having (or having returned to them) the choice to be 'active agents'. Choice is very intertwined in the construction of a relationship between the 'silenced' and the 'researchers' who collaborate in solidarity. This notion of solidarity erases the relation of power between observer and objectified and legitimizes participatory research as an oppositional (and innocent) political practice.

Maguire makes another move to innocence when she essentializes the category 'woman' in a feminist framework for participatory research. She begins to question privilege within patriarchy but omits the implication of her subject position as a white woman in the maintenance of white supremacy:

The framework did help project members and myself explore the oppression women experience as women. It should also help men explore the privilege they enjoy as men and the roles they play in the oppression of women...feminist participatory research intends to analyze oppression based on class, race, and culture. (1987:212)
Briefly referring to race and culture does not go far enough to interrogate white complicity in the structures that maintain white privilege and how this is discursively and materially played out in participatory research.

Stoecker provides another example of a move to innocence by suggesting that it might be possible for researchers to ‘negate’ their dominant class position:

Here the goal is to negate our class position as professional experts tied to existing power structures. Instead, we need to recognize that communities who lack power have research needs also, often completely at odds with those in power. Moreover, members of those communities have knowledge, based on their experience of the society, that is typically denied and drowned out by the establishment. Part of their powerlessness lies in the fact that their view of the world is not heard. (1992:6-7)

Innocence is achieved by distinguishing oneself from the ‘establishment’ that does not listen to the voices of the powerless. This suggests that by recognizing and listening to the needs and views of oppressed communities, the power and dominance of one’s class location is adequately compensated for. Democratization of the research process is represented as an ideal way to facilitate power-sharing in research, education and action. This construction masks relations of subordination between researchers and participants that the model of participation does not dismantle.4 Representations of the ‘oppressed’ in participatory research legitimize the positions of ‘activists’ within the paradigm of ‘social change.’

Similar questions could be asked of the representations that structure the perspectives of university-affiliated Western academics. Delhi writes:

The hidden curriculum of higher education rewards middle class students, thus producing and reproducing class relations....Many writers, Valerie Walkerdine (1987) among them, describe procedures of transforming conflict into discourse as a key “normalizing” feature of bourgeois social regulation. Although appearing normal and natural, these processes of transformation are taught and learned—or not—in a complex web of social relations. (1991:64)

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4 Here it is useful to remember Said’s argument that through its construction of the Other, the West comes to know itself in a way that legitimizes and secures its superior position in the relations of colonial and imperial domination (1993).
These are social relations that I am compelled to account for within my analysis of participatory research discourse produced at the site of the university, as well as interrogating my subject position and identity investment in taking up this research question. For example, critically interrogating participatory research discursive practices also puts me in a position to benefit from knowledge about how to legitimize and successfully market a participatory research project.

Participatory Research with Aboriginal Peoples

In his review of participatory research in the aboriginal movement, Jackson notes the extent to which the middle class, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal, have controlled the process and outcomes:

The class locations of both these Aboriginal initiators of participatory research and the consultants whom they engaged for technical assistance were similar, if not identical. Class representation in the key positions in the participatory research process was dominated by the new middle class...Aboriginal leaders who advocated participatory research were unlikely to push the research process—in methodological, political or financial terms—to a point where it endangered their membership in the new middle class or the "symbiotic" relationship between this class and the successful operation of the state apparatus. (1993:55-6)

Since the 1970s there has been extensive adoption of participatory research in the Aboriginal movement. However, Jackson identifies this class bias, along with gender bias and competition between communities for funding, as key barriers to substantive change resulting for the Aboriginal working class, and particularly women. After more than two decades of participatory research as the "way of working" of Aboriginal communities, "Aboriginal women continue to constitute the most aggrieved and oppressed constituency within Aboriginal communities" (Jackson 1993:63).

One important issue is the problem of the non-aboriginal researcher. Nahanni writes:

We know from past experiences that government research by white researchers never improved our lives. Usually white researchers spy on us, the things we do, how we do them, when we do them, and so on. After all these things are written in their jargon, they go away and neither they nor their reports are ever seen again. (1977:23)
There is a long history of exploitive research relations between white researchers and Aboriginal communities that is supported by state bureaucracy, funding and educational institutions. Flaherty confirms the persistence of this control in her comments to the Northern Science Research Council two decades later:

I don’t like to speak in "them" "us" terms, but often we are driven to this because we are so different, and we speak from very different places. For Inuit we too often are placed into a position of weakness. By weakness, what I am referring to is the fact that the laws, policies and guidelines that pertain to research in Inuit communities and within the Inuit homeland are not ones Inuit have created but rather government, professional institutions and associations have established.

...There is a real pressure placed upon Pauktuutit, albeit external, to use the language, methods and practices of those we are lobbying, seeking research funds from, and advocating to make changes. We must be careful to not exploit Inuit in our own research projects. (1995:10-12)

The non-innocence of our location within the power relations that embody elite institutions (like graduate schools) is what sustains the desire to make social science research more democratic, equitable, just, accountable. But the question of what is accomplished and for whom when a research process is called participatory needs to be explored. How many White researchers have published reports and articles based on participatory research projects conducted in Aboriginal communities? How many degrees, research grants, sessional appointments, and tenured positions have been secured through this process? There are many benefits to those already located in dominant positions that are rarely undermined in a participatory research framework. I would maintain this view despite the concerns often expressed by participatory researchers about the difficulties of publishing or gaining credibility with this kind of research. Claiming a marginalized status within academe for participatory research is yet another move to innocence taken by such researchers. This is part of an ‘interested’ construction of an oppositional and therefore innocent political practice.

My interrogation of participatory research takes seriously Kaplan’s charge that feminists with socio-economic power need to investigate the grounds for their strong desire for rapport and intimacy with the ‘other’(1994:139). From my perspective I would venture that rapport with the
'other' is a means by which I might seek to secure socio-economic power that I do not currently have. By this I mean that there are government funded careers as researchers, professors, community and social workers, and administrators that are founded upon one's track record working with marginalized, minority and low-income 'communities.'

'Iincorporating' Indigenous Knowledge

Much concern has been expressed over the need to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the participatory research process by both native and non-native authors (see Hall 1993; Jackson 1993; Gaventa 1993; Castellano 1993). Vigilant attention must be paid to how recognizing 'culturally different' forms of knowledge production in ways that essentialize identities can mask relations of domination.

Colorado reflects on the pitfalls of using participatory research as a bridge between western and native science:

Native science requires and provides a process for Native people to complete the relationship with non-native people. If we are to survive as a people, we must regain our critical consciousness. (1988:61)

Native science is an indispensable component of the infrastructure of cultural sovereignty of Natives. Can participatory research limit itself so that indigenous people are able to regain autonomy of thinking. (1988:64)

Despite claims that the main goal of participatory research is to legitimize and validate popular knowledge, this passage suggests that autonomy is not a guaranteed result. The control exerted by research and funding institutions reflecting the dominant white culture's agenda is always present. The establishment of guidelines and codes of practice for researchers in aboriginal communities suggests that zealous researchers need to be limited.5

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5 In 1982 the Canadian Journal of Native Studies devoted a special issue to the role of professionals from outside Aboriginal communities. The Department of Native Studies at Trent University also established guidelines for doing participatory oral history research in Aboriginal communities in the mid-eighties (Jackson, 1993:62).
Another issue that the above passages from Colorado raise is whether essentializing ‘cultural difference’ between western and native science actually risks reproducing hierarchical categories that secure white superiority. There are risks associated with naming cultural difference as the place of resistance in a social climate of pluralism where "we speak more of cultural and ethnic difference and less of race and class exploitation and oppression" (Razack 1994:887).

What follows is a comparison between the situations of native peoples and the Third World as interpreted from a participatory research perspective:

It should be made clear that we are not suggesting that the situation of native peoples in Canada is directly comparable to the oppressed classes in the nations of what is called the Third World, although there are many parallels. The nature and extent of the penetration of capital, the elaborate ideological apparatuses, and the particular class structure of Canadian society are important factors which set the case of native people in Canada apart from the colonized peoples of underdeveloped nations. (Jackson et al. 1982:3)

Participatory researchers frame their work with native communities through parallels with the Third World where many of the methods and strategies they employ first evolved. They justify their intervention with the same discursive repertoires that legitimize the construction of benevolent ‘aid’ and ‘assistance’ for ‘development.’ However, the intentional distinguishing of the position of native people in Canada from colonized peoples obscures the subject location of white participatory researchers as dominant in the relations of colonization. Participatory research that incorporates indigenous knowledge without questioning the subject location of non-natives within the Canadian context works to sustain the racialized discourse of nationalism. It enables a site for the categories of ‘oppressed’ and ‘sympathetic researcher’ to secure social relations that mask domination and support moves to innocence.

Park describes participatory research as a process of "recovering people’s interactive knowledge." that is claimed to work better in "less-developed" parts of the world where "the destruction of the indigenous communal practices is less advanced" (1993:18). In industrialized countries participatory research is claimed to be "more easily carried out in settings where the
vestiges of shared culture and common ties are relatively strong, for example, among Native populations, in rural areas, among women, and in labour unions" (Park 1993:18). The assumption underlying these ‘observations’ is that these groups share strong internal cultural links. Connecting difference to culture is a way to avoid talking about domination. What is not mentioned, but is probably more significant, is that these groups share something in common with each other: their subordination by dominant groups. An analysis grounded in tracing relations of domination might conclude that the experience of domination is responsible for the ‘ease’ with which participatory research can be ‘carried out’ with these particular groups (and by whom we need to ask).

Conclusion

I have examined examples of participatory research literature for what they reveal about liberal humanist assumptions in this research discourse. A liberal construct of the autonomous individual with rights and rationality is central to the claims about recovering subjugated knowledges. Rahman writes:

An immediate objective...is to return to the people the legitimacy of the knowledge they are capable of producing through their own verification systems. as fully scientific, and the right to use this knowledge, but not be dictated by it—as a guide in their own action. (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991:15)

The ‘Other’ must be ‘empowered:’ they are granted a previously unavailable ‘right’ to use knowledge that has been constructed as less superior but is now to be legitimized. The category of the ‘oppressed’ gets produced in opposition to the ‘researcher’ who does the ‘granting,’ the ‘returning,’ and the ‘legitimizing.’ The benevolent researcher working in solidarity with ordinary people is secured in a position of dominance. The rational scientific model and the construct of the autonomous individual, (both discursive effects of racialized exclusions), work to maintain the continued dominance of the researcher and the oppression of marginalized communities. However,

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6 See Razack for a more in depth discussion of how the framework of cultural difference avoids issues of power between the dominant and subordinant cultures, and how this is enacted within the education system (1995) and the legal system (in press).
this reinscribing of oppression is not challenged in the participatory research framework. A refusal to paint oneself into the picture of systems of domination constitutes the participatory researcher’s move to innocence.

Dominant groups, who control resources and operate under expectations of white privilege, invite the participation of marginalized groups into a research process that ultimately secures the innocence of researchers as ‘workers in solidarity.’ Heaney recognizes this move when he identifies the ‘professionalization’ of participatory research and the university’s implication:

Attempts to "legitimize" knowledge produced by those who would use it to redress injustice or right inequities can go too far. The proclamation that such knowledge production is "research" was a political act. ...Having "legitimized" the research, there are those who would now "professionalize" the researcher, who would now impose new rules to limit and circumscribe what counts for knowledge among those doing participatory research. And as self-styled legislature and judiciary, the university is ready to take over. (1993:46)

What those who hold power in participatory research often do not see, or care to see, is that their power often comes from much more than their location in an academic institution. Race (white), class-privilege, a dominant subject position in an ableist and heterosexist society; these all interlock to regulate what is seen and not seen, what is ‘knowable,’ and who is erased when the ‘subject’ of participatory research is constituted.

On a cynical note, Heaney suggests that naming work ‘participatory research’ was a political strategy to access funding: "the creation of the term participatory research has been hype-an attempt to gain leverage in a struggle for limited funds and resources" (1993:44). While not discounting this possibility, I have chosen to critique participatory research by pointing out that racialized and exclusionary modern liberal discourse is constitutive of participatory research practices. Underlying Heaney’s suggestion is the assumption that before participatory research was appropriated by academe or other institutions of power, it was pure and authentic. I would argue that even when it is claimed that a participatory research project is ‘authentic,’ meaning free of corrupting capital and elite institutional control, the discourse itself remains, with racializing and
exclusionary effects that sustain systems of domination. Racism in the liberal discourse of modernity is central to participatory research assumptions and practices. In Chapter Four I examine the transcripts of four interviews I conducted with participatory researchers. These narratives show that despite attempts to challenge and resist the liberal discourse of modernity in participatory research, the risk of reproducing racism and erasure remains.
I begin this chapter by discussing autobiographical factors and theoretical positions that influenced my research process. There are tensions to explore in the transition from analysing written texts of participatory research to analysing the interviewing and transcribing process. Following this is a discussion of discourse analysis and deconstruction; methodologies that I used to prepare for, transcribe and analyze the interviews. Then I discuss each interview individually, drawing from transcript excerpts and journal reflections.

Representation and Performativity in Interviewing

I was very hesitant about interviewing. Informed by poststructural perspectives that problematize the ‘real,’ I now viewed preparing interview questions and deciding who to interview as a performance that would create fictional accounts of participatory research discourse. I rejected positivist positions in traditional ethnography of what constitutes a ‘representative sample’ or ‘reproducible findings.’ I wanted to develop an ‘interested objectivity’ (Haraway 1991) that would account for power relations in researching across differences that operate to silence or determine interpretive control of representation.¹

So why interview? Describing the discursive foundations of participatory research and its relationship to social change did not require interviews. An analysis of the text of canonical literature presented in Chapter Three was one way to accomplish this. Excavating my autobiographical discourses when I promoted participatory research as a more valid or ethical research practice to students of community development was another way. Part of my data became

lectures I had written and my memories of classroom discussions. I remember making persuasive arguments about the importance of people's voices being heard in research, and a researcher's responsibility to make spaces for those voices. Subjugated knowledge needed to be recognized on equal footing with dominant ways of knowing.²

These discursive practices reveal a dependency on theories of 'authentic voices' and 'experience' for accessing the 'truth' about actions and knowledges that can bring about social change. They also materialize the identities of 'ordinary people' in relation to those who have the 'responsibility' to make changes. This discourse regulates and constrains what is 'knowledge,' who are 'researchers,' and how these interact to produce 'social change.'

Britzman (1995b) urges us to recognize the cost of our identity investments. This means accounting for how biography is constitutive of research. Developing an anti-racism framework for participatory research was the learning agenda I brought to graduate school. The moral imperative was this: were I to be involved in a participatory research project in the future, I did not want it to perpetuate racism. I wanted to engage in discussions with other people who frame, or struggle with framing, their research as participatory. I decided to conduct interviews with participatory researchers and initiate conversations about the possibility that racism was structuring this research discourse. This was intended to 'incite us to discourse' that I could document.

I designed my interviewing schedule, which became a list of guiding questions and some scenarios for us to discuss, using some of the techniques from Wetherell and Potter's work with interpretive repertoires (1992) and Riessman's work with narrative analysis (1993).³ Another influence has been Lather's discussions of validity (1994) that rethink the claims of generalizability and reproducibility that dictate standard approaches to analysing interview material in the social sciences. I am not concerned with generalizing or verifying my findings about a 'real'

²From Fischer, Lectures. 1995.

³ For a list of these questions and my reflections on them, see Appendix A.
world across a series of interviews. Rather I strive to produce plausible and persuasive interpretive accounts that attempt to be trustworthy, as opposed to 'true.' This is partly achieved by what Reissman (1993) refers to as the 'pragmatic use' approach to validation that takes place within an already socially constructed academic community (1993:68). By this she means describing and making visible how interpretations are produced, making primary data available to other researchers and attempting to make foundational assumptions and values as transparent as possible.

I have taken a series of steps to reveal the foundational assumptions that underlie this research. These include stating my anti-racism framework, interrogating whiteness in my autobiographical data, and presenting a critique of modern liberalism from race and poststructural perspectives. I have also been attentive to discussing my subjectivity in the interviewing process. The primary data I provide for other researchers are substantial passages from my interview transcripts that include my questions as objects of analysis. I also reveal my transcript conventions in the appendices.\(^4\)

I wanted to think about participatory research as an effect of discourse or as performativity, but I was anxious about how I would communicate this to my participants in language that was understandable to them. I first articulated this as a desire for 'accessible language' that was free of postmodern jargon. I was asked by one professor to investigate what I thought I meant by 'accessible language.' She was suggesting that my concern about 'accessibility' revealed my theory of language, rather than revealing any 'truth' about accessible language. I was also concerned about asking what I thought of as 'threatening' questions about racism and white privilege, particularly of the participant who is white. I worried that the interrogation of whiteness that I wanted my interview questions to incite was inadequate.\(^5\) These concerns shaped who I

\(^4\) See Appendix B for transcript conventions.

\(^5\) Both of these concerns became very 'real' and evident as blocks and limitations in the interviews. The awkward moments in interviewing that these blocks can create are most usefully seen as what Reissman (1993) describes as a 'breach.' When there is a breach a reigning discourse is being interrupted in a way that makes the regulatory aspects of discourse much more obvious.
decided to interview and how I asked questions. Three of the four people I interviewed were students at my institute who were already familiar with my project, namely my concerns about racism and foundational assumptions in participatory research. My fourth interview was with a participatory researcher whom I was able to contact through a classmate.

Reviewing the schedule of questions (Appendix A), they appear aimed at minimizing the barriers to establishing rapport that I was anticipating. I ask very straightforward questions about my participants' understanding of participatory research and the roles they take in projects. Then I introduce scenarios that raised ethical and equity issues that a researcher might encounter. I had studied written accounts of participatory research projects and now I wanted to see if my participants and I could challenge the underlying foundations I had identified in this literature.

Despite attempts to incorporate poststructural theories in my interviewing methodology, many of my decisions rely upon authorizing discourses of 'legitimate' and 'critical' academic work. My rationale for interviewing is performative of social justice; it is a citation of 'letting

My analysis of individual interviews describes some of these breaches.

There was a great deal of protective anonymity for myself in the fact that I was contacting people to interview in Toronto where I knew very few people. Certainly if I had been interviewing in my hometown I would have been conscious of possible repercussions to pursuing this line of questioning with people who might have been acquaintances through past and future work connections. I think my questions might have been more tentative in their attempt to identify racialized categories and racism inherent in the foundational assumptions of participatory research. At the same time I might have pushed to generate a much more practical discussion about actual strategies to resist racist underpinnings. This might have led to an underlying agenda of 'fixing' participatory research. Without the consistent contact with my supervisor, classmates and antiracism scholarship available to me in Toronto, I suspect this project would have taken a more reformist perspective.

I may have had even more opportunity to develop useful insights if I had met with the participants, either separately, or as a group, to discuss my initial findings and hear their feedback. This may have also been a more reciprocal process for the participants too, if they had wanted to volunteer their time to do this. But there are many risks of reproducing power relations when revisiting these issues, especially as a group, and I do not believe this process necessarily results in more objective findings. There are other options, such as sending participants copies of their transcripts, and/or transcript with analysis, and asking for their written or taped comments. But I chose to focus on the wealth of data available just in my participants' responses and my interpretations of the interviewing process. I feel I am only beginning to scratch the surface of the potential of this data for useful analysis.
people speak for themselves.' My choice of whom to interview invites critical inquiry. Three of
the four people were members of a graduate class on participatory research and the fourth person
had recently arrived in Canada and is a participatory research consultant for a Canadian NGO. Of
my three classmates, two are female; a white woman and a native woman, and one is a black male
who is visually disabled and a visa student from a ‘third world’ country. The fourth person is a
woman of colour, also from a ‘third world’ country.8

Why does my choice of participants conspicuously reflect hiring equity policies directing
employers to welcome applications from women, disabled, Aboriginal and visible minorities? I
know this is not by chance nor reflective of the makeup of my participatory research class. It is
also unlikely to be an accurate reflection of the identity categories of people who label their work
as participatory research. Only the percentage of women I interviewed might reflect the proportion
of women who participate in graduate classes in schools of education relative to men. However,
forming a representative sample was not my conscious intention.9 These choices of who to
interview were not dictated by a particular methodological or theoretical framework. Rather, this
‘diverse’ selection of participants is produced by discourses of inclusion. Retrieving suppressed
and forbidden memory, I can recall mentally checking off which ‘oppressed’ groups each person I
was planning to interview represented. Implicitly, the identity of the white woman and my own
identity are normalized. Racism and heterosexism structure the identity equations of this

8 ‘Third world’ is a term that was originally used by a group of nations in the United Nations
that wanted to distinguish themselves as non-aligned, meaning that they were not aligned with
either the United States (democracy) or the Soviet Union (socialism). Rather they were proposing a
‘third way.’ This term then came to be synonymous with terms like ‘underdeveloped,’ ‘less
developed’ and ‘developing world’ that emerged with modernization theory. I use it here to
indicate that the home countries of two of my participants were both formerly of this non-aligned
movement. Like all categories, the ‘third world’ is socially constructed through relations of power.

9 In fact, I negotiated my thesis supervisor’s recommendation that I interview eight people (so
that I could generalize about the discursive practices they deployed) with my growing attempt to
conceptualize the validity and generalizability of my findings without relying on quantitative
measures.
'representative sample' that informs my participant selection process. This is the violence of discursive practices that regulate what is 'normal' and 'valid' in the research process.

My choices of whom to interview reflect my nagging anxiety about the generalizability of my research and reveal the limits of my thinking on the validity. Why this necessity to interview four people who have diverse identity investments in order to generalise about discursive practices in participatory research? It is antithetical to the poststructural theories informing my research approach which displace subject position or identity as originary of knowledge. I recall an unconscious reflex, the reiteration of a discourse of inclusion from my popular education training. Implicit to the 'fixing' of identities that I have gathered and arranged as 'representative voices' in my research project is an imperative of definable difference. This imperative also operates in the definitional and regulatory practices of participatory research. Participation is premised upon all voices being heard and all possible 'stakeholders' being represented in decision-making.

I have interviewed four people, not to present them as representative of a sociological phenomenon or as generalizable to a specific category of people, but in order to document a discourse. The transcripts provide data for interrogating discursive practices that structure the intelligibility of 'participation' and other constructs in participatory research. There are tendencies to both fix and unfix identities in order to speak about their oppression. I am attentive to the complexity and contradictions of identities and identifications. On the other hand, this kind of

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10 In other words, this research slate is not cleared of the remnants of legitimacy indicators derived from the discourses of inclusion. There is no neutral, originary place from which to begin: we are always working from "resources inevitably impure" (Butler 1993:241). The 'diverse voices' that my selection process produced shows how difference is constituted on the surface of bodies through the discourses of inclusion in popular education and participatory research. Recognizing how my research is shaped by the discourse of inclusion helps me to see the racializing impact of this discourse in participatory research itself.
problematizing can also distract theorists from addressing the oppression that real people experience.11

**Audience and Agency in Writing**

Questions of audience intersect with my research objectives, my perception of ethics and my struggles with the question of agency. These multiple points of intersection lead to further theorizing of how a research project is shaped. Butler maintains that agency lies in the instability and the deconstituting possibility of the process of repetition or resignification (1993:10). The idea of agency as not originary in the subject, but occurring through slippages, structures the thinkability of my ‘findings.’ I struggle with describing participatory research in poststructural terms, as the effect of regulatory discursive practices, because it does not ‘feel’ like an ethical way to understand the agency of real people who participate in research projects, and feel empowered by the process. I want to deconstruct my actions as a researcher without denying that we often speak from strategically essentialized identities. The challenge is this: “how to think power as resignification together with power as the convergence or interarticulations of relations of regulation, domination, constitution” (Butler 1993:240)?

I would like to think of our exchanges in the interviews as more than a reintrenching of discursive practices that mask power relations and the material structures that sustain participatory research. What kind of discursive practices, and what kind of researcher, might make visible the discursive practices that sustain these material structures? I return to thinking of reiterative practices in which there is always slippage. Here lies the possibility for change: for making material structures more visible and easier to interrogate. What participatory research theorists.

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11 Razack (in press) shows how the category ‘vulnerable woman’ in law originated out of attempts to protect women’s rights and recognize their oppression. However, the category ‘vulnerable woman’ only works to a woman’s advantage if she is constructed as a victim. The category can also penalize women by the way it sets up a binary for understanding their actions; either ‘woman as victim’ or ‘woman as responsible.’
practitioners, my interview participants, or I imagine and reiterate as social change *materializes* through time and is continually remade. These representations will never again mean what we meant, they will never again regulate and constrain participatory research's 'thinkability' in exactly the same way. This is one way to begin theorizing agency.

I report what I understand from the interviews and how these views came to hold my attention. Many perspectives remain firmly buried beneath my sites of excavation. Techniques of validity and representation attempt to persuade us that certain ideas emerging from what appears on the paper are the 'fruitful findings.' Alternate readings will destabilize and contradict my partial perspectives in ways that locate them within sets of social relations. Haraway refers to "a doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformations of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing" (1991:191-2). I study the relationship of constructs such as individualism and participatory research in order to ask what these discursive repertoires accomplish. This requires tentative explorations of how concepts come to be thinkable as relational processes rather than assertions about independent and verifiable truths. The relationships between these concepts produced in my discussion of these interviews are interesting for what they reveal about the limits of my thinking about research.

**A Note on Discourse Analysis and Deconstruction**

In an attempt to rework discourse analysis for analysing racism in the ordinary talk of white New Zealanders, Wetherell and Potter (1992) distinguish their approach from a variety of

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12 By 'us' I am thinking of myself as author of this piece of writing and other people with whom I have engaged in the creation of this work, such as people I have interviewed as well as people who have read this work at various stages in its development. This work is destined to evolve through many drafts crafted for particular purposes, such as shorter articles, conference presentations, and PhD. and funding applications. There will never be a 'final draft' and the opportunities to theorize omissions, silences and gaps will never end.
other trends in the sociology of racism. They propose thinking of 'ideological practices' rather than 'ideology.' From Miles (1989), Wetherell and Potter hold on to the importance of seeing how texts are bound up with social and material processes, and his emphasis on historical analysis. But instead of remaining exclusively entrenched in a functionalist approach to discourse, they also draw from Foucault, and propose thinking of discourse as constitutive, and power as dispersed throughout social formations. Their work is somewhat parallel to mine in that they are concerned with how racist legitimations also work through social reformist, humanitarian and liberal discourse (1992:56).

Miles sees discourse and ideology as ruling ideas that must be critiqued based on 'real' facts. This is compatible with participatory research which is concerned with identifying power structures with particular social groups. As the logic goes, if those without power can participate in knowledge production, the ruling ideas of the elite can be critiqued based on 'real' facts from the experience of people. Both Miles' functionalist account of ideology and discourse, and participatory research, share an underlying concern with essential causes of social patterns, and with discourse as concealing exploitive social relations.

However, my use of discourse analysis in the interviews departs from this understanding of ideology. I am not looking for 'misrepresentations' of the reality of the oppressed. Instead, I am concerned, as are Wetherell and Potter, with how facts are construed as facts and what might be the consequences. This entails looking at 'ideological practices' and 'interpretive repertoires,' or discourse in action as Wetherell and Potter describe it (1992:69-72). Interpretative repertoire is the

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13 These other approaches include functionalist accounts of ideology (Miles 1989), social cognition theory, social identity theory (Turner et al. 1987), and research on the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al. 1950). See Wetherell and Potter (1992:34).

14 Wetherell and Potter (1992) want to move away from linking ideology to falsity (simply representational of material realities), and away from thinking of discourse as the property of social groups (reflective of their material interests).
term these authors use to distinguish their application of discourse analysis from other discourse research styles (88). They describe interpretative repertoires as

broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors and vivid images...as systems of signification and as the building blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self, and social structures in talk. (1992:90)

In my analysis of the interviews, I too am concerned with 'talk' not as derived from abstract meaning but from its situated use. The interviews are set up as conversations about participatory research and my participant's responses, as well as my questions and interventions, provide examples of constructions, or discursive repertoires.

How my task differs from Wetherell and Potter’s, as it does from van Dijk’s (1993) work on analysing racism through discourse analysis, is that these works focus primarily on tracing racist discursive practices in the talk of white dominant groups. I trace discursive practices in participatory research that sustain white dominance, however the bodies that are constituting and are constituted by the discourse (authors, my interview participants, myself), are not exclusively white. This is not a significant diversion however, because as Wetherell and Potter explain, they are not trying to classify people but rather reveal discursive practices through which race categories are constructed and exploitation is legitimized (1992:102). Examining how race categories are constructed shows how these categories sustain identities such as 'the oppressed' and 'researchers.'

In the interviews, I asked questions intended to stimulate reflections and opinions on participatory research. I am influenced by Britzman’s call for factoring in the cost of our identity investments and moral imperatives to the research process (1995b). This means recognizing how my original research question, "Can participatory research discourses resist dominant social

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15 The two other styles of discourse analysis that Wetherall and Potter (1992:88) want to distinguish their work from are speech-act studies of conversational coherence (Coulthard and Montgomery 1981) and 'discourse processes' work on story grammars (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983).
practices of exclusion?", emerges out of my identity investments as a graduate student engaged in thesis research. This question relies upon the idea of ‘dominant social practices’ that are distinguishable from 'participatory research practices.' It presumes that participatory research can have effects that an ‘objective’ researcher will be able to determine as either resisting or sustaining something that is intelligible as a dominant practice. The possibility of participatory research being a ‘dominant social practice' is foreclosed or obscured within this syntax. The question is strongly suggestive of its potential to be a preferable method of research. It is a question that seeks out credibility and legitimacy for participatory research practices and attempts to secure a position of innocence or non-complicity for the researcher involved.

There is a hidden or absent ‘I’ in the above articulation that is part of the representation of some originary point of knowledge arising from the dialogue that emerges in interviews. To analyze our discussions, I examine the intertwining of my moral investments with my interviewing and research objectives. This is not with the belief that I can create transparent objective representations of these interviews. Rather it is for what these interrogations can reveal about race and representation in participatory research. I turn to Britzman’s discussion of the study of ignorances, limits, and reading practices (1995a). She suggests that it is only by looking closely at what we do not know (limits), do not want to know (ignorances), or want too much to know (our reading practices) that we can being to grasp how ‘what we know’ is shaped and determined. This encourages me to imagine the emergent and resistant identities and strategies that could lie beyond stable identity categories like ‘researcher’ or ‘ordinary people.’

These ideas affect how I chose to reproduce excerpts from my interviews. Uncovering my identity investments in the research begins to disrupt any unified story of the effects of participatory research discourse. Following Haraway’s assertion of the need to rescue objectivity from the bonds of scientific hegemony, my account intends to highlight the partiality of a particular slice of "interested objectivity" (1991:189). This approach to validity also draws from
Lather's discussion of 'voluptuous validity' in which authority is constructed via practices of engagement and self-reflexivity (1994:682-3). I exercise self-reflexivity by questioning, for example, my motives for pursuing this research or asking for interviews with particular people. Authority through engagement is achieved by incorporating my autobiographical data. These exposures tell a revealing story about the construction of a 'participatory researcher.'

The next four sections discuss each of the interviews individually. In analysing the interview transcripts, I use the conceptual tool of performativity to trace reiterations that mark the limits of the body and identities in the discourses of participatory research. These discursive practices or repertoires open up some sites of power for excavation and recognition of the multiplicity of representation, while they foreclose others. Racialized constructs, like the autonomous individual, lock our thoughts into a discourse of binary identities and the bodies that materialize are inequitably positioned in systems of oppression.

The Interviews: Interviewing Arthur

Arthur had been involved as a 'consumer representative' in a participatory research project that brought together disabled people and engineering firms to collaborate on the design of assistive devices. Arthur is also a doctoral student who is proposing participatory action research for his study of the needs of disabled students in his home country. The interview was conducted in English, which is not Arthur's first language. During the interview we made use of his computer which is adapted with voice generation to accommodate for Arthur's blindness. In response to some of my questions, he asked me to read passages from his writing and we discussed them. I had also heard Arthur present his experience and analysis of the assistive devices project in a class we had taken together.

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16 His real name, and the names of the three other participants, are not used in the thesis.

17 I have corrected minor grammatical errors but otherwise the transcript was prepared according to the Transcript Conventions in Appendix B.
My excitement about Arthur's involvement in participatory research and my interest in interviewing him reveals racism and normalization in my discourse. I found it 'notable' that Arthur, a black disabled man, was a participant in one project and was also designing his own project. A racist discourse producing 'participatory researcher' as white and able-bodied structures my 'interest' in Arthur's story as someone who disrupts the norm. Arthur can not be confined by the static identities in participatory research and his 'uneasy fit' provides a critique of these categories. He sees through constructions of participation and empowerment that do not represent or account for his experience with participatory research. I trace his multiple identifications in the research and his insights on how power circulates in the construction of identities. Individualism, professionalism, and market forces are reigning discursive repertoires in Arthur's story. His narrative shows two things: the first is how participatory research is conveniently suffused with discourses of the expert and coopted for maintaining the power of the status quo. The second is how liberal constructs of the autonomous individual, and an essentialized identity category like 'disabled,' limit the anti-subordination potential of the participatory research project. Modernist and essentialized identity categories in participatory research sometimes reintrench the subordinating power of a construct like 'disability.' more than they subvert it.

I now turn to some passages excerpted from my interview with Arthur. What first held my attention in the transcript was the multiplicity of terms Arthur used to describe people who 'participate' in research. They included people, individual, user, consumer, engineer, client, patient, and handicapped person. Arthur describes his role of 'consumer' as being very passive:

I was described as a consumer in the project. The consumer is someone who buys the technology...that was my role, that is. I should go to help them, I should volunteer my time, help them, assist them. ... but the role was not to be...a...an active participant [...]. So, in the final analysis, my role was only to provide information [...]. (AK:2)

Participants passively providing information sets up a relation of power with those who receive this information that produces identities like 'client' and 'patient' which later emerge in the
Arthur's discourse. This sets up a model of expertise within the research that is authorized through the discourse of medicine:

[…] to locate the issues of people with disabilities you look at, for example, the disabled person as a client or as a patient. So, his or her expectations are not very important, they’re looked at as experiences but then the engineers just come in and collect the information and use this to develop the technology which is theirs to sell it to you afterwards. (AK:2)

Arthur’s reference to ‘clients’ and ‘patients’ signifies the medical model underpinning the practitioner/consumer dichotomy in his discourse. Similar to doctors that solicit symptoms, the engineers are experts who incorporate people by soliciting the design specifications from them, almost like quality control. From Arthur’s discussion it appeared that there was no prior process to determine the priorities of the disabled people involved from their perspective. The priority seemed pre-determined by the imperative of corporate profit: design a better product that is ‘useful’ and will sell. Using the term ‘consumer’ in the research project might propose to be inclusive of persons with disabilities on equal footing in the decision-making process. But market relations (producer/consumer) define the intelligibility of Arthur’s place at the advisory table. This static role imposes severe limits upon the claims to authority from which Arthur can advocate. He describes sitting at a table with seventeen engineers, as the single consumer representative on the management board, and how he was sometimes not invited if there were "sensitive issues to be discussed" (AK:5). A research process ostensibly set up to facilitate cooperation and advocacy opportunities for persons with disabilities actually functions primarily to exploit the labour of individual ‘representatives’ for free marketing and design consultation. Not only will this arrangement potentially increase profits for the engineering firms involved, with no direct compensation to consumers, but it also regulates how disability is thought about.

The imperative structuring ‘disability’ is that technology is the answer for enhancing people’s lives. This ‘answer’ is a regime of truth that constitutes disability as a void in the body that technology can fill. The multitude of ways in which ‘able’ bodies are also supported and
function through relationships with technology is silenced in the able/disabled binary. Exploring the potential of legislating accessibility and equity, rather than prioritizing technological solutions aimed at normalizing individuals, is foreclosed within this project. What constitutes life enhancement (values that underpin liberalism like mobility, independence, functionality) is already determined through the authority that accumulates in citations of the ‘functioning’ body.

Arthur describes how the expectations of disabled people are ignored and their contribution is constituted as ‘experience.’ Disability regulates and constrains what is thinkable as this ‘experience.’ Its intelligibility is structured as the experience of incapacities. This regulatory discourse renders unintelligible the ‘experience’ of disability that could provide answers for enhancing society as a whole, including the lives of people constituted as able-bodied. Silenced is the ‘truth’ that the ‘experience’ of disability reveals all that is wrong and lacking in society.

Increasingly, scientific and corporate focus on the development of ‘assistive devices’ eases the burden on society to change its structures in more fundamental ways to make equitable participation of the ‘disabled’ possible. Multiple ways of viewing ‘the problem’ could lead to very different research strategies. Focusing on structural and systemic features of accessibility would work at solving a societal inaccessibility problem, rather than designing assistive devices to solve the ‘problems’ of individuals.

‘Experience’ in the discourse of Arthur’s project is constituted as living in the disabled body. Marking the limits of that body is the reiteration of the able (normal), individualized body. Participatory research discourse reproduces the individual and the normal through the rhetoric of participation that is available to Arthur:

Participatory research, to me, means actively involving people in the decision-making process...uh, it could be on any individual level, that is when you are assessing the needs of an individual. Then in most cases the people who are assessed are people with a disability, but it can apply also to just assessing the skills of an individual which he can market, or the skills that an individual can use to do a job or to lead a good and normal life. (AK:1)
'Skills' and 'abilities' are produced categories or performatives that structure the intelligibility of the abled and disabled body. They are constructions authorized in discourses of the labour market and productivity. The disabled body materializes in opposition to able-bodied through its relationship with market forces. Citations of 'life skills' and daily reproduction activities reiterate the normalizing discourse practices of ability and disability. The marked experience of disability is reproduced and structures the thinkability of a participatory research project.

From Arthur's narrative, a hierarchy of experience emerges:

I think in order for this to produce good assistive devices, the experience of users is really important, because they work with those devices from day, on a daily basis, so they know their needs much better than the professionals. So in designing that kind of technology, uh, the input of handicapped people was very important [...] (AK:1)

This passage reiterates the binary categories of professional/user, and the 'professionalism' of 'disabled' bodies (for example Arthur's profession as a doctoral student), is erased. A discourse of standards and meritocracy underlies constructions of ability and disability, especially as standardized measurement determines who 'fits' the category 'disabled' and is therfore eligible for 'benefits.'

The slant of my interview questions also reveals the embeddedness of professionalism in the discourse of participatory research. My investment in the 'participatory researcher' identity consistently shifts the discussion to the legitimacy of possible roles for university affiliated researchers. For example, I ask Arthur to respond to a scenario which raises issues of equity in the hiring of participatory research consultants. The intelligibility of my scenario relies upon insider/outsider binaries and the signifiers of hiring policy standardization. Skills, experience, and job performance have regulated and constrained meanings that mark a racist limit in participatory research discourse and in my thinking about it.

18 This scenario involved the hiring of participatory researchers for a project to assess the mental health needs of multi-racial communities. I was asking Arthur whether being a person of colour or having experience and qualifications as a participatory researcher should be prioritized in the hiring process. (See Appendix A: Interview Questions, question #11)
The scenario in which I describe a hiring dilemma for a multi-racial participatory health project prompted the following narrative from Arthur:

[...] qualification is not only a certificate, that’s my feeling. I also disagree with advising and all this kind of stuff, they have to be done to try and fudge people [...] but overall, I don’t think job performance has led to what your qualifications say. Job performance is also a matter of your interest in the job, and experience, some people with life-long experience here have not been recorded, so, uh, and particularly, some people, like I can give you an example of disabled people..myself, I could be highly qualified, more than an able-bodied person, but I could have less experience because very few people like to hire me in the first place (yes), [...] so I might take longer to get a job than a white able-bodied man, uh, because, uh...the...the connection, and whatever, friends, and whatever can easily get you jobs, so it’s a very difficult scenario to discuss, but there are many variables apart from qualifications and experience of individual [...] So, you have to look at an individual’s life from a much more broader perspective rather than a narrow minded experience, and the qualifications, there are so many factors such as inability to have money to go to school, family violence, and so forth. So, there are some good people would not get the opportunity who might do a better job, so, it has to be actually looked at, uh, it needs to be examined from much more than that. So there is no, in the further analysis, there is no simple solution (AK:5-6).

In this passage, identity as a site of the crisis of representation disrupts the liberal discourse of equality and standards in hiring. The many variables Arthur describes complicates a unified understanding of experience and qualifications. The possibility of hiring on the basis of interest in the job begins to subvert the discursive practices that position ‘disability’ within standardized job market discourse. This rupture provides an opening to the misrecognition of disability and the recognition of unthinkable ability. A discursive repertoire that identifies skills thought necessary to overcome the physical limits of the body subordinates the disabled body. Skills that have been gained to offset those limits, that remain outside of the domain of what counts as ‘skills,’ are not recognized nor valued.

Arthur's description of hiring practices in his home country reveals another layer to the ritualized barriers around hiring that are reincased in participatory research. He describes psychological testing as a tool of exclusionary hiring practices that is also used in participatory organizations:
[...] the psychological approach which uses what's called psycho-stimulate in which the people with disability are studied and use the IQ to eliminate them and what is frightening, particularly in [my home country], particularly if you are disabled and you are looking for a job, you have to be examined by other psychologists or medical people to show that you are fit for the job and usually if you’re handicapped, it is, they feel it forms an adverse condition which might compromise your chance of getting a job and that is, some say which uh, other organizations like the other participatory organization are, they claim to be participatory organizations but, they are still using those principles or beliefs in a much more subtle way. (AK:4)

In this rationalization for psychological testing, the mind and body are juxtapositioned in a discourse of integration and adaption in which what ‘lacks’ is located within individuals. The ability/disability binary obscures what is lacking within social arrangements to support what is normalized as individual needs. This way of viewing the world also masks the emergence of complex and highly subsidized government support systems that the dominant discourses of progress and development sanction, such as road systems, nuclear energy, free trade, or even athletic excellence.

Arthur criticizes the lip-service that is paid to participation and inclusion in projects and organizations. This is a very concrete example of how the discourse constitutes well formed participatory research plans that never have their intended effects:

So that’s some of the subtle methods which they use, but if you read their paper, they are very good, usually black people, disabled people in this and that, but in the practical application of the process itself, that is the most ignored, but if you read their proposal, it’s a very good proposal, and if they follow what they say, that would be very nice, but, when it comes to the implementation, practical implementation of the ideas, they overlook the paper. That’s where their biggest problem is, and right now, that’s where the government still is a problem. (AK:5)

The discourse of participatory research already subordinates ‘othered’ bodies. Plans to include diversity and difference are constituted through the same discourse that produces the identities of those who must be included and those who do the including. When the normal is being constituted and patrolled through the discourses of inclusion, practical means to include the othered body only make sense through its exclusion from the bounds of ‘normalacy.’ Citations of the normal continually work against attempts to ‘include’ at every practical step, from communication and
transportation norms, to the thinkability of group and individual needs. Exceptions to this can be just as damaging when one ‘representative’ individual is tokenly included.

Arthur’s experience at his institute gives him direct knowledge of how processes of exclusion operate:

[...] when disabled peoples’ issues are being discussed, all the people at the table, well everybody, they, several people will not be able to have input in the issues [...] for instance here at [the institute], there is no disabled person on the board, no disabled persons who work, probably work here as professors, [...] such that when issues of people with disability are being discussed, nobody represents them. They just make the decisions from there. (AK:4)

Perhaps more than for any other socially constituted group, reigning popular beliefs about ‘capacity’ erases the disabled from speaking for themselves, let alone for anyone else. What is the importance of real bodies at the table? Arthur’s critique relies upon the notion of an originary source of authentic knowledge about disability needs, located within the ‘disabled’ body. We need to advocate for the hiring of ‘disabled’ bodies within a workplace, or their presence at the research decision-making table, and at the same time disrupt discourses that normalize ‘ability’ and subordinate ‘disability?’

Arthur maintains a level of faith in the potential of participatory research projects to provide disabled people with opportunities to take more control over the research process and their lives. This is indicated by his choice of participatory action research as a methodology for his doctoral thesis. But he still remains sceptical:

So you can see that it’s very, very complex, that’s why if a participatory action research approach is used, when the people see all these things, they will realize what is good and what is bad for them. Now that’s the way I look at some of those issues myself. I do get a lot of funding which is unnecessary, which is also being granted to white people and some of the research is very useless. (AK:7)

Arthur is concerned about how funding structures the research he does. His marked identity as ‘disabled’ is a point of entry for accessing research funding and opportunities. Can he disrupt the discourses constituting his identity that reintrench the domination? Will the design of his research projects open spaces of slippage and disrupt the normalizing discourses of disability? How will he
negotiate and resist the funding structures that produce what he calls ‘useless’ research, without reintrenching exclusionary discourse and practices that structure the intelligibility of his funding in the first place? Already his multiple identifications as a participant ‘consumer,’ disabled, black, and an emerging professional destabilize the racialized binaries of researcher/participant, expertise/experience and revolutionary leader/oppressed that underpin participatory research discourse.

The statement with which Arthur concludes our interview expresses his hopes and concerns for the practice of participatory research. They seem reminiscent of my preliminary excavations that set up this approach as having either negative or positive impacts:

[...] when people are discussing participatory research, I would like to see much more open mindedness [...] although I am afraid also that sometimes, if it is also left open, some people might abuse it, abuse the process, and they misuse it whatever, and [...] they might use it to terrorize those people whom they are serving. So I don’t know how this can be done, but I think the most important aspect of participatory research is to take care and to listen to the people whom you are researching. (AK:9)

Arthur occupies multiple and contradictory positions within participatory research projects. He has been an invited participant in a project on appropriate technology for persons with disabilities, and he is designing a participatory action research project for his doctoral thesis. He negotiates the identities of ‘consumer’ and ‘disabled’ in relation to ‘engineers’ in the research process. The frame of my research questions is challenged by Arthur’s interpretation of his experience. Regulated passivity, manipulation, co-optation and marginalization are the impressions that surface from his narrative. This is not a story that keeps intact the reigning discourse of empowerment in an ‘emancipatory’ research process.

Interviewing Maria

Maria recently arrived in Canada from a ‘third world’ country. She is consulting for a prominent Canadian NGO in the development of a participatory research project with domestic
workers from her country. She was interested in meeting with me because it was an opportunity to compare her knowledge of participatory research gained in her home country with that of a Canadian." She was familiar with the work of one of my professors and I was able to lend her a book which he had co-edited. She refers to herself as a participatory research practitioner.

In contrast to Arthur's story in which inequalities of power are explicitly described, Maria's story avoids direct reference to issues of power. The foreign domestic workers that Maria helps to organize experience multiple forms of oppression in Canada. However, the version of participatory research that Maria presents stresses its peaceful and non-subversive nature and the importance of values and building trust. 'Passivity' is a valued quality in a researcher, rather than the regulated quality of participants that Arthur described. From idealized constructions of a 'facilitator' and 'role model,' that are easily transported into participatory research discourse, I identify paternalism in moves to legitimize a researcher's intervention. I try to challenge these constructs that secure a position of innocence for the researcher in Maria's discourse. At the same time I need to keep in focus my dominance in the relations of power that are constituting the research relationship between Maria and myself.

My previous discussion of Miles' work on racism and its articulation with social processes of labour migration and nation-state formation provides a backdrop for my interview with Maria. This is how she describes the group of women she is working with:

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19 In the interview, we are speaking English, which is not Maria's first language. This is one way in which I have more power in the research relationship. At times I felt Maria's responses to my questions were geared toward trying out her understanding and perceptions of participatory research with me in English to see how they corresponded to the instruction and experience she had accumulated at home. This may have been useful to her in beginning her participatory research consulting relationship with a Canadian organization. The interview took place in an office at my institute which would have reinforced Maria's inclination to associate me with graduate work, knowledge and expertise in participatory research. This dynamic of seeking affirmation in the interview that she was 'on the right track' was confirmed in the tone of a thank you note she wrote to me when returning a book I had lent her.

20 Stalisius, Arafat-Koc and are just a few of the authors whose work addresses issues of power, domination and exploitation in the social relations of foreign domestic work in Canada.
this group of people who are organized to be a core group are the domestic helpers, of course, and they join organizations also, just to help themselves, and usually, these are...domestic helpers who are, some of them are professionals. Most of them are professionals, they were dismissed just like that, they were de-skilled just, just to have the job. (ML:13)

These women are organizing to research and take action that will improve their living conditions as domestic workers in Canada. They have migrated to Canada under a worker’s program that reinforces the duality of national and foreigner, a process that ‘deskills’ them and restricts or denies their basic human rights under Canadian law. Maria’s words complicate the notion of a homogeneous unskilled migrant labour force and supports Miles’ thesis that these women should be seen as “social actors seeking ways to respond to the disadvantaged position in which so many find themselves...continuing a historical struggle for equality and for a widening of the scope of the category of citizenship” (193).

Bakan and Stasiulis (1995) have argued that differences in citizenship status between domestic workers and their employers interact with racial/ethnic, gender and class differences to facilitate structural inequities. This research includes documenting the discourse of domestic placement agencies which reveals the socially constructed racialized stereotypes of domestic workers. Owners of these agencies were reported to have very negative perceptions of domestic worker’s rights advocacy organizations, like the one Maria is working with: "it’s just the radicals who are behind it. They have workshops that are completely negative. They’ll do chants and things they make up. It’s really just like a union" (quoted in Bakan and Stasiulis 1995:327). This negative perception protects the class interests of the agencies and their clients (the employers) and reinforces racial stereotypes that legitimate the unfair government policies that Maria’s participatory research project intends to challenge.21 Racism, gender oppression, nation-state

21 To make a similar argument, Colen (1995) employs the term stratified reproduction by which she means social reproduction (activities and relationships that maintain people on a daily and intergenerational basis) that are "accomplished differentially according to inequalities that are based on hierarchies of class, race, ethnicity, gender, place in global economy, and migration status and that are structured by social, economic and political forces" (78).
formation, and the political economy of labour migration articulate to produce the experiences of domestic workers. Maria’s work is to be a catalyst for organizing these women through a participatory research process that is driven by collective documentation and analysis of their experiences.

Maria describes the participatory research process she advocates as "peaceful." A discourse analysis that reads for silences, gaps and dichotomies reveals an underlying perception of the state:²²

> what’s nice here, they do not go against the government, or they do not go against other sectors who cause their problems, but they just work silently on their own, how can we help, how could we help in this problem, not through protest or whatever, but in our own little way, we could help. [...] it does not go into subversive action, but it’s just, it’s a very peaceful way of planning an action to the problem, to the solution of the problem. (ML:5)

The ‘government’ and ‘other sectors’ are the institutions that ‘cause problems,’ yet Maria insists that in participatory research they are not the focus of action for change. Is this because the state is perceived as too oppressive to risk confronting or incapable of being pushed to take action? This dichotomy of subversive vs peaceful action puts limits on what is understood as a legitimate role for Maria to play in the lives of these women, and it restricts the boundaries of what participatory research can hope to accomplish. Racism and nationalism, as well as stereotypes of appropriate forms for women’s political action might be influencing how Maria perceives her new facilitation role in Canada. It is also likely a reflection of the relatively higher risks of being associated with subversive action against the state in her home country where she first developed her knowledge and expertise in participatory research. As well, the Canadian organization for which Maria consults is mediating and authorizing the space in which she and the domestic workers can manoeuvre. Would a participatory researcher enjoying citizenship rights working with a group of

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²² I am referring to deconstruction as discussed earlier that includes reading for gaps, silences, dichotomies and disruptions that can reveal underlying assumptions regulating a discourse. See Feldman (1995:51-53).
women considered ‘nationals’ by the Canadian state exert a similar effort to position her work as *not* ‘subversive?’ The white Canadian participatory researcher whose interview I describe below made no hesitations in referring to her work as ‘subversive.’

The passage below I have reproduced with only minor deletions in order to examine the discursive repertoires that Maria employs to legitimate the role of participatory researcher. This non-subversive nature that Maria advocates is something I feel compelled to dispel, which reveals my own regulatory discourse about participatory research subverting power relations.  

WF: Are the problems ever though, identified as being as a result of the government action?

ML: Uhmmm.. usually political problems, it’s always there, it’s always every time, wherever you go, there’s always political issues in there, but, uhmm... if you are the trainer or you are the researcher, it’s just like, in the process of training, you form values in here, you form values in here so, values that are, that go into a peaceful--

WF: You form values (ya) in the people, or in yourself?

ML: At first in yourself, they—and then you transfer it to the people, so if you form good values in these people, you’re the role model as researcher, so, these people look up to you as their role model, so, whatever attitudes you will be possessing, they will adopt it because you’re the role figure. So if there’s, if they want to clarify something, they go to you, because you establish already a bonding trust with these people.

WF: A-hmm. What do you think is the basis of the people’s trust in--

(ML:5-6)

[...]

ML: Yeh, the basis of the people’s trust. Uhm.. in the process of integration, initially, when you enter the community and we integrate with them, I have this some sort of, idea, uhm.. usually I do this, when you enter this group of people inside, you need to be sensitive to... these people when they say “yes”, it means “no” and when they say “no”, it means “yes”. because you’re the outsider and they’re inside the group....and gradually in the process of integration, it’s just inside you, you could feel the term that you’re "the outsider", so...what happens to the organizer, what happens to the organizer......(pause)... okay, this are certain things that should happen to the organizer in the process of integration. This is applicable to the, I don’t know, it could be applicable to-- so, usually, you get the respect of the people, okay, ... and, you could feel it as an organizer, or as a researcher, uhm... you tend to see the liberating aspect of the culture. (ML:6)

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23 My speech is indicated by WF and Maria’s speech by ML.
Maria is concerned with the process of integration in which an outsider gains the trust of people, but is also something of a role model and a trainer. The narrative revolves around two sets of values. First, there are values intrinsic to participatory research (patience, sensitivity, respect) that are passed on to people through an integration process. Second, there are the values of a particular culture or community which a participatory researcher must learn and absorb if they are to successfully integrate and gain the trust of people. This notion of gaining trust suggests that in encounters between groups and prospective researchers there is inherent mistrust. A discursive repertoire about ‘gaining of trust’ shifts focus away from the question of power inequalities between researchers and groups. Power imbalances are fertile ground for this mistrust that a participatory researcher must be so actively involved in overcoming.

Maria discusses a program in her home country where nurses must do participatory research projects as part of their studies in community health. I remember being persistently troubled during the interview by the ways in which the identity of the researcher was being constructed. It was done in such a convincing way, creating the image of an adaptable, sensitive, and non-intervening role model for the people. I struggled with how to bring up issues of power between researchers and the groups they work with, which led to my asking leading questions like the one I reproduce below. I recall being worried that I may offend Maria by suggesting the unthinkable: that participatory research could actually reinforce the power inequalities that constitute the research context. My attempt to make this point in the interview was very abstract and evasive.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{24} I really wanted to exert editorial control and delete my question from this manuscript, or at least the phrase "don’t you think it’s coloured in some ways" because of its racist implications. I have not because it is important to uncover how racism structures our interactions in interviews. As a white researcher interviewing a person of colour, I must trace the effects of my dominance. Where does this concern about ‘offending’ Maria come from? I may be hesitating in my suggestion that as a participatory researcher Maria exerts power over participants because I am self-consciously avoiding acknowledgement of the power I exert over Maria in the interview. The underlying censoring in the interview may be that in speaking to a member of the dominant racial group, Maria is careful about what she will and will not reveal. The lack of trust that we are discussing is also likely affecting what is possible for us to share in the interview.
WF: Okay, uhm... if you look at some of the students (a-hmm) in the university, (a-hmm) and you find out how many are men, how many are women, or how many... you’ll find that in general, there are more people in the university who have power in society than those people who don’t have power in society, don’t have as many chances to go to university. So, this is what I’m interested in, I’m interested in the fact that participatory research gets passed on and passed on to trainers who live in the community, but where it’s originally coming from, don’t you think it’s coloured in some way (a-hmm) by the fact that those people who are the initial pass, who have initially passed on the strategies are located in positions of more power.

ML: Okay, ya, so...if your initial organizers comes from the university and of course, these are the people who can afford, uh power, so if you are the researcher who will conduct the trainer’s training to this group of people in university, in the classes of training, you form values in there also. So that...in the formation of values there, when they go down to the level of those who have less power, these people who have less power will not feel that these people have more power because in the trainer’s training, values are formed in there...//

WF: //What are some of those values?

ML: Okay, uhm..first is.....these are some, okay, this is principle one. There’s always participation, even when you start your trainer’s training, there is always participation, and...if you’re the researcher, you’re more listening, and you don’t let your.... it’s very important, you’re flexible and you’re open. [...] it’s very important to involve everybody who is at the university, [...] and as a researcher, you’re ready to learn also, because participatory research as I say, is two way, just you’re the expert, and these are the less literate people, [...] you will say that the ones you are training are more experienced in their own [problem] because what they’re focusing is on their problem, not your problem. They’re more experienced, so in a way, you could get something from them also. Okay....you seek information more than one way, and.. of course... uhm.. this is very important as a researcher in participatory research or as organizer, you’re relaxed. You don’t—you don’t rush things, because transformation in attitudes and values, uhm...it takes time, it’s a long process, so you have to be relaxed, and you have to be very patient, because sometimes, most of the time, or commonly you encounter attitudes which you don’t like, and attitudes which you like, so as a participatory practitioner, you need to be very sensitive and very uhm.. patient... just like, you have to please them (a-hmm), but you have to direct them also on the right attitude (a-hmm, a-hmm). Don’t pass over important information. They’re the ones digging the in-depth of the problem, you’re just there as a guide. Seek out those less vocal, less powerful. (ML:13-14)

Maria reassures me that my concerns about power in participatory research can be resolved through the forming of values. When I finally ask about these values directly, this stimulates the long passage reproduced above describing how participatory researchers should ideally conduct themselves. The discourse constituting this behaviour pivots around key concepts like flexibility,
encouraging participation, openness, patience, and sensitivity. This is revealing of a superiority embedded with paternalism; being relaxed, guiding without leading, or giving too much away, even when you are not in agreement with what is going on. What is not revealed is what sort of activities a researcher might have to be patient about, or the kinds of attitudes that might be found objectionable. Perhaps these disruptions, objections or stalling could be alternatively read as acts of resistance to the cooptation of people’s participation in research? The notion that with patience, guidance and direction, the process will eventually move forward, leaves intact hidden assumptions about what is an appropriate and ideal research process. It is assumed the researcher must continually check their reflexes to take over the process and improve it. This "two way" process sounds much like a parent allowing children to learn from their own mistakes.

As Maria and I continue the interview, this idealized version of a participatory researcher starts to unhinge. The demands of adhering in practice to the defining principles and values of participatory research start to emerge as emotionally charged:

ML: So..I always evaluate myself everyday, and once l..so this is it...oh today, these are my weaknesses when I work with this group, I tend to be more talking, l, I seem not to be listening, so...when I identify my own weaknesses, the following day, I shift my attitude, because sometimes you’re just a human being, you’re not perfect, and sometimes you forget yourself to...(u-hmm)..just like with these..uh..domestic helpers because they tend to be talking about [my country] and [my people], I come in there and then...I become too emotional too with the situations that we’re talking about, and...I forget myself also that, I..oh I..don’t need to do this, but it’s just like, I’m there also, I kept on talking, and then, but I could feel it, there’s something wrong, it’s just like because it’s getting...getting more//

WF: //It’s not their story//

ML: //complicated, it’s not their story, sometimes I’m, I talk more, yeh. (Yeh) It’s getting complicated and that’s why when I realized that I withdraw, I tend to be quiet again, and listening, and let them talk, and talk (yeh). (ML:17)

In part what I see operating in Maria’s struggle to remain a ‘good listener’ is the inability of constructed identities such as ‘the research group’ and ‘the researcher’ to capture what is actually a multiplicity of shifting identities. Maria may be trained in participatory research but when she works in Canada with domestic workers from her own country, she shares experiences of racial
and gender oppression with these women. It may be that the ‘participatory researcher’ identity is
the only thing separating Maria and these women, because of the superior status accorded to
research work over domestic work.

Shortly afterward, Maria reasserts her convictions about the appropriate stance for a
participatory researcher:

ML: I don’t feel that way because it’s like when you go down there...to the level of the
less powerful, you, they, you don’t, you don’t talk much about...yourself, it’s just
like forgetting yourself, as...I mean, as who you are, but...it’s within the concern of
these less powerful, [...] these less powerful are the ones [who are] powerful (a-
hmm) in that situation, and you have nothing to do with uh—what they decide, or
how they decide, you are just guiding them, that this is the way, but you have
nothing to do with how they decide, and what they will decide, and what to tackle,
because it’s their choice, this is how participatory research is. (ML:14)

I see a contradiction between ‘forgetting yourself’ and guiding the process. This is the intrinsic
contradiction in a discourse that constitutes power-sharing as a process in which the less powerful
are empowered to take action against their oppression. This contradiction leaves intact the
construct of more empowered individuals who can go down ‘to the level of less powerful’ and
‘help’ this empowerment occur, this independent choice-making to happen.

Maria struggles with naming this process where she plays an active role in initiating other
people’s participation:

So what’s nice about participatory research is that... uhm.. it’s just like you...let the
people mobilize, you make the people, I don’t know if that’s the right word or,
you motivate the people to move, to take action on the problems that they have
identified. (ML:5)

Maria’s hesitation about using words like ‘mobilize’ or ‘motivate’ the people to action probably
results largely from speaking in her second language. But this hesitation also marks a limit for the
unthinkable of participatory research: that it is really a process of manipulating people to do
something that you have pre-determined is for their own good. This unexpressed, unthinkable
notion is what I aim to reveal in the discourse of participatory research. It is this unspeakable but
underlying premise of manipulation that secures the superiority of the researcher who knows better
what the people really need than they themselves. By recognizing how a binary such as researcher and the people operate, I am identifying limits in the potential of participatory research to contribute to anti-subordination.

However, there is a subtext to this interview that needs to be examined. Racism articulates with labour migration and nation-state formation to give rise to conceptions of ‘identity’ and ‘nation’ that constitute Maria and I and structure Maria’s experience of participatory research both in her home country and in Canada. There are very powerful discursive and material practices that regulate what Maria could say in the context of an interview with a white Canadian researcher who is investigating her story. Without the rights of citizenship, there are risks and penalties for Maria to construct her work as subversive of societal power relations. Racism and discourses of nation re-entrench the limits of participatory research discourse and practice.

**Interviewing Ruth**

Ruth is an Aboriginal woman. In our interview I felt that we shared a similar perspective on the limits of participatory research to really subvert societal power inequalities. Our discussion employs a knowable aboriginal identity for constructing arguments about subordination and inequity. There are risks to essentializing this identity, as was discussed in my analysis of Arthur’s story. The tracing of power relations is evaded in a model that celebrates cultural difference. These risks are contrasted with the need to locate power relations in research in the historical context of colonialism and white supremacy in Canada. In the interview we were tracing how the creation of the expert gets institutionalized in ways that even the ‘participatory research’ process fails to avoid in practice. Each time the ‘expert’ is materially and discursively produced, this inevitably becomes a site of institutionalized racism. Questions of funding repeatedly arose, which is notably absent from much of the participatory research literature examined in Chapter Three. No wonder Wetherell and Potter (1992) hold on to the importance of seeing discourse as reflective of material
processes while continuing to embrace a Foucaultian genealogical understanding of discourse as constitutive. It is important to follow where the money goes when a participatory research project is funded. Many highly paid ‘professionals’ have curriculum vitaeas and bank accounts padded with consulting contracts in participatory research.

One of our early exchanges in the interview shows the constant tension that arises between what would be ideal participatory research and how different the reality is:

RT:  To me the most important part would be that the initiative comes from the participants so for me that’s the really crucial part of participatory research [...] it’s not a request from an outside source, or you have to do it for some funding [...] Oh, obviously it’s important too...that once it’s initiated then that someone else doesn’t come along and take the whole thing on...but...I can think of so few things that are actually initiated by the participants.

WF:  Can you think of any?

RT:  No, actually, I can’t think of any.

The interpenetration of discourse and the social context (Wetherell and Potter, 1992:105) is easily discernible in the contradictions between needing money to do research and needing to do research because there is money available. The discourse of participation and participant-initiated research that constructs Ruth’s understanding of ‘real’ participatory research are inextricably linked to the accessing of material resources. Not being able to think of any ‘true’ participatory projects marks the limits of their intelligibility. These limits are where research initiation, including that of participatory research, is always already connected to inequitable social processes of wealth distribution. These relations are silenced and obscured in a discourse of empowerment and emancipation.

Economic imperatives continue to complicate how Ruth and I understand the empowering potential of participatory research. The recently submitted Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is self-described as building upon the participatory research approaches that have characterized the Aboriginal movement over the past two decades (Jackson 1993:60). Ruth’s
insights into how significant research resources are actually distributed shows how power
inequalities can be reintrenched in the political economy of research, even when it is called
'participatory:"

RT: So here comes the Royal Commission, they decide that they're going to hire this
person to do a study on aboriginal child care in Ontario, without even considering
that, for instance, I had been doing the same thing, through a native political
organization.
[...]

WF: And one more non-native academic is paid a contract and has one more experience
(right) to build a career on.

RT: Exactly. [...] People get hired to do these things. It's something else on their
resume, and it's an old development dynamic of creating the expert from outside
the community, but it's still happening in the communities right. We're still hiring
non-native consultants, people from outside the communities, to do all our research
and all our work, and we're not hiring the young people that..or old people, or
whatever, more experienced groups within our own communities to do the work,
so they don't get the experience, and what we are doing is creating experts, we
create experts outside of our community because we keep giving them the jobs.

The paradox of developing participatory research experts, when the discourse represents relations
between researcher and researched as being equalized, is a signpost for what Britzman (1995a,
1995b) calls the costs of our identity imperatives. To be constituted and constituting oneself and
others as researcher blends participatory research discourse with the discourse of skills and
qualifications that is so prominent in my interview with Arthur. The construct of experience is
revealed as shifting and multiple: the imperative of people's participation based on their experience
of the research problem intermingles with the notion of a researcher's experience with
participatory research determining their appeal and value as a researcher. Ruth explains:

> It's easier for him to hire the non-native consultant, because the guy has
> experience, you know, he's got the whole..thing...but if he hires some native
> consultant, it's more work for the executive director because he's got to coach him
> a little bit, or maybe some things won't be done exactly//

These dilemmas about what constitutes appropriate experience and qualifications reiterate the
demands of responding to funder's and government requirements (i.e. legitimate research practices,
relevance to the scientific community). Standardized research and funding criteria actually thwart
an empowering equity hiring policy, such as hiring native researchers to do participatory research with native communities. The insider/outsider binary that is set up validates a discourse of ‘standards’ and the ‘professionalism’ of the outside ‘expert’ and inferiorizes subjective insider knowledge. This tension is evident in Ruth’s words about her own position in participatory research:

I think a lot of my particular role would be...not necessarily as the...uhm...participant in a participatory research, but more as the...you know, somebody that they could, they could...helper right...somebody that might be brought in to help with the whole process, having those skills to help along...like a...consultant you know...in the purest sense of the word. But, uhm.....if I tried to think of a project that I might be a participant in participatory research, uhm, there may be a few things, such as this aboriginal project that is going on [...] which I do want to get involved with, and I could be a participant in it because...that’s been my experience right.

The identity of participant is produced through binaries of skilled/unskilled or rational/experiential that arise from the liberal humanist paradigm and its racialized construct of autonomous individual. It is by discarding one identity of consultant and taking up another of Aboriginal that Ruth can make sense of when she is legitimately a ‘participant’ in participatory research.

Participating on the basis of one’s own experience with the issues under inquiry is organizing Ruth’s understanding of participatory research. At the same time she is sceptical of how these discursive repertoires, like ‘listening to the people,’ actually play themselves out in practice:

It’s very hard to find a pure participatory research project...some of them may have been more participatory than others, but I think just because you go to a community and talk, have a focus group or whatever, doesn’t make it participatory research. Just because you call up some grassroots people...and talk to them...that’s not, that doesn’t make it participatory.[...] It’s always a question of money too, who’s funding it and why.

The identity constructs, like researcher and community, that represent who is listening and who is listened to, structure the methods and approaches that participatory researchers conventionally take. Ruth’s dismissal of these practices is a critical evaluation of the interpretative repertoires that participatory research discourse employs for sense-making about empowerment. Constructs such as
'community' or 'grassroots people' and participating in focus groups or listening to the people's voices, are revealed as moves that legitimize a researcher's claim that they are engaged in, and engaging others in an emancipatory process. Ruth views these moves as inadequate rationalizations for understanding participatory research in a 'pure' sense. The economic bottom-line rears its head once more:

it's not a good thing just to be...become more participatory because you're using the...participant base because you can't pay people to do it any more, or it's not a good thing to be more participatory hiring a native researcher because you can't pay for the eight hundred bucks a day that the non-native researcher wants or whatever, that's not necessarily, then it's a question of funding, that's not necessarily the ideal but sometimes it does force you to move into working with who your clients are.

In an attempt to resolve what she condemns in practice with her ideals about 'pure' participatory research. Ruth begins to describe a participatory research process that might have anti-subordination effects. For example, members of the 'community' that a particular participatory research project has constituted could be adequately trained in research skills. Many accounts of participatory research methodology actually refer to this process of training and skill-building, and transfers of power and resources. But is it sustainable and prioritized in practice? Do the budget and 'time restraints' allow for training? As Arthur describes, often what appears in research proposals is not implemented in practice. Producing a report to funder's standards might be prioritized over the time and resource-consuming training process. Ruth highlights some of the issues:

I think you need somebody who is qualified to do the job, but I think you have to look at ways of training, and look at ways of uh...fostering development of those people and of those skills in our own community...As the client in a lot of these situations or as the research group, we start to take some responsibility for building up that expertise in our own fields. [...] when you take on that kind of responsibility to be participatory, you also have to take on the responsibility for supporting people in how they're going to go about it.

I had not come across this particular evocation of responsibility in any of the published participatory research texts I examined in Chapter Three. It is a challenging perspective on what
participatory research could be, in both its discursive and material practices and the ways in which these are intertwined.

**Interviewing Valerie**

In this final section I again focus on only one interview. However, having interviewed four people forces me to confront my persistent slippage into theories of causality in the writing process. In my analysis I struggle with seeing subject location as an origin or explanation for the variance I saw in my participant’s responses to questions about race. A passage from the dialogue from my interview with Valerie is what I have reproduced below. I have chosen it because I remember it as being one of the most problematic moments that I experienced in my interviewing. It was something of a breach that Feldman describes in her explanation of ethnomethodology (1995:16). I was attempting to stimulate ‘discourse in action’ that Wetherell and Potter refer to in their study *Mapping the Language of Racism*. Their techniques of active, confrontational interviewing are what I attempted to emulate as I was ‘playwriting’ my interviews. I hoped that controversial scenarios would stimulate both Valerie and myself to display our discursive practices in interactions that highlighted contradiction and multiple meanings. I was determined to not avoid or mask conflict in my interviewing process.25

This portion of the transcript stands out to me because it represents an occasion when I actually did interject and attempt to contradict and rupture the discourses that Valerie and I were operating within. I thought of myself as taking a less ‘passive’ stance as interviewer and trying to make more ‘transparent’ my political agenda. These notions of passivity and transparency reveal authorizing conventions about ‘objective’ interviewing styles.26

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25 I am thinking about resisting the down-playing of conflict in the actual interviewing process which is inspired by the discussions of interpretive conflict in Borland (1991) and Williams (1991).

26 My speech is indicated by WF and Valerie’s by VS.
WF: A community group, uhm, made up of people of colour, want to hire researchers to do a participatory research study to determine the health needs of their community in Toronto. It's actually made up of uhm... a lot of different communities, ethnic communities. The most experienced participatory research practitioners who apply for this job are white, they are not of the community. The people of colour who apply have less experience and fewer skills. The hiring process becomes controversial. So what is your response to that situation?

VS: You mean who should they hire?

WF: That could be a way to respond to that...

VS: Well, I think they should hire the best qualified person because I think that a participatory researcher who is competent knows very well that any information, or any knowledge they have is going to come from the community. And you're black, supposing it were black, er, participatory researcher is not going to know anything more than a white participatory researcher going in there. The community will tell them whatever it is that they need to know, I think. But, I don't know. I think also that a less experienced person can be taught... I guess I'm a bit confused about why they don't already know. And/

WF: //and a less experienced person gains experience.

VS: They do gain the experience, I guess I would wonder why they haven't gone out and gotten that experience. So, I think, I think what's key is the participatory piece, not the look-alike piece, and not the my-experience-is-your-experience piece, because my experience ain't your experience, at all. So, you may as well not pretend that it is, and you may as well bring whatever skills you've got, as much and as many as you can get. A well-skilled participatory researcher, I think, is expert at listening, expert at helping people express themselves, expert at helping people put things together for themselves, helping people position themselves, helping people articulate, helping people stay safe and helping people wrap things up. So, I don't know that a look-alike is essential to be helpful with those things.(uhm-uhm)... I don't know.

WF: I think, I think part of what comes into this kind of debate are, is if you look at some of the work that George Dei does about schooling and black kids dropping out of school faster, meaning that, we'll stay with the black community, less black people might be going on to further education. That, level of further education, you have graduate degrees, that might play a role in your opportunities to gain that experience, for example. So, looking at those kinds of reasons for different...levels of experience, or different skill levels, where does change come from? Does it come from hiring the less skilled person whom may be perceived of as/

VS: No.

WF: //perceived as of the community?

VS: No, I don't think the community deserves to have a second rate researcher, I think they deserve to have a first rate researcher do a first rate job. And one of the
things, hopefully that they would address is the fact, that, their own are not getting into these places where they need to be. I think that's where change begins.

I...I...now maybe I'm just so strongly convinced on that point, convicted on that point maybe, that I don't see anything else.

WF: What if the hiring committee had specified that they were going to hire researchers of colour. How, how would that/

VS: That's their choice. They may not get the same quality, they'll certainly get somebody of the same colour. So, I hope what was important to them—because that's what they'll get.

WF: Uh-hum.

VS: They'll have to make their tradeoffs. (two second pause)

WF: Okay. Here's another scenario.....27

At no point in this exchange are either of us able to disrupt the discourses of 'standards' and a 'first-rate' job, or of 'competency' and 'qualifications.' The citation of these conventions legitimizes our role as 'professionals' who can bring the needed 'skills' to the participatory research project or the 'community in need.' Any attempt to unsettle this definitionality is met by resistance. A 'regime of truth' about 'standards' organizes how Valerie and I can think about what makes a 'good' researcher. My attempts to disrupt that discourse with repertoires like 'insider/outsider' and 'real' difference only serve to reiterate other regulatory and constraining practices. I try to argue that there are people with more or less skills and more or less experience and who have different possibilities to access these things. I am tied to an understanding of subjects who have power and those who are denied it and who should therefore be granted more power. I can not escape the convention that there must be one who 'grants' that power. The shift I suggest (a foundational participatory research principle) is that rather than 'involving' the community in the research, the researchers should actually be of the community. I am not talking

27 I continue the interview with a second scenario about aboriginal communities that also attempts to question how inequities within society are reproduced within the framework of participatory research.
about a resignification of ‘experience,’ ‘skills,’ ‘community’ or ‘research.’ I am insinuating that participatory researchers who already have access to resources and job opportunities should step aside and allow other people to have a chance. I slip into a discourse of stable identities and subject locations. Located here is a move of superiority: give ‘less experienced’ researchers a chance to catch up to your ‘level of expertise,’ and a move to innocence: by stepping aside, or collaborating, I have given up power and am no longer dominant.

Valerie and I begin to cut each other off (marked by //) which signals tension because it did not happen to any great extent in the rest of the interview. This scenario comes at the end of the interview because I favoured beginning with more general questions about my participants’ understandings of participatory research and their own experiences. Throughout the first part of the interview I tended not to interject or disagree because while I might recognize discourses that were operating, I did not want to interrupt our shared conversation or disrupt what I perceived as a building of trust within the interview. I was waiting until I could privately reflect upon the interviews, transcribing and deconstructing them using methodologies discussed above. So what propelled me to interject at this point? What moral imperatives were operating? Perhaps I had structured the scenario hoping that Valerie would respond in such a way to convince me that we shared a common ‘moral perspective’ on what ‘actions’ or ‘attitudes’ would confront racism. My interruption was then an attempt to persuade Valerie of the worthiness of this anti-racist perspective.

My interjections reveal the embeddedness of my thinking in theories of subject location and discourses of experience as access to ‘truth’ that can bring about social change. I am representing the notion that people researching about and from within their own communities is the way ‘real’ social change originates. This is presented as a morally and ethically superior arrangement for research. I attempt to convince Valerie that a certain kind of researcher, such as a

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28 Here I reveal my theories of when ‘reflection’ and ‘analysing’ happen in interviews, as if they can be chronologically and independently ‘thought’ and arranged.
'white researcher' (for example, Valerie and myself) is necessarily an outsider to the 'black' community, and we therefore need to seriously question the implications of our involvement in such a project. Valerie attempts to convince me that my concerns about subject location are unfounded. To disrupt my discourse of the 'validity of experience,' Valerie makes use of two discourses. One is a poststructural treatise on experience: that experience is an interpretation and no one can actually claim to know any one else's experience. She also uses the discourse of meritocracy: the 'best researcher' for the job should be the one hired. The effect of these discourses must be highlighted. The first conveniently erases the fact that a Black researcher does have access to experience that distinguishes them very clearly from a white researcher (as well as connecting them to the Black community) and that is the experience of racial oppression. The second discourse of meritocracy legitimates the continued monopolization of job opportunities by traditionally dominant social identities. In this discourse, conventions like competency, ability and excellence are thought of as universally identifiable rather than socially and historically constituted as the property of a white male dominant group. Despite my theoretical work to disrupt homogenizing discourses, I still employ fixed identities in the interview questions. I need the strategy of representing the 'Black community' in order to understand how hiring practices in participatory research can privilege dominant social identities.

How do these discursive practices resonate with other discourses structuring the interview and the intelligibility of participatory research? One of the contradictions that I traced in this interview involved Valerie talking about loving to do participatory research and having no other reason for doing it:

So, I like it..uhm..but I like participatory research as a way of leveraging the system into change which is more equitable, and that's the only reason I do it, I don't do—but..but..when I say that I do have fun, but, but that's what I think fun is. So it's a little bit of shit disturbing, I love shit disturbing. I just think it's great. it's fun for me. (VS:2)
I read into Valerie's hesitation, "I don't do-", as an unspoken claim that she is not doing it for the money. Later in the interview Valerie gives a different impression of how she approaches her work:

I don't. I don't try to fool anybody. In fact one of the things I've said to the people I've worked with who use heroin is that I cost. If you want to get the money and hire me, do it. I'm yours. I'd like to be with you, I wanna work with you, this is really important to me. I don't do it for love. (VS:19)

These passages reveal the discourses that regulate whose work gets renumerated and limit how we perceive our livelihood options. Participatory research gets constructed as the lesser of evils; we all need paid work and research that is participatory is at least more ethical. I recall how I rationalized going to graduate school and participating in a system that perpetuated inequality. I had determined that my research would be participatory and thus would rupture those systems.

Another contradiction I noted in the interview was Valerie presenting herself as not being manipulative with the people she worked with: "he decided that..I was not being condescending, and I was not being manipulative, in a bad way, of himself or his peers (VS:11)." At the same time she called herself a 'shit disturber' who was tinkering and levering with the system and encouraging other people to do the same under her guidance. There was definitely a theory of 'good' manipulation and 'bad' manipulation organizing how Valerie thought about her work. This contradiction demonstrates how being the 'good researcher' is in tension with being manipulative and accomplishing a personal agenda that is represented as leading to social justice. I have shown in my own history that I was attracted to this type of research through my training in popular education and a desire to resist my tendency to dominate groups. A discourse that constitutes me as 'facilitator' produces an identity and practices that regulate and normalize 'participation' in groups.
With this next piece of transcript I try to reveal some of the subtext of the interview by juxtapositioning excerpts from my field notes with sections of the transcribed interview. This provides more background on my relationship to Valerie that deepens what can be revealed about my investments in the research and the discursive repertoires available to me within participatory research.

Reflections on Interviewing Valerie

Valerie had caught my attention in the class we both took on participatory research and I recall thinking she was out-spoken and called things as they were. We were in the same small group that presented on the dilemmas of participatory research practice and Valerie had been put on the hot seat to be questioned on the ethics of her practice by the other four of us. In the context of a role play presented in class. I remember she once said about doing participatory research that you’re "damned if you do, damned if you don’t."

* * * *

I didn’t do anything before that. I was a good little girl. I did my best to fit in, I did my best to do what I was told. I did my very best not see things, I did my best to not hear things and I really worked hard at trying to keep my mouth shut, to be socially acceptable, and I found that I wasn’t socially acceptable anyway, because no matter what I tried to do, my mouth still opened up and out things flew. I would look around and say well who put that thought in my head [chuckles] believe me, it wasn’t mine. But nobody would believe me, they thought it was mine and they didn’t like me, so, I didn’t do very well in conventional social structures.

* * * *

Valerie was one of the first people I thought of interviewing. I respected the fact that she had done participatory research and had managed to get significant financial support for her projects. On the last day of our class she asked for my phone number saying that she would like to keep in touch, that opportunities to work on projects together might come up at some time. I was quite thrilled that she wanted to keep in touch.

* * * *

In truth, at this point, I am not able to get to the ‘them’ that I want to get to. But I am able to get to a lot of the lesser folk who are still in the power structure, and who control lesser amounts of money. I pried out $200,000.00 for the first national HIV in-prison conference, and it’s going to keep going, and I like it. It’s a dialogue, it’s a way, it’s a start, it’s worth it. It took some effort on my part, but I think it—I just love it, and I’m...and I didn’t go...to the conference. I didn’t need to

39 Excerpts from my field notes are italicized. Valerie’s words from the interview transcript appear in the standard font.
go to the conference. Other people did that piece. And so, I like that. I want more money pried out.

* * * *

I was also impressed with the fact that she taught sociology of nursing courses to students of a new midwifery program. Midwifery is both a personal and political interest of mine. After our interview she told me that she may soon leave for another province to accept a very well-paid position affiliated with a nursing college.

* * * *

I really don’t know. Uhmm... so I think, well, those bits sort of trouble me, and the payment bit, I mean. I’ve said what I said, but I wonder about it. I don’t know, you see, if that’s the right thing to do.... But uhm, I don’t feel tormented by it, whereas I look back on the time I spent in a hospital, I just think, ughhh, maggots and slugs, now that...the fact that I stayed in a place where they hurt people, they mutilate them, they torture them, and then they make money, I feel really bad about...So, I don’t have that feeling about this. So, I think that’s an improvement for me.....

* * * *

Valerie is a single mother of a teenage son and I was a single mother of a pre-schooler until recently. I know this identification I feel with ‘single motherhood’ structures what I perceive as our ‘shared experience.’ The current political-economic context of right-wing policies making profound social assistance and social program cutbacks is part of what structures the interview and our developing friendship. Being a sole provider for a family and the desire and pressure to be self-supporting as a woman in a sexist society while still doing work you can believe in and enjoy is the unspoken text of this interview for me. The pressures I have felt to seek academic qualifications so that I will be equitably renumerated for my work and able to support my son is the ‘reading’ I bring to my role as interviewer and narrator. At the end of the interview I recall attempting to reestablish a shared understanding of what constitutes ethical practice that was disrupted when Valerie and I discussed race:

WF:  I, I think I can relate, you know, that to not live in poverty takes a certain amount of money. (uh-uhm) You know that raising a child, and meeting whatever expectations you’ve set for yourself, in how you’re going to raise that child, takes money, so it’s a matter of...the ethical choices that I’m making, knowing that I will earn that money that, that meets my needs. It’s almost like role modelling. So the principle that you’ve used to live your life that... (VS:21)
Structuring this interview are our identity investments in justifying a role in social justice as white women positioned dominantly in the relations of racism. Valerie and I are white and university-educated which gives us access to enormous privilege and resources. Yet we identify with feeling economically vulnerable as single mothers. The power of our social location sometimes feels minimal in the face of corporate and state power that we need to resist. Valerie’s comment after the interview is over echoes this vulnerability:

it’s nice you’re doing this, because I think that it gives you an edge on it because some of the things I’ve learned, I had to learn... the hard way. And so now you’re learning it a nice way, I think. So I like that. (VS:21).

Valerie’s comment points to the contradictory and relational identities we occupy, which “incite us to discourse” (Britzman 1995b): her as mentor, me as disciple; me as theorist and critic, her as practitioner and subject of my study. Both my questions and her responses attempt to simultaneously uproot and cover over the tensions between these multiple and shifting subject positions. I resent the assumption that I am doing this research so that I can be a better participatory researcher, so that I can learn the tricks of the trade before actually doing it. However, interviewing Valerie and others does give me access to knowledge that could help me promote a participatory research project and be renumerated for it. This is one more way in which the material relations that organize privilege in participatory research are sustained.

Conclusion

These interview narratives are representations of my research objective to demonstrate the racializing and exclusionary effects of participatory research discourse. Many identity constructs in these transcripts re-entrench ritualized and common sense citations that mark the ‘othered’ body. The ‘expert,’ the ‘professional,’ ‘skills and qualifications,’ ‘standards:’ these surfaced again and again as citations of the ‘good’ researcher. This is where the erasure of identities and bodies is maintained, negotiated and resisted. In participatory research discourse, bodies are represented in
ways that homogenize and solidify the meanings that 'difference' can have. While the identity of 'researcher' in a participatory research project may be recognized as shifting and multiple (engineer, facilitator, consumer, advocate, role-model, client), identities like 'the people' or 'disabled' remain firmly patrolled. Opening up these categories that regulate, constrain and overdetermine the individual and the body is a step toward freeing participatory research from the racializing modern liberal paradigm.

Each person I interviewed, as well as myself, reveals identity investments that are central to the discourse of participatory research. We fix and unfix the identity of researcher in quests to locate our work in the struggles for social justice. Participatory research, for unique reasons, appealed to each one of us as a discourse constituting our role. We are each differently aware, according to our shifting subject positions, of the regulatory, exclusionary and racist effects of the modernist discourse underpinning participatory research. The interview transcripts document how we reproduce, obscure, struggle with and attempt to resist the modern liberal paradigm.

In the interviews with Arthur and Maria, normalization in participatory research is made most obvious by the ways in which their identities exceed the master narrative. Arthur is a consumer representative whose labour is exploited through participatory research, a theorist presenting a critique of his experience and a practitioner designing his own participatory research project. His multiple identities within participatory research exceed a discourse of 'working in solidarity with the oppressed' that Valerie so comfortably inhabits. Maria shares her struggles to maintain the values of passive listener when her identity is also multiply located in systems of domination. She occupies shifting roles as participatory research consultant 'outsider' and women immigrant 'insider,' identities that stretch the boundaries of 'researcher' and 'ordinary people.' The subject positions of Maria and Arthur are constituted within normalizing discourses that produce a Black, noncitizen, disabled body as 'the oppressed,' who tentatively occupies the identity of 'researcher.'
In stark contrast is Valerie who defends an innocent researcher identity in opposition to those whom she 'works with.' This innocence relies upon arguments fashioned through repertoires of individualism, professionalism, market demand and the politics of funding. These arguments are authorized by liberal discourse that her stories about manipulating the system and subverting power relations can comfortably occupy. I share Ruth's hesitations about the social justice potential of participatory research. A fundamental assumption, like recognizing people's experience, is too conveniently undermined in associations of 'experience' with 'qualifications' that regulate the 'best' researcher. Funding, academic imperatives, and identity investments implicate us in social relations of power and material structures that reward and privilege. Tracing how the wealth gets distributed in participatory research is a crucial way in which to uncover manipulation, exploitation and cooptation.

A binary construct upon which participatory research discourse relies is activist/non-activist. This produces the 'agents of social change' and 'the oppressed' who need their participation in transformation to be facilitated. Discursively produced identities have material effects: money in many participatory research projects is diverted toward the salaries of professional 'activist' consultants.\(^{30}\) The notions of 'researcher' and 'oppressed' secure superiority and reproduce class relations and racialized exclusions. Given that we are so implicated in these material relations, what are our options for trying to make change? In Chapter Five I present some possibilities for researchers who intend to vigilantly trace their implication in structures that guarantee their privilege, and who intend to make changes.

\(^{30}\) One of the questions this raises for me regarding Maria's situation in Canada is whether her consulting work and professional credentials are recognized at the same rate of pay as a 'national' might receive. How do racism and national identity articulate in the organization of renumeration within a participatory research project?
CHAPTER FIVE

Toward Anti-Racist Participatory Research

I was forced to continually confront the contradictions of my own life choices. For example, to what extent am I willing to live out my values and philosophies in concrete daily actions.

-Patricia Maguire, *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach*

As a society, we can address questions of social justice, equity and powersharing by first understanding ourselves and how we see our social obligations and responsibilities.

-George Dei, *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice*

This final chapter is an attempt to summarize my findings about participatory research discourse and demonstrate the implications of these reflections on my future practice. In George Dei’s (1996) words, it is not enough to expose, critique and condemn racist structures, discourses and practices if we are not prepared to take action to transform them. I need to respond to the question: “So, what would you change about how participatory research is done?”

I have shown that racialized constructs and identities that draw authorizing power from the discourse of modern liberalism pervade participatory research. Modernist assumptions about pursuing equality by empowering the individual mask power relations. Showing how racist discourse is foundational to participatory research is just the start of many more questions. How do we resist the racist and racializing effects of this modern liberal discourse? What are the terms for evaluating courses of anti-racism action? How do we predict, recognize and secure anti-racism transformation of institutions and avoid ineffective, neutral racism-sustaining practices?

Questions about action and social transformation concern me as I approach the end of my studies. Is it possible to negotiate a role in a participatory process that is consistent with my academic theorizing? How does this scholarship inform my job search and daily work practices?
Making anti-racism changes within educational institutions and community organizations; hiring people from racial minority groups; taking responsibility and being accountable for racism means many things in practice. If participatory research is to have anti-subordination impact in the lives of people, we need to trace its material structures. However, as Spivak (1990) has said, we are never free of the 'text,' but inserted in it. Remaining vigilant about discursive practices is a central part of tracing material relations.

**Strategies for Resisting Privilege**

Critical work on the discourse and material relations of participatory research shows how privilege and domination is obscured and remains unchallenged in relationships between researchers and marginalized groups. Analytical tools that have been introduced in this thesis, like accounting for our subject position and excavating exclusionary liberal ideology, are the same tools that must inform our daily practices as researchers. There are steps to relinquishing privilege derived from our subject positions and maintained through liberal discourse. I question strict adherence to the principles of participation when there is a broad range of research approaches that have social justice as their goal. But I also think it is worthwhile to develop guidelines for community organizations, researchers, institutes and funding bodies that are set up to facilitate grassroots involvement in research projects. What follows are some of the ideas that emerge for tracing material relations as they structure 'community,' funding, hiring, and the benefits of participatory research.

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1 Suggesting there may be strategies to improve the contribution of participatory research to anti-subordination, does not foreclose the discussion of whether or not this truly is the preferable option for research with social justice ends. Supporting more minority researchers is another anti-racism strategy for recognizing research that critiques and guides the transformation of systems of power and domination.
The 'Community' and Funding

The constitution of any 'community' involves exclusionary processes. How do relations of domination structure who is 'in' and who is 'out'? As well, claiming a collective identity does not preclude multiple and shifting identities that give rise to power differentials within communities. It is important to trace how certain concerns are marginalized in the research process and make changes. Sometimes this means forming more representative research committees and rethinking the foundational assumptions underlying the research.

Competition for funding can pre-determine the discourse of a project in the proposal writing and grant application stages. There is always the risk of prioritizing the short-term goal of acquiring funds over the long-term goals of the project. Funding linked to corporate and government power can shift the research lens to protect the concerns of capital and status quo societal 'stability.' Adjustments made to secure funding for the project may take the research in a direction that becomes impossible to subvert. Sometimes alternate funding sources need to be considered.

Funding requirements such as adherence to initial proposal, deadlines and traditional research reporting styles tend to divert resources away from involving people as researchers in ways that benefit them. A common excuse for 'failed' participatory research is a lack of time and resources for training. Often discourses of 'skills' and 'abilities' as attributes of the individual are constituting training 'needs.' In fact, it is those in positions of power who need training in critical tools that will enable them to recognize and relinquish their privilege. Guaranteeing access to power and resources for those who are marginalized is an alternative way to frame 'empowerment' that avoids the paradigm of 'skills and training.'
Hiring the 'Best' Researcher

Many participatory research projects seek legitimacy in the eyes of the state, the scientific community, funders, the media, and the public by complying with requirements laid down for traditional research. This leads to the 'need' for research expertise and the creation of contract consultants. 'Professionals' are hired so that the project's documentation and communication (i.e. budgets, progress reports, public reports, etc.) meet the standards of the 'outside' community and policy-making institutions. Much of a project's funding pays for these costly consultants who legitimate the funding in the first place. This is how participatory research is complicit in structures that privilege the already privileged while professing to be in the interests of the oppressed.

If the research goals of the project indicate a need for expertise not found within the current research group, then perhaps those goals can be re-evaluated. If the need remains, hiring outside researchers is an obvious next step, but there are many options that bring anti-subordination goals to the forefront. Job descriptions and qualification requirements should not privilege dominant groups and penalize subordinate groups and they need to be challenged by employers and candidates alike (especially those who are being privileged.) A researcher with a critical perspective and who identifies with the research agenda will take the project further than well written reports. Taking a strong anti-subordination position may open up new avenues of funding, replacing those lost when status quo funding requirements are compromised.

Candidates for participatory research positions need to account for how they may be positioned dominantly in the research context. If your candidacy or grant application relies upon vectors of traditional social power to eliminate others from the competition, your motivations for engaging in this research must be questioned. Project structures allow different amounts of manoeuvring room for anti-racist and anti-subordination practice. Some options for real power-
sharing to consider are job-sharing, job-shadowing, salary-splitting, salary equity models, team work, and volunteer advisory positions.

Who is Benefitting?

Participatory research claims to be about accessing power to make change. According to the reigning discourse, the oppressed need to access power and participatory researchers can help this to happen. However, the relations of power constituting the subjectivities of researcher and oppressed are absent from this equation. This means that strategies for interrogating and relinquishing power derived from our subject locations is not an implicit part of participatory research.

Maguire describes the three main goals of participatory research like this:

Development of the critical consciousness of both the researcher and the participants; improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process; and transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships. (1987:29)

The anti-subordination impact of pursuing these goals depends upon thinking of them as a simultaneously integrated process. Critical consciousness, particularly of how we are multiply positioned both as dominated and dominators complicit in other's subordination, is crucial to an understanding of global systems of domination. Transformation of these structures and relationships, and improvement of people's lives, is most discernible from the perspectives in which we are subordinate. Improvement (understood as less subordination) in the lives of some people involved in the research, hinges upon others involved in the research relinquishing power and privilege derived from their dominance.

High consulting fees for 'professionals' and minimal honorariums for 'ordinary people' are not appropriate for a research team that values the contributions of each member. We must be attentive to how liberal discourses of merit and the market economy translate into wide gaps in renumeration and compensation between 'researchers' and 'participants.' Co-publication and
lobbying institutions to offer academic credit opportunities for co-researchers are important steps to ensuring tangible and equitable benefits for everyone participating in a research project.

**Being Vigilant About Discursive Practices**

‘Empowering the oppressed,’ ‘researching with the community,’ ‘hiring the best researcher;' these are all discursive repertoires that obscure relations of power. They essentialize identities, secure positions of innocence and dominance for researchers, and construct a liberal meritocracy that masks the privileges of whiteness. Interrogating this discourse and recognizing how it constitutes us with racist and exclusionary effects is a crucial step in tracing our implication in material relations. As Goldberg (1993) reminds us, liberal discourse has racist discursive and material effects. All of the strategies for tracing material relations described above require a genealogy of practices that disrupts a reigning discourse of empowerment. The ideas I have offered, like challenging professionalism, meritocracy in hiring, and funding standards, are steps of resistance. However, we must also pay attention to how the discourse of participatory research regulates how we think about social change.

People getting their voices heard, sharing their experiences, participating in research projects and feeling empowered is a version of ‘interested objectivity.’ These representations of social justice require essentialized identities that render intelligible the ‘return of power’ to ‘the people.’ Bodies are ‘guided into this discourse,’ into performances of empowerment and emancipation. Individuals are positioned as autonomous, rational and having choice, without any consideration of the historical context of colonial and imperial domination that structures these modernist notions. Whiteness and its privileges are masked as ‘unracialized’ in liberal discourses of equality and the autonomous individual.

Powersharing and collaboration can bring different results, but this does not happen without vigilant and ongoing questioning. The terms of the research and its purpose must be
continually negotiated. Is this purpose being fulfilled, and for whom? While some are benefitting from the research, who is not benefitting or is being adversely affected by racist discursive and material practices the research sustains? Representations of collaboration in participatory research that erase the conflicts will undermine anti-subordination struggles. We need to realize that if relations of domination are going to be redressed, then not everyone will benefit from the research. Resisting the discourse of the universal subject and the mantle of invisibility for whiteness is how those in positions of power can chart our implication and complicity in relations of domination. We have individual and collective responsibility contextualized in historical perspective to resist privilege and dominance.

Resolving Self as Text

A motivating factor in pursuing this research was my desire to put into practice anti-racist, feminist and poststructural perspectives as strategies for challenging my role as producer and effect of discursive practices in the field of education and specifically as a teacher of participatory research methodologies for community development. One way to take up this challenge was to critically examine my history and subject location, not looking for an origin or explanation for my interpretation of ‘the problem’ with participatory research (although this was certainly tempting at various points in the research), but in order to describe discursive practices. I have interrogated the categories of ‘social change agent’ and ‘the oppressed’ as representations that can have injurious and violent effects. These effects materialize through discourses of ‘empowerment’ and ‘social change’ that regulate who gets to empower and who needs to be empowered. My common sense understandings of justice, who I am, and whose side I am on have been problematized. Mapping autobiographical discourses which produce the ideas presented in this thesis is a political project, inseparable from describing the discourses that regulate ‘the knowable’ of participatory research.
Whereas I had once asked "How can I do participatory research better?", I now ask "How does power circulate through representations of research, and what do they secure?"

I have navigated anti-essentialist views on experience that compete with theories of epistemic privilege in the ethics of knowledge about power and its abuses. My preliminary inquiries into the production of identities in participatory research were very stuck in the essentialism/anti-essentialism debate. I wanted to explain how the 'oppressed' or the 'participants' in participatory research were essentialized and homogenized as racialized Others. Likewise, I was concerned with what I perceived as the essentialized identity of participatory researcher as a 'social change agent.' The following argument of Spivak is very relevant:

The position that only the subaltern can know the subaltern, only women can know women and so on, cannot be held as a theoretical presupposition either, for it predicates the possibility of knowledge on identity. Whatever the political necessity for holding the position, and whatever the advisability of attempting to "identify" (with) the other as subject in order to know her, knowledge is made possible and is sustained by irreducible difference, not identity. What is known is always in excess of knowledge. Knowledge is never adequate to its object. (1988:253-4)

I shifted from associating identity and experience with knowledge (only the oppressed could know the oppressed) and began to incorporate Spivak's response to the essentialism/anti-essentialism divide by focussing on strategy. I saw the importance of strategy to the critique of essentialism, to be "understood not as an exposure of error, our own or others', but as an acknowledgement of the dangerousness of something one cannot not use" (1993:5).

I have been 'reading' the use or misuse of an essentialist argument for the transferal of power to groups constituted as 'oppressed' within participatory research, a move which I claim actually ensures and maintains the superiority of those facilitating the transfer of power. Now I am thinking about the dangerousness yet inevitability of masterwords such as 'research' and 'social change.' Through this process I have come closer to an understanding of what structures my thinking about participatory research, closer to what Britzman calls the limits or outside edges of my thought. The structures of my thinking show that participatory research is constructed as
having the potential to effect some type of ('positive') social change or social justice. I was concerned about participatory research actually reinforcing the oppressive power relations it is endeavouring to subvert. This concern relies on a belief that participatory research done differently might have a more desirable effect. Tied to this assumption is the possibility of 'really' 'knowing' whether participatory research is having a desirable or undesirable impact on the structure of power relations.

My initial question 'can participatory research be done better' is premised upon the desire to develop a framework for participatory research practice that could confront dominant social relations, particularly those of racism. On the one hand, I want to believe that it is possible to identify oppression or an abuse of power. I also want to believe in a kind of research that challenges relations of oppression. On the other hand, I recognize the danger in making truth claims about what constitutes 'good' research, what is an abuse of power, and what is social justice. I am arguing that they are in fact representations, performative of discourse, knowable only through relational identities.

Embedded in the discourse of participatory research is a causal relation between the actions and intentions of those engaged in the research and its outcomes. An investigation from this frame of causal logic would ask what methods bring about more just and ethical relations within the research process. My continual slippage into causal explanatory theory is evident, especially in the interviews. I insinuate that participatory research would be 'better' if researchers 'from the community' were hired as opposed to 'outsiders' who occupy a dominant subject location. Causal logic also underlies the strategies I propose above for resisting privilege and being vigilant about discursive practices. However, critiquing representations of the 'real' can work both for and against an anti-racist agenda. We must be continually vigilant about the distance this poststructural perspective can go in avoiding accountability for the lived experiences of oppressing and being oppressed. Only by tracing relations of domination in a particular context (who is doing
the critique and what does it achieve) will we know the difference between critiques of essentialism that contribute to anti-subordination and those that do not.

The Vigilant Researcher

I feel I have achieved one small but significant part of a larger project. My interrogation of participatory research discourse has revealed essentialized categories and modernist assumptions that have exclusionary and racist effects. This critique is not given much attention in the current literature on participatory research. In terms of what might be a next step, I want to continue the challenge that Butler raises: "How will we know the difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose" (1993:241)? She writes:

Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a "pure" opposition, a "transcendence" of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labour of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (241)

I want to think about what might be the subversive effects of tracing material relations and being vigilant about discursive practices in participatory research.

Ruth’s reference to responsibility is the most useful idea with which to summarize my conclusions. By this I mean taking responsibility to ensure that participation of all those involved in research is supported with the recognition that we are not ‘all equal’ but are positioned by discourses, material structures and social practices in very unequal ways. I also mean taking responsibility for the effects of our discursive practices; identifying interpretive repertoires, recognizing their racist and exclusionary effects, and vigilantly replacing them with anti-racism practices. Finally, taking responsibility means to continually trace how we are implicated in the oppression of others; how their subordination is intertwined with our innocence. It is not enough to identify interlocking vectors of power and how we benefit from our position within them at the expense of others. We must strategize to make these relations visible in wider, public ways and
make changes in our daily practices. For participatory researchers, this means letting go of an identity of 'innocent researcher' working in solidarity with the 'oppressed.' We can replace it with a vigilant researcher who charts their implication in others' subordination and gives up power and privilege in their anti-subordination research efforts. Anti-racism theory and practice would be central to this new framework for participatory research.
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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. Describe how you understand participatory research.
2. Do you think there is a relationship between participatory research and social change or social justice?
3. How do you understand your role?
4. Who are the people you work with?
5. What makes participatory research 'participatory'?
6. When or how is it not participatory?
7. Who do you think should be doing participatory research?
8. What are your criteria for getting involved with a participatory research project?
9. Are these descriptions in Voices of Change relevant or contradictory to how you understand your work?
10. Do you think participatory research should be taught in universities? community colleges?

11. A community group of people of colour want to hire researchers to do a participatory research study to determine health needs of their community in Toronto. The most experienced participatory research practitioners who apply are white. People of colour who apply have less experience and fewer skills. The hiring process becomes controversial. What is your response to this situation?

12. White or non-native researchers are frequently flown up to northern First Nation and Inuit communities to do participatory research projects by invitation of the community. This seems to be a growing trend. Also the most recent Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has adopted a participatory research process that includes community and government representatives. What is your response?

13. Adults sometimes refer to their research process as participatory when they are researching with street kids? What is your response?

14. Any final comments?

Reflections on the Interview Questions

These are the questions that I prepared prior to interviewing. I would have these questions in front of me and they felt like a security blanket in case my mind went blank. Only during the first interview did my interviewee also have a copy; usually they did not and they had not seen the questions prior to the interview. I was interested in the spontaneous responses that my questions would elicit rather than previously prepared answers. However, each participant signed a consent form just prior to beginning the interview that clearly stated a research intent (see appendix C). So as the interview began they were reminded of my interest in race and representation within the discourse of participatory research. (I had also briefly discussed my concerns about essentialized
identities and representation in participatory research with each of my participants prior to interviewing them.) After doing it in this way, I felt that I would prefer to get the consent form signed on another occasion before the actual interview because doing right before seemed so formal, official and intimidating to me. I imagined it having a similar effect on the person I was interviewing. I need to explore further the ways in which signing the consent form immediately prior to the interview structured its intelligibility. My concern to avoid a ‘formalizing’ procedure reveals my investment in ‘rapport’ and my theory of what makes a ‘good’ interview.

I did not always stick to the exact wording of the questions but I generally brought up the ideas in this order. Often I followed the narratives that the questions provoked and then used a question when it seemed to fit. I always started with #1, and then asked or prodded in the direction of #2, #3, and #4 as they seemed relevant. I rarely asked #5 or #6 but the next questions, #7, #8 and #10 I would touch on or ask directly. I never asked #9 which I had thought would involve my participant responding to excerpts of canonical participatory research literature that I had been studying using textual analysis. I had wanted to see if they had similar impressions to mine or how they would respond if I shared my analysis with them of the discourses that I thought were regulating how we think about participatory research. I now think that this might be a more interesting way to elicit and represent discursive practices in this discourse. I may reintroduce this if I do post-interview conversations or more interviewing.

I usually introduced #11, #12, and #13 as ‘scenarios’ and read them verbatim. I remember feeling I had to ‘work up’ to these, so I positioned them at the end of the interview when I thought that we would be more comfortable about addressing these issues. There is a lot to unpack here in my reading practices which is beyond the scope of what I am attempting in this short reflection. Here I am representing tools that I think will be helpful for engaging in this analysis and outlining some of the directions this analysis might go.

The process by which I created these questions is central to what I intend to explore in subsequent writing as I continue to analyze ‘data’ and what I think counts as ‘data.’ I need to explore how I reconstructed these ‘scenarios’ (#11, #12, #13) based on discussions I had about ‘real’ people with my thesis supervisor, or from my reflections on presentations that I had attended within OISE. My recreation of these ‘scenarios’ are illustrative of the discourses that circulate through the ‘materialization’ (Butler) of participatory research. The ‘strategies’ (Spivak) that are deployed in my discursive practice include representations of ‘community’ and ‘difference’ and binary understandings of ‘skills’ and ‘experience.’ These are examples of the ‘performatives’ of participatory research where discourses and power converge. My questions and the responses they elicit are made possible through regulatory and normative processes or citationality. They illustrate the performativity of participatory research and provide a glimpse of the shifting limits of my thinking or the ‘thinkable’ of this research approach.
APPENDIX B

Transcript Conventions

I have adopted Wetherell and Potter's transcript conventions from *Mapping the Language of Racism* (1992) with some minor variations. As they note, transcription is already a form of analysis and I felt that the aims of my study were similar to theirs in that I was interested in analyzing discourse in its social context. I have used a simplified system of transcribing that was manageable within my time frame and available resources.

Repetition in wording and grammatical inconsistencies are transcribed without editing. Pauses are represented with dots and the number of dots corresponds roughly to the length of the pause, i.e. more dots would indicate a longer pause. If the pause is longer than approximately three seconds then I indicate that in round brackets: (three second pause). These repetitions in phrasing and pauses are important to include because in my analysis I am paying attention to the silences, the unspoken and the gaps that are provoked in my "readings" of hesitation, pauses and repetition.

I have added commas, periods and question marks according to my interpretation of the flow and rhythm of the speech. The punctuation represents a very slight pause, a breath, and/or a shift in ideas. When there is a very obvious breath taken I indicate that in round brackets: (breath). I also indicate in round brackets when there is laughter, chuckles or sighs. Speech errors and particles (e.g. uhm) are included. When the listener briefly acknowledges the speaker with "uh-huh" or "yes," these are included in round brackets. If I could not distinguish actual words I placed what I thought had been said in square brackets or left them empty. When words or particles were said with particular emphasis they are underlined. If the listener cut off the speaker or spoke over top of the first speaker, this was indicated with a double slash mark: //.

These conventions allow me to re/present the meaning I am reading into what I hear on the tapes. My recreation is also informed by my memory and notes of impressions during the interview. The conventions provide a medium through which readers (and their reading practices) can 'play' with my reading of the data. How I have chosen to transcribe from taped oral material into the written word is also 'data.' Often the process of transcribing led me to different meanings for what was being said then I had 'experienced' during the interview. My interpretation of these shifts and rereadings, an interrogation of my reading practices, forms part of the analysis in this report. I have also become aware of how my formatting choices (use of italics, indentation) re/present my 'readings' of the relationship between the 'data' and the 'analysis'.
Informed Consent

I agree to participate in an interview conducted by Wendy Fischer for her study of Participatory Research discourse. This research will form part of her M.A. thesis research entitled "Race and Representation in Participatory Research" in the Adult Education Department of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, affiliated with the University of Toronto. This study hopes to explore how representations within Participatory Research discourse work to maintain, negotiate and resist dominant social systems and the implications for anti-racist practice.

The interview will be taped and transcribed and all identifying information will be accessible only to myself and Wendy Fischer. Confidentiality will be ensured by the use of pseudonyms. I understand that material from this interview will form part of a course term paper, the above-mentioned thesis, and possibly future publications. I am free to decline any questions or to withdraw from the study at any time.

If I have any questions about the study I can call Wendy Fischer at (416) 928-3163.

Participant’s Signature: ____________________________
Reflections on Informed Consent

Since interviewing I have been thinking of how this consent form should be changed according to suggestions made by one of my interviewees who chose to just initial the form. The reason I had included address and telephone on the form was because I was verbally promising a copy of the final term paper to each person I interviewed and I wanted their addresses in a safe place. I now realize that identify information should be kept separate from initialled consent forms that are coded by a system with which only I am familiar. However, I have reproduced my consent form as it was for the interviews. It shows how I was describing my research intent at the stage prior to interviewing and what interviewees were aware of as my interest. It might describe a different intent if I were to revise it now, which I feel tempted to do. My thinking was very structured by investments in a causal way of thinking about social change as a possible effect of participatory research. My understanding of ‘maintenance,’ ‘negotiation’ and ‘resistance’ is now influenced by Butler’s notion of performativity and her formulation of agency.