Three Performances of the Postmetropolis: Youth, Drama, Theatre, and Pedagogy

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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2014

ABSTRACT

This Canadian arts-infused ethnography inquires into youth and their social relations in a Mississauga secondary school and in the rehearsals of a production of Concord Floral at Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto. This study analyzes three performances of the suburb for what they suggest regarding the lives of youth, drama, and theatre pedagogy and the changing geography of the suburb. The first performance is a production of Concord Floral by Jordan Tannahill enacted by eight youth from the suburbs. The second set of performances is composed of place-based rituals of schooling presented by students in the spaces of the school where they originally occurred. The final performance takes place on the same school grounds where I conduct walking interviews with youth. Our walks are interrupted and we become spectators to a third performance of the suburb orchestrated by the nonhuman. The social relations observed in this study suggest both normalized privilege and reaction against it. Drama and theatre are used methodologically to produce data rich with affect, including pleasure in rehearsal and the frustrations of a tension-ridden class. Drama and theatre, however, are analyzed for more than their methodological use. This research offers aesthetic approaches that open notions of both drama and theatre pedagogy as they are practiced with youth as ethical, social and environmental art forms.
Social geographers Edward Soja (2011) and Doreen Massey’s (2005) spatial theory and Gilles Deleuze’s concepts of the “minor” (1997) and “difference” (1968/94) frame the study theoretically (1997, p. 141). The findings suggest multiple diversities ranging from artists-in-the-making to the nonhuman. Methodologically, doing drama enhances focus groups and conducting the interviews while walking results in the creation of hybridized methods. The analysis attempts to find what Patti Lather (2013) calls a “difference driven analytic” (p. 639). This study analyzes theatre rehearsal, school, and suburban spaces for their potential to become increasingly heterogeneous and equitable (Sibley, 2011, p.131). It closes with an analysis of the school grounds and its potential as a place for socially-engaged artistic practices working with, and alongside, the community to address issues of inadequate infrastructure, environmental concerns, and the quandaries associated with being young in the contemporary suburb.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my supervisor, Dr. Kathleen Gallagher, I send my profound thanks for your engaged intellectual path-walking with me. I also thank you for the terrain that you walked in this field and the path your footsteps have broken. Your supervision was executed with exceptional care and thought. As well, this research was bolstered by an apprenticeship on your research team, from which I have learned about relational pedagogies that create intellectual communities of common purpose and the great pleasure of exchange. This intellectual and relational passage has been one of the highlights of my life and your stewardship of my evolving scholarship and of me is a mentorship that runs very deep. I am, and will always be, hugely grateful.

Deep and sincere thanks go to the others who were present in my Final Oral Exam: Dr. Caroline Fusco, Dr. Barry Freeman, Dr. David Booth and Dr. Helen Nicholson. I thank you all for your work to expand the ideas and approaches of this research. David, I have known your work the longest – and your devotion to drama and to teaching have inspired me to aim higher with both. Caroline and Barry, as members of my committee, I thank you for adding immeasurably with your generous and insightful suggestions for structure, clarity and further readings. Helen, thank you so much for acting as the External Examiner and bringing your fresh questions to the project to show how much more might be learned from this research. I also deeply appreciated the encouragement you gave me when I presented the early findings. I feel most honoured for the extent to which you have all entered into my work.

Thank you to OISE professors who have contributed to the thesis through your classes and classroom-based discussions: Stephanie Springgay, Megan Boler, Ruben Gaztambide–Fernandez and the late Roger Simon. Thank you to one particular TA for your exceptional intellectual vigour and pedagogical invention – Etienne Turpin.

Thank you to Nina Lewis, Danny Cavanagh and Cheryl Clarke for helping with the organization of graduate student life and my research assistantship. Thank you Neil Tinker for your patient, upbeat and ongoing teaching about navigating the digital world.

Thank you to Harrison Browne and Martha Muzychka for being so instrumental in the preparation of the manuscript.

Thank you for the companionship of several students: Carol-Ann Burke, Traci Scheepstra, Rebecca Starkman, Meredith Heyland, Chloe Shantz-Hilkes, Dirk Rodricks, Diane Swartz, Heather Fitzsimmons-Frey, Art Babyants, Alex Means and Christine Poitier. Thank you to Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou. You
started with me in the first class I took at OISE and have been a true support and dear friend throughout these past seven years.

I thank the following people for teaching me through their fearlessly inventive pedagogical spirits: Naomi Savage, Urvashi Sahni, Dan Chapman-Smith, Andrew Kushnir, Antonio Cayonne and Catherine Murray.

Thank you to two important people who acted as intellectual companions and trusted friends from the west coast: Mia Perry and Amanda Wager.

The research could never have been completed without the generosity of the students at Branch Secondary School and several teachers. To you, Mr. A, I send enormous thanks for acting as a true partner in the research. As a most gifted and generous teacher, you shared your classroom and entered into the planning and implementation of the research with such openness and curiosity. I am deeply grateful for our collaboration, shared purpose and continuing friendship.

In the second site of the research, Concord Floral, thanks go to you, Jordan Tannahill, for bringing me on board to be present in rehearsals, neither of us knowing what the process might entail. With Erin Brubacher and Cara Spooner, you formed an artistic team that was exceptionally welcoming and you went out of your way to include me in all the events associated with Concord Floral. Thank you to all three of you for your artistry and commitment to both the aesthetic and social pedagogies in this work with youth. I wish you, the cast and crew the very best as the third iteration of Concord Floral opens at the Theatre Centre next month.

Thank you to the people who made my teaching at the University of Windsor possible. This opportunity allowed me a space in which to try out some of the ideas that I was writing about in this thesis. Thank you to Tina Pugliese, Kathryn Brennan, Justine Bruyere, Brittany Wiessler and Nikki McCarthy and all the students in that most memorable class in the winter term of 2014.

Thank you to other people in the theatre education community who have been exceptionally generous at conferences, in collaborative workshops, in shared teaching and utterly expert at moral support: Karen Gilodo, Lois Adamson and Belarie Zatzman. Paula Wing, I send heartfelt thanks to you as you exemplify artistry in both teaching and in friendship.

This intensive process has required a level of energy and commitment that has taken me away from regular visits from those who sustain my life. I thank all of my friends who stood by me knowing that one day I would return but that I had found something that was strangely obsessing me: Susan and Nestor Golets, Elizabeth Klinck and John Martin, Elizabeth and Nigel Etherington, Elizabeth and David
Morley, Cherie Camp and John Welsman, Vicki Smith and Craig Turner, Linda Mollenhauer and Gary Whitelaw, Val and Gord McGiverin, Ron and Gillian Graham, Sherry and Bruce Sandilands, Kate Rodd and Ted Young, Harry Underwood and Denise Ireland, Diane Pitblado and Mark Wilson, Barb and John Myers, Ashleigh Everett and Stuart Murray, Pauline Pariser and Howie Abrams and Jill Carr-Harris. Deep thanks to my special Annes: Anne West and Anne Simpson. I thank my godchildren: Sophie Golets, Peter Etherington and Lily Martin.

Special thanks to you, Stephanie Nicholas, for your weekly yoga, instructed with such care and love. Thank you Frank Bach for your conscious movement classes that helped to sustain me.

And now to my family - how I wish my father, Burton Wessels, and my grandparents could be here now so that I could thank them for their encouragement and love.

To my mother, Diana Wessels, thank you for continuing to be an inspiration. You are an example to me as you made major changes in the middle of your life, to create a new life that would sustain you. Over the course of the writing of this thesis you have had to suffer illness and I am buoyed by your strength, courage and love. And I’m deeply grateful to your partner, Jim Hubbard, who has been so tenderly beside you in these last twenty years.

Thank you to my strong and spirited sister, Sandra, who has been a cherished friend. Thank you to her beloved children Harrison, Mitchell and Laura for their presence in my life.

Thank you to my brother Mark and sister-in-law Judie for introducing us to Newfoundland and for your two very fine sons: Cameron and Simon.

To my father-in-law, Jim Kitchens Sr., I send my thanks for always asking about my work. I thank you for giving your son away to Canada. I know there must be days when you wish that he were closer by. I remember Ruth Kitchens with love. Thank you dear sisters-in-law: Lynn and Laura and dear brother-in-law, Walter. Thank you to my savvy and feisty nieces Hilah and Catherine who, with your respective partners Jake and Aaron, are tending your flourishing families that give me sustaining pleasure from afar.

I thank my children: Walker and Will for your beautifully nimble minds and tender, funny spirits that push you to follow your own paths. These little words seem meager as I try to express the sense of grace that I feel having you both by my side. I feel a staggering love.

And to Jim, I send my deepest thanks for your literal sustaining of my life. This process has altered our domestic life and you have become a magnificent cook. Your dinners night after night have been gifts – such nourishment and care. This is no small contribution to this thesis and to our shared life. The list
would be too long and the accounting somehow inadequate for all the many ways that you have shown your abiding love day in and day out. There are no words – just thanks and more thanks.

Finally, thank you to the teachers earlier on: Canon Bagley, Michael Mawson, Pierre Lefevre, Peter Carver and Kathy Stinson and Beverly Clarkson.
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CHAPTER 1 – PERFORMANCES OF THE POSTMETROPOLIS

Whether by choice or by force, builders and inhabitants, rich and poor, construct and live in urban peripheries around the world. We can now look “from the expanding edge of the global city” into the dynamic process that drives the urban revolution today and are able to realize that the ‘urban century’ is rather the ‘suburban century.’ (Keil, 2013, p. 5)

Youth in the Toronto suburbs live in a place that is not designed for them. To come to know the suburbs from a youth perspective, this research studies youth involvement in three types of performances about the suburb. These performances, both at a school and in a theatre, suggest that the social relations of these youth are both vital and unsettled. The drama and theatre practices create multiple pedagogical encounters with aesthetics, ethics, and the environment. Through these performances, the youth and their teacher/facilitators open both drama pedagogy and theatre practice to the multiple stories happening all at once as these youth express their affection for one another, their distrust of difference, and their care for aesthetic work that matters to them. This research develops a nuanced understanding of the ways that youth through both drama and theatre create socially-engaged artistic work that produces and place-makes a suburb on their own terms.

This research is a two-sited, arts-infused ethnographic inquiry into youth attitudes to diversity in Toronto suburbia. The first research site is found in the rehearsal halls used by a group of young people preparing a production of a scripted play about a youth ritual, the suburban field party. This first type of performance is a play written by Toronto playwright Jordan Tannahill, who also directs the this production in collaboration with his artistic team: Erin Brubacher, Cara Spooner, and ten youth actors, eight of whom are from the suburbs.¹ This production was first presented publicly at Toronto's Canadian Stage Festival of Ideas and Creation in the spring of 2012 and later in the same year at Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille as part of their Bring the Buzz programming.

The second site of the research is a secondary school in the suburban city of Mississauga, Ontario. In this site, the drama pedagogy I observe in two grade ten drama classes at Branch Secondary School is led by Mr. A. The second type of performance I analyze in this research is the place-based school rituals the

¹ Jordan Tannahill identifies as Canadian born, English speaking, Caucasian, queer, and male. Erin Brubacher identifies as Canadian born, English speaking, Caucasian, straight, and female. Cara Spooner identifies as Canadian born, English speaking, Caucasian, straight, and female.
students enact in the places in the school where they originally occurred.\(^2\) A third type of performance of the suburb occurs on the school grounds as I conduct walking interviews with youth participants. In what I am calling a “performance of the suburb by the suburb,” the youth participant and I become spectators to a performance by the nonhuman. All three of these types of performance use the suburb as setting (Concord Floral) or are mounted site-specifically in the suburb (the two performances at Branch). These three performances generate data about the suburb as a place of unforeseen diversities that include the nonhuman, hidden income disparities and the associated coming and going of youth, and social tensions that are gendered, territorial, age-related, and intergenerational.

My study analyzes Concord Floral and two performances at Branch Secondary School. To inquire into various aspects of the suburb, I work alongside the youth as they create both their dramas in the school site and as they rehearse their play in the theatre rehearsal halls. I use drama in focus groups and use walking interviews to travel through the school grounds and neighbouring suburban streets. In both sites, I interview youth, and I observe their working processes and their break time, so that I may understand more about their social relations. In interviews, I ask about their attitudes to diversity as they negotiate their daily lives. This research is not about charting diversity but perceiving the extent to which it is expected that diversity would be assimilated. Marvasti and McKinney (2011) warn against diversity policies that expect assimilation, arguing that if diversity is only tolerated, or if it is made to fit into already existing social relations, then members of the dominant culture remain dominant instead of entering into a negotiation of relations.

This study builds on my Master’s research, which analyzed the intercultural potential of constructing a play devised by youth, also at Branch Secondary School. In my doctoral research, I choose to foreground the suburb more intentionally because there is little research that offers a youth perspective of suburban life and schooling. This study differs from my previous one in that I focus on the socio-spatial relations and the ways that communities can become increasingly different as a means of countering the pull to sameness or the assimilation of difference. This study also differs methodologically as I use place-based rituals, rehearsals of a scripted play, and walking interviews rather than devising.

This research is important to me because I was a teacher at Branch for eight years. When I went to graduate school and studied urban education, I was curious to know if discourses of urban schooling assumed the inclusion of suburban schools or if they assumed that suburban schools were different and

\(^2\) Mr. A is the the name I give the teacher with whom I collaborate in the planning of the drama unit at Branch Secondary School, also referred to as Branch. He identifies as Canadian born, English speaking, Caucasian, straight, and male.
did not have the same issues as urban schools. I came to recognize that this quandary is related to a larger discussion about whether the suburban is a subset of the urban, or if the suburban is separately situated somewhere between the urban and the rural. Where the suburb fits on the rural-to-urban continuum will be discussed later in this thesis; however, given how few ethnographies have been completed in Canadian suburban schools, it is time to consider the specifics of suburban schooling from a youth point of view.

The findings of this research suggest the suburb is both a material and a conceptual place. Materially, it is a place where people go about their daily activities and respond to the conditions under which they live. The suburb, however, is also a conceived place in which its historic myths clash with its contemporary realities. Conceptually, these myths include the clean division between the suburban and urban, and the idea of the suburb as a place of artistic aridity. This ethnography generates data regarding youth experiences of the suburb, which challenge those outdated myths. Paradoxically, although the suburb is neither exclusively affluent nor homogeneous, this analysis suggests privilege is an active force in the site of the school.

Myths are important because they can have material consequences. To illustrate this point, I offer an example regarding settlement services for immigrants. David Hulchanski (2010) has documented growing rates of poverty in suburban Toronto. His statistics suggest a polarization of income with a greater number of neighbourhood populations moving from middle income into low-income compared to those moving from middle-income to high-income. Social programs have not expanded to accommodate these new and increasing levels of socio-economic disparity. The suburb of Mississauga, where this research takes place, is socio-economically mixed; however, the poverty here can be hidden and not easily detected. Misconceptions of the suburb can work to disadvantage or marginalize youth living in the suburb and who are “invisibly” poor. Geographer Lucia Lo (2011) makes just this point, suggesting the conceptualization of the suburb as an affluent space has influenced the number and scope of public services offered. Lo cites this misconception as partially responsible for the lack of adequate immigrant settlement services for new immigrants. It is important, therefore, to create more nuanced understandings of the suburb that make income disparity visible while suggesting a fuller range of diversities, within both the neighbourhood and the school, to counter prevalent and still powerful myths.

This analysis contributes to the fields of geography, theatre studies, and drama pedagogy and applied theatre. This research contributes to youth geographies by trying to understand how the youth participants negotiate the space of both the school and theatre and how these negotiations create more or less equitable socio-spatial relations.
Just as there are few ethnographies of suburban schools available, Morris and Cant (2006) suggest there are also few examples of site-specific work in the suburbs. They state, “it appears that little cultural geographical analysis has been undertaken on the concept of site-specificity and art in non-urban environments” (Morris & Cant 2006, p. 865). To address this gap, this study makes use of site-specific, place-based performances of ritual as a means to generate youth perceptions of the suburb where they live and of the suburban school they attend. A word of explanation is needed here. Site-specific work is set in a particular place outside conventional theatres while place-based work, according to applied theatre artist and scholar Sally Mackey (2007), is also set outside mainstream theatres but it depends on the deep knowledge of place that residents and inhabitants bring to such projects.

This study offers to the fields of theatre studies and drama pedagogy, an analysis of the social uses of drama to create conversation across difference. This research also charts multiple methodological uses of drama to depict social relations. It inquires into the intricacies of theatre pedagogies that are ethical and social, as the actors engage with each other and the audience and with the aesthetics of their play.

The analysis of Concord Floral offers vocabularies with which to discuss the intentions and practices of such works that are neither relational art nor community theatre. In the absence of discursive frames for such hybridized work, this study offers a context for Tannahill’s approach by analyzing those theatre artists whom he considers influential, namely Richard Maxwell and Rimini Protokoll. In combining their ideas about theatre with the interviews of Tannahill, Brubacher and Spooner, this study offers ways to discuss such hybridized productions aiming to create more inclusive theatre practices for and with youth by straddling urban and suburban, professional and amateur, and adult and youth theatre.

To introduce the ethnography in more detail, I will begin by outlining the reasons for studying the suburb. As this research is about drama and theatre pedagogy, and the suburb, I will define these terms: suburb, suburbanism, postmetropolis, drama, and theatre education. I will identify the theoretical frames of Doreen Massey’s (2005) spatial theory and Gilles Deleuze’s (1968/1994, 1997) concept of “difference” and the “minor.” This introduction will also set the study within the larger context of neoliberalism and globalization. As well, it will situate drama and theatre pedagogy within the larger context of neoliberal curriculum and contemporary poststructural pedagogies. Before concluding, I will discuss the relevance of early findings to the shaping of the subsequent research questions as well as set the parameters of the work, articulating its limits.
Why the Suburb? Outside, Newer, Less Densely Populated, Diverse

To describe the suburb geographically, it is located by, or adjoins, a city but it is not fully part of that city. Suburbs are newer than the oldest part of the city’s core, and traditionally they have been less densely populated. In Mississauga, the population today is highly diverse in terms of religion, ethnicity, race, language, ability, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation. In the United States, more than 50% of the poor now live in suburban areas. Keil and Young (2011), in referencing Census Canada statistics from 2006, say that 70% of people living in Canada are living in metropolitan areas. In cities like Toronto, where many parts of the downtown have been gentrified, some of the urban poor moved out into the inner and older suburbs of the city in search of affordable housing. In addition, recent influxes of immigrants are choosing the suburbs to settle. As Parlette and Cowen (2011) say, “gentrification works in tandem with the racialized suburbanization of poverty. The displacement of inner-city residents through gentrification has led many to relocate to the suburbs, which are also the main sites of new immigrant settlement in many cities” (p. 798). The infrastructure, however, is insufficient to meet the demands of residents living in this changing locale. Keil and Young say, “one of the most important areas of concern in the in-between city is the provision of infrastructure, its use and accessibility to it” (p. 7). The findings of this research would concur with Keil and Young, as the youth identify many shortfalls in local infrastructure. The youth also identify a lack of affordable housing, an observation which is echoed by geographers Preston, Murdie, Wedlock, Agrawal, Anucha, D’Addario, Kwak, Logan and Murnaghan (2009). Also, in suburbs designed for automobile transportation, the youth in the Concord Floral site identify the need for better and more regularly scheduled public transit. Finally, the youth identify an absence of non-adult or non-commercialized space in which to gather.

To consider diversity as an aspect of the suburb, it is worth asking if this is a new phenomenon that is transforming the suburb, or has the suburb always been diverse? Kneebone and Berube (2013) suggest that the “suburbs have never been as monolithic as historical stereotypes would suggest” (p. 8). Valerie Preston (2002) suggests Mississauga has never been homogeneous and it has always been home to new waves of immigrants. In his early ethnography of the suburb, sociologist Herbert Gans (1967) suggests the post war American suburb was a place of diversity. Arguably, his notion of diversity excludes certain populations; nevertheless, his analysis suggests that discussions of suburban diversity are not new. I would argue that the reduction of the suburbs to an image of exclusively White and privileged is an outdated Americanized myth that does not even accurately represent the current heterogeneity of American suburbs and certainly does not serve well the youth inhabitants of the Toronto suburb of Mississauga. Assuming the suburb as a place of uniform privilege may result in overlooking those in need of publicly-funded supportive services. The invisibility of the poor and near poor may work to
marginalize them further (Dippo & James, 2011). When poverty is not visible, it may serve to perpetuate a myth that all who live in the suburb are affluent.

**Terms: Suburb, Suburbanism, and Postmetropolis**

In the early analysis of this project, I tried to make use of a double term, suburb/edge city. The term seemed apt because it expressed two perspectives. The suburb is the term used by city dwellers to describe the sprawl beyond the downtown, while suburban residents may see themselves as living in a different kind of newer city located at the edge of the older downtown core. Initially, I thought these two perspectives could serve to relax the tight distinction between suburban and urban and to show how definitions change according to context. Later, I found the term unwieldy; furthermore, it perpetuated the very binary I wanted to avoid. As a result, I reverted to the use of suburb.

Edward Soja (2011) seeks a new framework for “understanding cities and urban geographies” (p. 459). Soja suggests a new configuration of urban space is emerging, one which challenges the model of the suburb as surrounding the urban core, and he concludes, “the era of the modern metropolis may be ending, creating a growing need for new frameworks for understanding cities and urban geographies” (p. 459). He suggests there is a discourse within urban geography that “looked at the social and spatial effects of these new urbanization processes, emphasizing increasing cultural diversity, rising economic inequalities and social polarizations, and changing urban forms and functions” (p. 455). He calls these conditions “postmetropolitan” (p. 455).

As a more encompassing term, postmetropolis suggests the inadequacy of metropolitan mapping, which depicts a tightly structured division between the inner urban core and the suburban sprawl that rings the city. As I understand it, this postmetropolitan region has pockets revealing either urban or suburban features, or both, to varying degrees. I do not interpret postmetropolis to mean urban and suburban are no longer relevant descriptors, but that this new term maps a geography, composed of both urban and suburban features in various combinations. Over the course of my research, I learn to consider this part of Mississauga as one of the many suburban spaces within the postmetropolitan region. Such thinking is intended to suspend what we think we know and to explore a suburb that is far more diverse than what the shorthand of affluent and White would suggest.

While trying to discuss the uniqueness of the suburb, I face a particular challenge – the risk of falling into the kind of binary thinking that works to misrepresent this locale. Matthew Lassiter and Christopher Neidt (2013) suggest the issues of the suburb have to be placed within the context of the larger

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3 The term edge city is credited to J. Garreau whose work, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* was published in 1991, in New York by Doubleday.
metropolitan region but they warn that “the difficult challenge for ‘new suburban historians’ is to balance the equally critical themes of suburban diversity and metropolitan inequality in our scholarship, without reproducing the culturally, politically, and racially constructed boundaries of the urban–suburban binary” (p. 9). In highlighting the double focus of suburban diversity and metropolitan inequity, Lassiter and Neidt (2013) usefully outline the task ahead, which is to balance the larger context while looking at the minutiae of data created by particular performances of the suburb.

The Suburban School in Context: Policy and Infrastructure

To understand the school and its suburban location more fully, it is important to contextualize it with regard to municipal and board of education policies. As well, this suburb and suburban schooling have to be seen as nested within the larger context of the political and economic forces of neoliberalism that influence these local policies and infrastructure priorities.

Although Branch Secondary School is located in a mixed neighbourhood and the student population comes from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, income disparity is not often in full view. The findings show that income polarization and class differences can manifest in clothing and consumer items and that economic precarity can cause families to move in ways that can disrupt student schooling. Filion, Osolen, and Bunting (2011) chart the history of the Toronto suburbs from their early construction in the era of Keynesian interventionist public policy (the welfare state), which has now been replaced by the current neoliberal state. Of particular relevance to this study is their identification of the “reduction if not outright termination of social housing construction” (Filion, Osolen, & Bunting, 2011, p. 183). Their study pertains to the inner suburbs, but their findings regarding increased levels of poverty and reduced social and physical infrastructure are most relevant to this study placed in the outer suburbs.

Supporting the need for contextualizing local action are Cowen and Parlette (2005) who suggest that working locally can mask that a particular local problem is a manifestation of a larger one. Cowen and Parlette (2005) are not arguing against local initiatives but for the recognition of the larger economic forces in which the problem of poverty is embedded. They state, “the exclusive focus on the neighbourhood scale misdiagnoses poverty as a purely local problem rather than as a complex problem that manifests itself locally” (Cowen & Parlette, 2005, p. iv). These arguments are highly relevant to this inquiry as poverty and the lack of social infrastructure are more than a school problem. Focusing on schools without the larger political and economic context has the potential to blame schools for failings that are beyond their control.

Another of the contextualizing factors for schools and the suburb are targeted social policies. Cowen and Parlette, (2005) differentiate between targeted and universal policies. The targeted strategy identifies
“priority neighbourhoods” and is used by the United Way in both Toronto and Mississauga to give extra funding to underserved areas. In the Region of Peel, where the suburban city of Mississauga is located, the Neighbourhood Capacity Support Strategy was initiated and is supported by both the United Way and the Region of Peel. An example of their funding program is the Multicultural Inter-Agency Group of Peel, which received $26,500 to support the creation of a Neighbourhood Council focusing on the conditions of the West Wood apartment building, located near Branch Secondary School. The Region of Peel (2011) reports:

> tenants of this building are concerned with the safety and comfort of their families and voiced concerns regarding various concerning activities in their building. Residents would like to form a Neighbourhood Council to facilitate more interaction and cohesion in the building. (p. 5)

My research identifies the need for affordable housing in the area of the school, but this report indicates that the quality and conditions of existing housing stock are also important.

The Peel District School Board has also adopted the targeted funding model. Favaro, Bennett, and Gray (2011) studied the association of geography and opportunity and in their American Educational Research Association conference presentation, they report, “the high stakes associated with geographic disparities have wide ranging implications for people who live in these pockets of vulnerable communities, particularly the most vulnerable, children” (Favaro, Bennett, & Gray, 2011, n.p). The Differentiated Resources Program assesses schools in terms of risk and achievement, and those schools meeting their criteria receive supplemental funding. While I do not dispute that these schools are in tremendous need of funding, I do question the neighbourhood priority approach when neighbourhoods are not homogeneous. In mixed suburban neighbourhoods, where high-rise towers are mixed with single-family homes, and where neighbourhoods and schools may fare well on average, the socio-economic challenges of certain youth may be hidden. Don Dippo and Carl James (2011) describe mixed neighbourhoods that appear deceptively “ordinary” in their appearance saying, “the ordinariness of these neighbourhoods often conceals the social problems related to poverty and hunger, the unemployment and underemployment, the street crime and violence that would mark them as ‘inner city’ suburbs” (p. 119).

Attending Branch Secondary School, considered to be a mid-range school that does not qualify for priority funding, are students for whom the lack of available affordable housing has the potential to disrupt their schooling. Is it possible that policies, which take neighbourhoods and schools as a homogeneous whole, could be underserving those who remain hidden in a mixed neighbourhood?

Another of the contextual influences on youth in suburban schools is local infrastructure. Cowen and Parlette (2005) suggest infrastructure is both physical and social. The results of my research refer to
physical infrastructure, which includes local housing, the school building, and school grounds. Filion, Osolen, and Bunting (2011) identify plentiful green space as one of the assets of the inner suburb and my findings suggest that Branch Secondary School, with its massive grounds and green space, also has in its physical infrastructure a sizable asset. In terms of social infrastructure, Cowen and Parlette (2005) suggest that it can “support people’s collective capacity to act and make change” (p. 8). Although making change is difficult to document and may only be apparent long after the work or project is finished, I contend that drama and theatre pedagogies facilitate and develop collective capacities through practices of interdependence, the development of critical awareness and critical thinking skills. Micropolitical drama and theatre pedagogies that open classrooms to focus on local conditions create important opportunities for capacity building for youth.

**Neoliberalism**

This consideration of suburban policy and infrastructure has to be contextualized within neoliberalism. The findings of this research suggest that income disparity, patterns of consumption, and insufficient infrastructure (public transit and public housing) exacerbate the lives of students who live in families classified as poor or near poor. I want to draw connections between the particulars of the data collected at the school site with the larger trends of income polarization (Hulchanski, 2010; Keil, 2002) and the neoliberal state (Means, 2013; Giroux, 2004; Keil, 2002; Gallagher & Lortie, 2005). Hulchanski (2010) studies the decline of middle-income neighbourhoods in the city of Toronto. In looking at the 905 telephone area code (or the suburban areas surrounding the city), he charts a similar trend between 1970 and 2005 but says it is less pronounced than in the city. Of the changing status of neighbourhoods in the suburbs, he says, “as in Toronto, most of these neighbourhoods shifted to the low-income categories (from 0% in 1970 to 21% in 2005; neighbourhoods with higher average incomes also became more numerous, increasing from 13% to 18%)” (Hulchanski, 2010, p. 11). This suggests there is income polarization, and that low-income neighbourhoods are growing more quickly than high-income neighbourhoods.

Geographer Alan Walks (2009) links neoliberalism to the suburban conditions of increasing poverty and suggests that geographers need to turn their attention to:

- the urban impacts of de-globalization and shrinking world trade; renewed state dirigisme and the modification of neoliberal policies into new hybrid forms; challenges to the auto-dependent ways of urban life prevalent in Canadian metropolitan areas; and the suburbanization of poverty and crime, leading to new patterns of socio-spatial polarization. (p. 350)
It is against this historical and geographic background that my study is placed. Significantly, these trends are evident in the references youth make to commercialized space and the lack of infrastructure. Neoliberalism manifests itself in the policies that govern the structures of schooling. Specialized programming, parental choice of schools, standardized evaluations, and discourses of competition and efficiency are some of the neoliberal features of current schooling.

In addressing the ways neoliberalism has developed in schools, geographer Ranu Basu (2003) charts the Common Sense Revolution in Ontario. According to Basu, the rise of neoliberalism in the landscape of Ontario education shows the government implementing neoliberal policies by adopting a three-stage strategy: “aggressive implementation,” followed by a period of “chaos” which ended with “quiet anticipation” (p. 623). These policies filter down into the classroom in several ways. Basu says:

Spaces of learning are politicized and the neoliberalization of the classroom was promoted in different ways. The rationalization of restructuring was legitimized by a perceived need to remain globally competitive in a ‘knowledge based economy’ while at the same time maintain fiscal efficiency and accountability. In order to remain competitive in a global market the education system would need to increase educational standards and improve outcomes. (p. 628)

Might this culture of standardized testing and accountability contribute to school environments that value sameness rather than the vitality of difference? In their drama work in class and in the interviews, youth refer to the comfort of sameness, a concept that may not be so surprising in an educational climate that strives for uniformity through standardized testing. Within the classes I observed during my year at Branch Secondary School, there was tremendous elasticity and capacity for trying new pedagogical approaches on the part of Mr. A; for such teachers, I am convinced that inquiry, critique, and artistic experimentation drive their work even though the larger school culture may not reflect these same social values and politico-artistic aspirations.

These examples briefly summarize how neoliberalism is conceptualized for the purposes of this study. It is a larger economic and political force that is suspicious of government spending on social programs and schools, and it has permeated public institutions with the discourses of business and privatization. The findings of this research suggest such practices may not benefit youth as they produce exclusive spaces of specialized programs within schools that favour certain students and which create tensions within the larger student body.
The Parameters of Looking Very Locally: Advantages and Disadvantages

The times are dangerous because of a range of political and social crises: global economics, global politics, social unrest, and cultural experiments have forced a point of reckoning: Are ‘the children’ ‘our future’ or are they not? (Gallagher, 2007, p. 4)

Youth cultures are neither homogeneous and globalized, nor local and closed, but ‘products of interaction’ that change, meld and reform as they encounter new lines of cultural connection and different meeting places. (Nicholson, 2011a, p. 213)

Connecting the local to the larger forces of neoliberalism presents challenges for what this research can and cannot do. Drawn as I am to the micropolitics of Deleuze and the local practices of drama and theatre pedagogy, I have to issue a caveat. I see the strong merits of micropolitical strategies but they are, by nature, local. In the course of this analysis, I will refer to the times when it appears probable that what is manifesting locally is part of the larger political trend or economic force of neoliberalism. What may appear as a schooling problem may really be a problem with other parts of the infrastructure such as the lack of affordable housing. I will point to the larger forces when they manifest locally, although it is beyond the parameters of this research to analyze these macropolitical structures in any depth or to offer solutions to the larger problems discussed.

Getting stuck in thinking either locally or globally and in keeping the frame too big or too little, I have been stalled by not being able to reconcile my very local micropolitical focus with the larger economic inequities and forces of consumption that manifest in the local. Knowing that my skills and knowledge base are local and that my tools are pedagogical and artistic, I have struggled with how to proceed in the face of such overwhelming macro forces. Eventually, I had to recognize that this neat and tidy distinction between the local and global is messier in the reality of classrooms. Nicholson says (2005) “the stable identities associated with belonging to a bounded place are re-imagined and re-configured as it is recognized that many people have multiple cultural affiliations, and that relationships between the local and the global are complexly interwoven” (p. 11). In looking at the global and local as intertwined, I do not turn away from the larger forces, but speak as witness to their presence in classrooms and rehearsal halls. Gallagher (2007) considers the urban school as a “global” space. She ends her book, *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times*, with the assertion that socially-engaged practices of drama are important because of their ability to engage issues of global importance as they occur in classrooms:

I am persuaded now, more than ever, that drama accomplishes something crucial in the ‘global’ world that is the urban school: it resymbolizes the very experiential, intuitive, sub-cultural, ‘home’
knowledge that is prized by young people, who work assiduously at making meaning of their present circumstances and have the courage to imagine better futures. (Gallagher, 2007, p. 170)

In recognizing that drama and theatre practices work locally, as well as with small groups of people, I suggest that equipping students with micropolitical imaginations and the ability to engage others through theatre, drama, and performance is a political act, albeit a small one. Balfour (2009) considers such work as “a theatre of little changes” (p. 347), and Nicholson (2011a) suggests, “the pedagogical processes of intercultural exchange and theatre-making provide a rich, layered and transitional space to push against some of the boundaries of this inequality on a small scale” (p. 159).

In my study, the teacher Mr. A and his students produce a participatory pedagogical space through drama and they create micropolitical artistic work that could be unexpected given the policies of neoliberal school reforms. Nicholson (2011a) argues there is work being done locally in classrooms, theatres, and other applied drama sites that challenge the current political climate, in spite of neoliberal reforms. She says:

DeCerteau’s metaphor of the map and the story are particularly apposite here, and although the ‘map’ of official educational policies may seem to cut up theatre education’s history of social engagement, the story of contemporary practice cuts right across this perception. (Nicholson 2011a, p. 103)

Massumi (2011) describes “reconstructive architecture” as the events and encounters that reconfigure social relations and the politics of space (p. 102). These research findings discuss the many ways that youth and their teacher/facilitators, both in schools and in theatres, work to insert themselves into the givens of the architecture – the school hallways that were supposed to be cleared of students, the school grounds, and the rehearsal halls and green rooms of theatres usually reserved for adults.

**Theatre Education, Drama Education, and Pedagogy**

The artistic processes at both research sites, the rehearsal hall and the school, create various pedagogies that serve various purposes. The rehearsal hall practices and the performances of Concord Floral offer learning of all kinds through encounters between the youth, between the youth and the facilitators, between the youth and the audience, and between the youth and me as researcher. At the school site, the pedagogical exchange happens between the teacher and me, the youth and their teacher, and between the youth and me. Finally, in the third performance of the suburb, the school grounds, the bird and insect life become instructive to both the research participant and to me.
This ethnography analyzes both drama education and theatre education. According to Helen Nicholson (2011a), theatre education is the practice of professional theatre artists working in schools, hospitals and other settings to facilitate programs. The theatre makers may be part of arts institutions or work as freelancers. In the case of Concord Floral, although the artistic team hold other jobs, they are working on this production as freelance, professional artists, under the auspices of Suburban Beast theatre company. Nicholson suggests that drama education takes place in schools facilitated by specialist teachers at the secondary level and more generalist teachers at the primary junior level (p. 86).

At the school site in this research, a specialist teacher teaches the class, but I, as researcher, work very closely with him. Nicholson (2005) describes the socially-focused intentions of applied drama “specifically [as] an aspiration to use drama to improve the lives of individuals and create better societies” (p. 3).

The places where drama and theatre pedagogy occur are also integral to the drama in both research sites. Nicholson (2011a) makes use of a term credited to Tim Edensor which concerns vernacular places of learning that, “identify and celebrate alternative, uncool, or ‘vernacular’ spaces of creativity that are found in suburban gardens, for example, or community centres, garages and sheds” (p. 108). This vernacular, and its association with the ordinary and the everyday, is relevant to the design, processes, and findings of this research. Mr. A and I create drama activities for the youth to explore the rituals of this particular suburban school and to enact them in their vernacular places in the school and on the school grounds. In the research site of Concord Floral, I observe the everyday rituals of rehearsal with youth in spaces that are, at times, vernacular, particularly in the case of Videofag, a storefront performance space housed in a converted barber shop.

The stance of drama and theatre pedagogy is also important. Social geographer Massey (2005) describes an outwardly-focused stance:

‘outwardlookingness’ towards a positivity and aliveness to the world beyond one’s own turf, whether that be one’s self, one’s city, or the particular part of the planet in which one lives and works: a commitment to that radical contemporaneity which is the condition of, and condition for, spatiality. (p. 15)

This outwardlookingness may take the form of talking across difference in the context of a drama class, or it may address a larger local or global concern.

As this research progresses, I come to understand that I am looking as much at pedagogy as I am at the suburb. When I return to my original proposal for this research, there are questions concerning the methodological uses of drama pedagogy, but I do not have any questions about the pedagogy itself. Although my official research questions initially ask nothing about drama pedagogy, at every stage of the
research, I am asking pedagogical questions of drama and theatre. I am fascinated by the ways the pedagogies at work in the sites of this research ask that I pay attention to the aesthetics and how caring about them is a form of ethics. In both sites of the research, it matters how we (the artists, the teacher, and I) care for the youth doing the work, and how they, the youth, care for the aesthetics of the work. This intersection between artistic pedagogy and pedagogical aesthetics provokes a spatial conceptualization of pedagogy, as if good pedagogy holds open possibility by suspending definitions or making definitions more spacious, and by stretching accepted practices so that they can breathe.

*Concord Floral* suggests many pedagogies that include an aesthetic of the “unpolished.” These pedagogies question notions of mastery and virtuosity, and the exclusions those priorities create regarding who can participate in the arts or artistic practice. These pedagogies also engage with what audiences consider worth seeing. Associated with these pedagogies is the need for spectator pedagogy and the ways that audiences may be brought into discussions to appreciate new approaches and different intentions in theatre.

The last aspect of pedagogy that I would like to discuss is the intersection of pedagogy and methodology. Drama as a pedagogical art form is well suited to explore both the material and conceptual terrain of the contemporary suburb. In the suburban school site, I observe and participate in the creation of place-based performances of school rituals occurring in the school and on the school grounds, and I witness performances of the suburb by the mushrooms, bird, and butterfly – the nonhuman – outside the school building. In the second site of this research, the scripted play offers theatre pedagogy that depicts youth life in suburbs, as well as opportunities to interview and talk with the youth actors about how the play reflects or intersects with their own lives. Drama is an effective tool to depict and produce space and to reflect on the spatial relations the youth experience in the context of the suburb.

I would also argue that the methodology and pedagogy inform each other productively. This intersection of pedagogy and methodology asks that youth think like researchers and start to ask questions of their choosing. It also informs, in a small way, the aesthetics of *Concord Floral*. These kinds of reciprocal pedagogies are one of the pleasures and sources of fascination within these drama and theatre pedagogies as they were practiced methodologically in both sites.
The Larger Context of Poststructural Pedagogy

Drama and theatre pedagogies of this kind can be seen as nested within the kinds of poststructural pedagogies that Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) describes. Her approach to pedagogy is neither linear nor predictable. About her work on affective and indirect paths of learning, she says:

The places of learning that I have considered [here] address us in ways that put to powerful use the understanding that learning involves cognition – but never direct, unmediated cognition. Learning never takes place in the absence of bodies, emotions, place, time, sound, image, self-experience, history. It always detours through memory, forgetting, desire, fear, pleasure, surprise, rewriting. And, because learning always takes place in relation, its detours take us up to and across the boundaries between our selves and others and through the place of culture and the time of history. (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 55)

Drama and theatre pedagogy, when practiced as both an embodied and emplaced art, is affective, engages memory, and is enacted in relation to others. Nicholson (2005) suggests that practice has to come from the particulars of contexts, “if pedagogical practices in applied drama are to be effective, they need to be negotiated, planned and focused according to different contexts and situations” (p. 40). Pedagogy is responsive and as such can offer no single model to follow. As Ellsworth (2005) suggests, pedagogy needs to draw from many sources and disciplines with the aim not of transmitting knowledge but initiating change:

Given the terms of their invitations, these pedagogical innovations must not address their students as already presumed, diagnosed, or assessed within the prevailing educational approaches or agendas. Instead, they must find ways to address a student that is not coincident with herself, but only with her change. They must figure out how to address a learning self that is in motion. To do that, they must set the concept of pedagogy itself in motion into interdisciplinary spaces between the cognitive sciences, cultural studies, aesthetics, psychology, media studies, architecture, and the biological sciences. (p. 7)

Ellsworth (2005) suggests in this passage that we cannot presume to know our students before we spend time with them or even after time spent with them because there is no guarantee that one person can come to know another. The complexities of place ask that educators and artists take time to learn about both the student and their geographies, not to impose fixed identifiers, but to become engaged with the learner’s potential as a learning self in motion.
The findings of this research show moments of learning that are not predictable and moments in which pedagogical, artistic, and methodological practices shift in response to the encounter with what cannot be known beforehand. Gallagher (2007) also suggests that drama pedagogy is about the moment of becoming when what is known acts as the stepping off point for what might be known. She says:

Drama can create an analogous context in which there is always the possibility of both identification with and distance from the drama. This is a process I have termed the sociology of aesthetics, that is, an aesthetic experience that resides in the connection between what a person already knows (of herself and her community), feels, and desires and what a new experience might offer. Drama makes explicit the social context, in that one person’s aesthetic response is intimately tied to the performances and responses of the group. (Gallagher, 2007, p. 161)

**Theoretical Frames: Massey and Deleuze**

**Researching and Thinking Spatially**

The theory that catalyzes, and continues to inform, this research comes from the scholarship in drama education, pedagogy, theatre/performance studies, and cultural geography. Henri Lefebvre (1974/1984) suggests we look at space as it is perceived, conceived, and lived, and his approach offers a productive framework for considering youth, pedagogy, and drama in the context of the suburb. In touring the school space, the youth in this study map stories of power and important incidents of encounter. This touring is an interaction with conceived space; that is, space as architects design it. By adding stories and by dramatizing those stories of ritual, youth live the space differently.

According to Massey (2005), thinking spatially offers a means to consider parallel stories or accounts that are happening at the same time. This method disrupts an historical or temporal organization of events that insists on sequencing and causal explanations. In a spatial framework, people and things are placed in relation through encounter and entanglement that form ecologies. Massey (2005) says:

What is needed, I think, is to uproot ‘space’ from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness…liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape. (p. 13)

Before starting this research, I considered space as a container for human action. Engaging with students and walking through the outdoor spaces of the school grounds and neighbouring streets have provoked me to consider more carefully the three-way relations of the researcher, the researched, and place, or what Sarah Pink (2009) calls “emplaced” research (p. 81). As I come to know and attach myself to the
spaces of this school as a researcher, I find myself compelled to consider space relationally, affectively, discursively, and materially. This “alongsideness” of trajectory, in which multiple stories and events can take place at the same time, is a messier view of space, but it also suits the space of classrooms and rehearsal halls where multiple stories often happen simultaneously. Drama and walking interviews are methods well suited to spatially-focused ethnography.

**Diverse Differences and Different Diversities: Composition and Encounter**

Deleuze is the great theorist of difference, of thought as difference. (Grosz, 2001, p. 60)

In this section, I introduce several of Deleuze’s concepts, but they will be fleshed out in more detail in the review of relevant literature. Deleuze’s (1968/1994, 1997, p. 242) concepts of “difference” and the “minor” frame my research design, implementation, collection of data, and analysis, but I start by considering other Deleuzian notions of encounter and composition because they have implications for pedagogy. Deleuze (1968/1994) writes about encounter as the thing that forces thought saying, “something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but a fundamental encounter” (p. 139). Drawing on Baruch Spinoza, Deleuze (1970/1988) suggests that social relations can be either decompositional or compositional. He asks the question, “how do individuals enter into composition with one another in order to form a higher individual, ad infinitum? How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other’s own relations and world?” (p. 126). This has relevance for the social aspects of learning that either support or prevent learning from happening. Implicit in this thought is the importance of relation, but not relations of assimilation in which one person has to become like the other, but instead the kind that respects the unassimilated difference of the other person or the nonhuman.

Difference and diversity are central to all aspects of the thesis from its design to its content (writing). Deleuze (1968/1994) asserts that diversity and difference are not the same, “difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse” (p. 222). Diversity refers to identity-based categories that use negative difference to classify. I am not a man. I am not poor. I am not a person of colour. As much as these identities reduce and, as a result, are dangerous, these rough categories also matter. It has mattered in my life that I am a woman. Socio-economic status affects health and potential life outcomes. I am not presenting a closed deterministic system, but these aspects of social positioning have material consequences. As a result, I recognize that these concepts of difference and diversity are useful analytical tools, and yet, they must still be used cautiously:

Difference is usually understood either as ‘difference from the same’ or difference of the same
over time. In either case, it refers to a net variation between two states. Such a conception assumes that states are comparable, and that there is at base a sameness against which variation can be observed or deduced. (Stagoll, 2005, p. 74)

In contrast to this concept of difference, Stagoll (2005) suggests that Deleuze “develops a concept of difference that does not rely on a relationship with sameness” (p. 75). This means that things and people differ from each other, but difference is not being considered as difference from a particular standard, or single set of criteria. Difference, in the context of this research, is aligned with Deleuze in that it does not refer to a centre or single criteria against which the “different” must resemble or diverge. According to Deleuze and Stagoll, things, people, and practices are different from each other without needing a central concept or ideal from which to compare.

According to Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), the difference between the processes of “differentiating” and differenciating is fundamental to Deleuze’s (1968/1994) conceptualization of difference. Positive difference is the differenciating that happens within a practice or process as it becomes that which it is not yet. Patton (2005) stresses the political implications of differenciating and moving beyond a molar position in the dominant majority culture. Referring to Deleuze, Patton (2005) suggests that “becoming minor” or “minoritarian” is associated with the “creative process of becoming different or diverging from the majority” (p. 77). Parr (2005) suggests that differenciation “is an actualization of the virtual” (p. 78). I suggest that these concepts are apposite to pedagogy and particularly artistic pedagogies. In the creative acts I describe in this research, something comes into being that has not existed previously. This is highly relevant to all the performances of suburb and the relational encounters surrounding these performances. Deleuze broadens the definition of difference generatively, and I am drawn to becomings instead of simply trying to place people, objects, and practices into recognizable categories.

Unanticipated Diversities and Practices as They Become Different

Through the analysis of the third performance in this research, I come to see the vitality and the agentic nature of the inanimate. This provokes a reconsideration of space as relational not only between people but also as an exchange between people, plants, the ground, the sky, trees, and animal life as well as the bricks, paint, carpet, and paper that comprise the “everyday” in a suburban school. Theories associated with new materialism (Bennett, 2010; Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010) inform the analysis and make legitimate the interest in the third performance of suburb that holds me in its affective grasp. Even now, I cannot get it out of my mind.
Baz Kershaw (2007) writes about the important role of the environment in theatre and performance. Of theatre ecology, he says:

So ‘theatre ecology’ (or ‘performance ecology’) refers to the interrelationships of all the factors of particular theatrical (or performance) systems, including their organic and inorganic and non-organic components and ranging from the smallest and/or simplest to the greatest or/and most complex. Following uses in ecology, these terms can also refer to the interrelationships between theatres (or performances) and their environments, especially when interdependence between theatres/performances and their environments is implied. (p. 16)

An ecological perspective suggests that diverse elements in processes and environments are significant in their interactions. Isabelle Stengers (2005) activates Deleuze’s notion of difference by articulating a notion of “ecology of practice” that attends to processes and practices as they become different (p. 186). As her notion is relevant to the pedagogical, theoretical, substantive and methodological foci of this research, I describe the methods used, but also show how they evolve through the doing of the research in response to the particulars of the events, people, and things. As such, both pedagogy and methodology could be considered as responsive ecological practices. Stengers (2005) says:

An ecology of practices does not have any ambition to describe practices ‘as they are’; it resists the master word of a progress that would justify their destruction. It aims at the construction of new ‘practical identities’ for practices, that is, new possibilities for them to be present, or in other words to connect. It thus does not approach practices as they are – physics as we know it, for instance – but as they may become. (p. 186)

**Setting Out**

To put up a fence is to suggest difference where there is none (though there will be), and to draw a border is much the same thing. Paradise means a walled garden, and when Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden, its walls first appear in the narrative, because they only matter from outside. (Solnit, 2003, p. 123)

**Early Analysis and the Garden**

This thesis includes early writing and analysis completed mid-way through the data collection. This early work forms an important part of the overall analysis as it delineates some unanticipated themes that prove generative to subsequent work. In looking at both the early drama and interview data, I can see in participants that there is a pull towards sameness and a fear of difference.
Writing about the first of the performed rituals of schooling provokes a spatial analysis of the garden and green space of the school. The first performance of ritual I analyze at the school site takes place under the apple tree outside the school, and it depicts older boys enticing younger girls to pick apples off an apple tree as an initiatory rite rewarded with a red mask painted with a black serpent insignia. I look at the apple tree ritual in depth for the ways in which older students have pressured younger ones into conformity. By succeeding in their challenge, the boys reward the girls for becoming like them in both their actions (stealing) and appearance (masked). The mask is not intended to suggest gang membership, but is associated with an imagined sub-group within the school. In class, during reflective discussion with the youth, a student remarks that this ritual reminds her of the Garden of Eden. In response to this student observation, I research the garden and its associations with the space of the suburb.

Historically, both the garden and notions of paradise have been associated with the suburb. The suburb, as depicted by playwrights Edward Albee (1968) and Jordan Tannahill (2012), is a kind of compromised Eden. Albee (1968) associates the suburban garden with extreme consumerism and playwright Jordan Tannahill describes the suburb as a “failed paradise” (Tannahill interview, September 23, 2011). The garden/green space becomes centrally important to the spatial analysis of this research as it features prominently in the three performances of the suburb. The first of these garden spaces is the abandoned greenhouses in suburban Toronto where Tannahill (2012) has set his play, Concord Floral. The youth he depicts in his play congregate there for parties away from adult supervision. It is here that the inciting incident of the play takes place when local boys violate an adolescent girl. The extent of the violation is not explicit, but references are made to boys shining flashlights in the girl’s face and yelling at her. The violation is serious, and although it is not enacted in the course of the play, this is the event to which all the action refers.

At the school site, the “garden” features in the performed rituals of schooling when we leave the building to watch the drama presentations outside on the school grounds. Secondly, it features in the one-on-one walking interviews when the participant and I turn our attention to the performance of the suburb by the mushrooms, bird, and butterfly. These “encounter performances” interrupt our walk and ask us to pay attention to elements of nature and the nonhuman world as they make themselves known to us. I consider these encounters as “performances” because in those moments, the roles of ethnographic researcher and

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participant are reassigned, as we become willing spectators for a display of a more-than-human performance in the school garden and green space. Tim Ingold (2011) suggests:

To perceive the environment is not to look back on the things to be found in it, or to discern their congealed shapes and layouts, but to join with them in the material flows and movements contributing to their – and our – ongoing formation. (p. 88)

I would add that this encounter also contributes to the ongoing formation of the ethnography. In my process, I begin to sense the ethnographic potential of mobile methods of interviewing and thinking together with the participants. I begin to see that it is not that walking occurred and thinking came later, but that in the moment of encounter, there is a meeting with the unfamiliar and our own puzzled thoughts. As I do not know why these encounters are important, I can only surmise they are, as I am unable to forget them. Ingold (2011) writes about thinking and movement:

Cognition should not be set off from locomotion, along lines of a division between head and heels, since walking is itself a form of circumambulatory knowing. Once this is recognized, a whole new field of inquiry is opened up, concerning the ways in which our knowledge of the environment is altered by techniques of footwork and by the many and varied devices we attach to the feet in order to enhance their effectiveness in specific tasks and conditions. (p. 46)

The early analysis of the apple tree ritual leads to a consideration of the garden and the physical environment. This analysis of the performed ritual and interview data, also suggests the theme of sameness that is so important to the ongoing discussions with youth. This prompts a consideration of difference and how difference and diversity manifest in the social relations of the classroom, outside on the school grounds, and in the rehearsal hall. Reducing difference to the same is part of the humanist project and has been critiqued by feminists, critical race and postcolonial theorists, and poststructuralists. Here in this research site, youth express a tension between the pull to sameness and the fear of difference. This research proceeds by looking at the differences of identity, and also by charting moments of becoming different, as they are highly pedagogic in nature and can be micropolitical in intent.

Massey (2005) suggests that space is composed of “stories-so-far” (p. 12). Solnit (2003) likens story to path making and says, “A sentence or a story is a kind of path” (p. 15). And so, this story-so-far and path begin. This is a path of getting stuck, backtracking, and starting in other directions. The stories of this research have to find their way as they go, much like the walking interviews, the rehearsals, and the pedagogy have to respond to the milieu, the people in the rooms, and the odd hunch. What follows is a description of motion and the moments when practices are put in motion. Your reading and my telling
combine, laying down another path through the dense empirical materials collected on the move. My storied path-in-the-making becomes different with your reading alongside me.

The Different Sites

Branch Secondary School, Mississauga, Ontario

Branch has a student population of 1500. The ESL population is listed as comprising 20% of students and special needs students as 10.8%. The average income of parents is $63,400. This is twice the income of some downtown secondary schools and is $20,000 higher than the school considered to be the most socio-economically challenged in the Peel District School Board. Recently the school has developed the Specialist High Skills Major program with a specialization in sport. Also important to note is that Branch houses the regional French Immersion program that offers most high school subjects in French. This program is small within the school, but it features prominently in the analysis of the research. These regional programs also shift the school population from being purely local to drawing from across the region. Although the school is located in a particular neighbourhood, the students who attend the school may not live close by.

The school is located at a moderately busy intersection, and within walking distance, there is a strip mall with a grocery store, florist, liquor store, a coffee shop, and other fast food outlets. Behind the school are football bleachers and a red cinder running track. A grove of large pine trees rims the parking lots, and along the sidewalk, stands a row of apple trees that flower in the spring. The tennis courts have fallen into disrepair, and the two large parking lots are filled with yellow school buses, staff cars, and student-owned cars. There is a bus stop (Mississauga Transit) at the front of the school. In one direction, the bus goes to the largest mall in the area, and in the other direction, it accesses the Toronto subway system. Students who wish to travel to downtown Toronto need to pay two fares.

The school grounds appear even more spacious than they really are because they abut a water filtration complex that looks like a low-lying green hill. The perimeter of the school is lined with tall hedges which separate single-family homes from the school grounds. Visible in the distance are high-rise apartment buildings housing a proportion of the students at Branch. In the front of the school is an electric sign that tells the time and announces notable school events in small red lights. A semi circular

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5 Strip malls are small malls with stores that border a parking lot. They often have stores that are locally owned, or even family owned. With the introduction of big box stores, many of these small malls have closed, as they find that they cannot compete. Parlette and Cowen (2011) suggest these small malls were important community hubs, and to lose them is a loss to the local suburban community.
driveway leading from the street to the front door of the school has a designated lane for students who go to school by car.

The school, built in the 1960s, was constructed as two square buildings connected with bridging hallways. Recently freshened with murals and new paint, the interior of the school has classrooms on two above-ground levels and in the basement. Recently, York University has housed one of its satellite teacher training programs in the basement. There are two studios equipped for drama, although the smaller one has been taken over by the physical education program. There are two art studios, two music classrooms, and several small practice rooms. The sizable library has a bank of computers, study carrels, bookshelves, comfortable couches, and chairs. The only place in the school that can accommodate the full school population is the **cafetorium** that doubles as a theatre and cafeteria. Taking place on this large stage are the music and drama performances as well as the annual ritual of commencement/graduation.

**Concord Floral, Toronto, Ontario**

The play, *Concord Floral*, was produced by the Toronto theatre company Suburban Beast. Before this research project started, I had interviewed playwright and director, Jordan Tannahill, about his previous, partially site-specific play, *Post Eden*, performed in a suburban subdivision. Following that conversation, we kept in touch. When he knew that Suburban Beast would be producing *Concord Floral*, he asked if I would like to participate as a “collaborative researcher.” With this unexpected but welcome turn in the research inquiry, I returned to the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Toronto to amend my protocol. My research role from this point onward is to study the production by being present at almost all rehearsals, by taking observational field notes, by video recording what is of interest ethnographically, and by squeezing focus group and individual interviews into the rehearsal breaks.

*Suburban Beast*, is a theatre company that is described as: “Suburban Beast produces performances that lie at the intersection of new media and theatre, documentary and imagination. All pieces are created by Jordan Tannahill in collaboration with guest artists” ([www.suburbanbeast.ca/](http://www.suburbanbeast.ca/)). For this mounting of his play, Tannahill solicited the help of collaborators Brubacher and Spooner along with a designer, a videographer, a stage manager, and ten youth. To give a sense of the play, I include a review commenting on the age of the youth by Tavish McGregor (2012) from Mooney on Theatre:

> *Concord Floral*, though, is less about character than it is about mood in any case: the play’s greatest achievement is its ability to deploy Suburban Beast’s trademark blending of media to often stunning effect. The play borrows as heavily from Wes Anderson as it does from Boccaccio, and feels like a darker version of Moonrise Kingdom (minus the Andersonian humour).
Scenes, monologues and conversations are spliced together to highlight the distance and
differences between characters: resulting through the din is an intense sense of isolation. At times,
these scenes are executed so well technically that actor, stage, and projected background are
indistinguishable and perfectly fused.

This is an ambitious project written, staged, and performed by an extremely young cast: deserving
credit even if a certain greenness bubbles through the play’s heavy subject matter. If Concord
*Floral* has one weakness, it’s that it twists itself in a knot trying to be as good with plot, with
allegory, with characterization as it is with setting scene and mood.

Lights come up for an ask-the-cast “talk back” that lasts about fifteen minutes, and you realize
how young Concord’s cast actually is. Stick around only if you enjoy feeling really, really old.
(www.mooneyontheatre.com/2012/11/10/review-concord-floral-suburban-beast/)

**My Positionality**

**The Familiar and Unfamiliar**

Mississauga, a Toronto suburb, is the location of the school, Branch Secondary, in which I taught for
eight years. In returning to this school as a researcher, I have come to see the school and its grounds,
students, and teachers in ways I could not have imagined. I thought I knew something of what I was
going to learn because so much of the environment of the school was familiar. And yet, as I came to see,
I knew very little of the expansive green space surrounding the school, and I could not have predicted
how important that would be to the analysis and theorizing about the social relations of this suburban
school and the processes and practices of research itself. Engaging the land and the material spaces of the
school through ethnographic practice and the methodological use of youth place-based dramas means I
have to adjust my epistemological and ontological assumptions of what I previously understood about
the school.

Methodological possibility presents itself often, and I must thank the students and teachers and the
spacious grounds of the school for the many ways they have propelled the research in unanticipated
directions. Fascinated as I am by the notions of pedagogy and research practice that respond to the
particulars of the participants, I have to express my deep appreciation for the ways in which the students,
the teacher, and the spaces in which we have found ourselves, are responsive to the research and my
questions. This ethnography is responsive to the youth involved as participants and, in turn, the youth
and their teacher Mr. A, are responsive to my persistent questions and incessant ideas for using drama to
learn more about the suburban geographies they call home.
This ecology of theatre – that engages youth in schools and attends to the upcoming generation of artists-in-the-making – points to the importance of diversity in both drama and theatre pedagogies. I present in the findings and implications, some of the pitfalls and shortcomings of the work I observe. I recognize how the findings are incomplete and act as a starting point for future work. Moving from what has been done to what might be done, I anticipate with curiosity and confidence, the work that is yet to be imagined by youth, artists, and teachers engaging with drama and theatre with an outward focus on the postmetropolis.

But I am ahead of myself. Let me summarize the main ideas. That is, practices cannot be separated from the milieu in which they happen. Youth are introduced in the context of their schooling and their artistic practices outside schools. The school and artistic practices are set in the larger context of the suburb and the suburb is set both in the larger context of the city and in the economic and political forces of neoliberalism. Furthermore, when space is conceptualized as relational, it is important to consider the relations between people, the local environment (including the nonhuman), the city, and the larger world beyond. Difference refers not only to diversity, but also to the moments when practices and social relations become different. And as Iris Marion Young (1990) suggests, otherness cannot be assimilated and difference needs to remain as difference.

The research questions evolve in response to the ethnography. Initially my research question asked: in the changing suburb, how do youth negotiate their social relations and what are their attitudes to diversity? As the research progresses, the questions become: how can spaces become increasingly heterogeneous and equitable through practices that foster unassimilated difference? The unofficial question at work in this research pertains to drama: in what ways might drama become different through pedagogical/methodological practices and in relation to the youth and the environment?

In the following chapters, you will read multiple stories of relational space as created by teaching artists, a classroom teacher, youth as artists-in-the-making, and a researcher. As Grosz (2001) says, “thinking involves a wrenching of concepts away from their usual configurations, outside systems in which they have a home, and outside the structures of recognition that constrain thought to the already known” (p. 60). What follows are the multiple stories of terms I thought I understood and how they start to shift, become inadequate, and even lose useful meaning. A map emerges with a smudged boundary between suburban and urban. At the same time, a more nuanced tangle of difference within the postmetropolitan suggests itself through mobile encounters of performance, pedagogy, interviews, and walking in partnership with youth living, being schooled, and making theatre in and about this contemporary suburb.
CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The ideas that catalyze and inform this research come from scholarship in drama education, pedagogy, theatre/performance studies, and social/cultural geography. This review of the literature summarizes geographical accounts of the contemporary suburb in the Canadian context. A history of diversity in the suburb is supplemented with current relevant policies from the local school board and the municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Here I discuss drama and theatre pedagogy and their intersections with poststructural pedagogy. I review literature on the placement, or situating, of theatre and drama pedagogy, including both site-specific and place-based practices. A review of the current literature on the ethics and politics of affect in drama education and applied theatre is followed by a review of research on walking practices and their intersection with performance. This chapter ends with a discussion of the theoretical frames of this research: Doreen Massey’s (2005) spatial theory, which conceptualizes space as relational and multiply storied and Gilles Deleuze’s (1968/1994, 1997) theories of difference and the minor. I conclude the chapter with the relevant literature on new materialism and its advocacy for the agential capacities of the nonhuman.

The Suburb, Youth, and Diversity

The Suburb: Youth and Schooling

Surveying the literature on the suburb in the Canadian context, Rob Fiedler and Jean-Paul Addie (2008) conclude there is a “paucity of recent studies detailing contemporary ‘every day’ life in the suburbs” (p. 25). They say:

It may not be possible to adequately capture the dynamic of ‘everyday life’ in contemporary suburbs, but more can be done to dispel overly narrow understandings of suburbia and replace them with a multiplicity of perspectives that better reflect present-day diversity of suburban Canadian cities. (Fiedler & Addie, 2008, p. 25)

They identify two trends in the literature regarding the suburb that are relevant to this study: a) a dependency on an American model of the suburb that does not reflect the realities of the Canadian context and b) a mythologized suburb that needs to be challenged and reconceptualized. The suburb in this research is a mixed neighbourhood with both single-family homes and high-rise apartment towers. As a result, there is a range in socio-economic statuses that David Hulchanski (2010) would describe as income “polarization” (p. 21).

Just as there is little ethnographic research on the suburb, there is even less regarding suburban schools. Due to the limited ethnographic research completed in the suburban context (Murphy, 2007, p. 25), I
content that suburban schooling has merited exploration, and not simply defined as that which is not urban. As the processes of drama are significant negotiations of relational space, they provide valuable data for an ethnography that focuses on the persistent myths of the suburbs as homogeneous enclaves of White privilege.

Beverly-Jean Daniel’s (2010) research on schooling in the suburb focuses on the evolving inner suburb and the implications for teachers and administrators, but a youth perspective was beyond the parameters of her work. There exists little research addressing youth in the Canadian context of their suburban schooling and social lives. The exception to this is the work of Dominique Riviere (2008) who conducted her research in another suburban Toronto secondary school. Her work offers valuable insights into the intersections of multiculturalism, student identity, and drama.

Peter Demerath’s (2009) ethnography in an affluent American suburban secondary school documents the inequities of privilege. Although conducted outside of Canada, Demerath’s (2009) research is especially useful as he analyzes a variety of student experiences, contrasting the high expectations for certain success-oriented students with the dispiriting influence this has on those students who are unable or unwilling to perform at exaggeratedly competitive levels. The gap he outlines has been instructive for my study, which explores diverse student attitudes towards academic work, and more precisely, the privileging of some students over others and the associated social tensions, which result.

**Diversity in the Contemporary Suburb and Suburban School**

The Toronto *Globe and Mail* reports that between 2001 and 2006, the percentage of young children living in poverty in the Region of Peel, bordering the city of Toronto, has increased from 14% to almost 20% (Baluja, April 20, 2011). These trends are reflected in suburbs elsewhere in Canada and the United States. In the past decade, growing poverty (Hanlon & Vicino, 2007; Freeman, 2010; Lucy & Phillips, 2003; United Way, 2004) and growing diversity (Katz & Lang, 2003; Hulchanski, 2010; Mississauga Youth Plan, 2009; United Way, 2004) in the suburb are issues that have been well documented through demographic and quantitative research. Little qualitative research, however, has been completed that looks into the ways this socio-economic disparity and ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, and sexual diversity manifest themselves in the lives of youth living in the suburb, both inside and outside their schools. Alexandra K. Murphy (2007) says this kind of research is both necessary and timely because, as Puentes and Warren (2006) suggest, “a recent survey of urban scholars ranked the deterioration of the first suburbs as one of the most likely influences on metropolitan America for the next fifty years” (as cited in Murphy, 2007, p. 25). These suburbs were the first built and have also been called in other
contexts, the inner suburbs. Although Mississauga is not one of the inner suburbs, there are certain pockets of poverty in Mississauga that resemble them.

Favaro, Bennett, and Gray’s (2011) research into the implications of socio-economic disparity for schooling in the context of Mississauga say it is necessary to “change how people think about socio-demographic challenges by giving voice to the lives and experiences of the children in communities.” Here I build on research by Favaro et al., by conducting a qualitative study in a suburban secondary school and by using data generated from youth-created dramas that focus on their lives and experiences of the suburb.

Baluja (2011) writes about the invisibility of poverty in certain areas of the suburb with mixed housing. She quotes Brian Crombie who says, “One of the benefits of planning in Mississauga and having mixed neighbourhoods is that you don’t have large ghettos, the downside is that you don’t see the poverty and bringing service to people who need it can be a challenge” (Baluja, The Toronto Globe and Mail, April, 20, 2011). The schools with the most marked need were identified as priorities through Favaro et al.’s research, but for the purposes of this study, focused as it is on multiple diversities, a middle range school offers the opportunity to analyze the negotiations of multiple diversities that include socio-economic diversity, linguistic diversity, diversity of sexual orientation, and diverse academic and programmatic groupings. I argue that in a school, like Branch Secondary School, that “on average” fares well, the needs and exclusions of some students may be hidden. There are diversities within a school that would be classified as moderate in terms of the Peel District School Board’s Social Risk Index, and those at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum may be marginalized by their invisibility due to the dangerous assumption that all students in this school must be faring well socio-economically.

**Historic Diversity in the Suburb**

Social relations in the suburb are the key interest of ethnographer Herbert Gans, who published his iconic ethnography on the new suburb of Levittown, New Jersey in 1967. Living in the community for two years, he inquires into suburban notions of pluralism, the myths of suburbia, and other aspects of the locale that included schooling, domestic life, and political participation. In response to claims that the suburban way of life instills a life of conformity and robs the American of his/her individualism, he found that the suburb is more heterogeneous than it has been portrayed. More importantly, the suburb is imbued with a vitality that had previously been overlooked. One of his objectives is to test the validity of the suburban critique and to analyze “whether the suburban ways of life [are] as undesirable as [have] been claimed” (Gans, 1967, p. xix). Although he asserts his suburb is a heterogeneous community, Gans’s analysis refers only to class and religion, and his concept of heterogeneity excludes racial, sexual,
and gender diversity. To a contemporary reader, this Eurocentric analysis is embedded in Whiteness, but as outdated as this is, his ethnography is nonetheless generative for contemporary research into the suburb. About Gans’s work, Murphy (2007) says:

> The same questions Gans set out to answer in his study of life in Levittown can be asked of life in today’s ever-evolving suburbs—especially with respect to his concern with social life and the importance of space and urban planning on the lives of individuals and the social collective. To take this a step further, not only can they be asked but their relevance is of great importance and should be asked. (p. 24)

Most useful are Gans’s (1967) conclusions regarding conflict, consensus and plurality, “Levittowners, like other Americans, do not really accept the inevitability of conflict. Insisting that consensus is possible, they only exacerbate the conflict, for each group demands that the other conform to its values and accept its priorities” (p. 413). This important observation of Gans asserts that should the inevitability of conflict be accepted, it would “make difference less threatening” (p. 413).

Gans sees the refusal to deal with pluralism as associated with conflict and difference, and he identifies a need for reassurance that one’s way of life is certain and superior by seeking to only associate with others that are familiar and “compatible” (p. 415). He rejects the notion that the suburb can offer a clean slate to residents where lives are wiped clean and begun again, and instead, he considers the suburb as a layered space of co-existing histories of previous “homes.” A contemporary ethnography inquiring into the present suburb, therefore, has to concern itself with these histories of longstanding discomfort with diversity. In this inquiry, the early analysis of data I generate from the drama work and the interviews indicates that, in spite of considerable diversity in the student population, the youth articulate a powerful pull to sameness.

Gans (1967) echoes Bennett Berger’s (1966) recognition that America has been troubled by the tensions associated with the myths of the American Dream and the inevitable conflicts present in a pluralistic society. As Canadian suburb scholars Fiedler and Addie (2008) contend, popular understandings of the suburb in this country rely on these “external” (outdated, Americanized) images and a “simplistic city-suburban dichotomy” (Fiedler & Addie, 2008, p. 3). They call for research projects to nuance this dualism and to revise our current terminology that represents outdated understandings. In response to this provocation, my study suggests we need new terms such as postmetropolitanism (Soja, 2011) to encompass the breadth of experiences in the contemporary and diverse suburban city.
Walks (2013) makes a useful contribution to this discussion by offering the notion of “suburbanism” (p. 1471). Recognizing that suburbanism has not been adequately defined, he suggests it is, “a multidimensional evolving process within urbanism that is constantly fluctuating and pulsating as the flows producing its relational forms shift and overlap in space” (Walks, 2013, p. 1472). This process within urbanism does not depend on the actual place of the suburb and it is possible to consider suburbanism and urbanism as co-existing in the same place but to varying degrees. Walks suggests that urbanism and suburbanism live in antithetical or dialectical tension to one another. He says, “suburbanism is, according to this dialectical logic, both a form of urbanism produced by and through it, and its anti-thesis, separate and inseparable” (p. 1485). Walks specifically looks at the dimension of social diversity as one of the six dimensions of suburbanism, “social diversity speaks to the tensions between (social) connectivity and isolation, encounter and evasion, co-existence and segregation, in the production of urban social space” (Walks, 2013, p. 1480). He lists in urbanism, “plurality, social connectivity, encounter, co-existence, strangers,” and in suburbanism, “division, segregation, avoidance, isolation” (Walks, 2013, p. 1479).

**Discourses of Diversity**

Before I discuss the specifics of the diversity within the suburban neighbourhood and school featured in this research, it is useful to outline some of the relevant discourses associated with diversity. Amir Marvasti and Karyn McKinney (2011) conducted research on the campus of an American “small State University,” and their findings suggest diversity is not an innocent discourse as it can work to reinforce the position of the already dominant (p. 635). They suggest:

Diversity talk is not inherently innocent, and thus support for ‘diversity’ cannot be judged as uniformly progressive and benign. From a critical sociological standpoint, we must judge diversity claims in terms of

(1) how the topic is framed in the context of history, culture, and social institutions,

(2) whose interests are served by a particular definition of diversity, and

(3) what practices are prescribed by differing visions of diversity. (Marvasti & McKinney, 2011, p. 632)

They draw on Iris Marion Young, who differentiates politics of “positional difference” from politics of “cultural difference” (as cited in Marvasti & McKinney, 2011, p. 633). She argues that an exclusive focus on cultural difference can cause one to miss or overlook structural inequalities. This important distinction is highly relevant to my research. Evident in the interviews with the youth is a high degree of
acceptance of multiculturalism as they suggest that the school is a place of gender, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and linguistic equality. They also suggest that there is a fear of difference and a pull to sameness. Although the data might appear contradictory, Marvasti and McKinney suggest that notions of diversity may rest on understandings that minimize difference and assume equality where there is still systemic discrimination. They demonstrate that for some, attitudes to diversity are based on the assumption that “we are all one” and can work towards unity. Giving evidence for the ways that equality is assumed, Marvasti and McKinney suggest:

For these respondents, discussions about difference should be about similarity. The argument involves a circular logic that goes something like this: people are all different; therefore, they have something in common; therefore, they are all the same. Diversity is then useful only to the extent that it emphasizes ‘similarities’ and ‘common ground.’ (p. 638)

Secondly, they effectively point to the dangers associated with market-oriented approaches to diversity that claim that, “diversity-is-good-for-business” (p. 636). They warn of backlashes if diversity is not shown to be profitable. They also question the framing of diversity as an “economic asset” uncertain as to whether it might “undermine or advance the progressive ideals of diversity as a mechanism for bringing about social justice and equality” (p. 632). Their assertion that “diversity becomes meaningful in relation to history, institutional structure, and individual interpretation” suggest the need in this research to analyze the discourses of local diversity policies and also to analyze the ways that the youth experience and think about diversity (Marvasti & McKinney, 2011, p. 647). To contextualize the school’s official policy, I turn to the Peel District School Board’s (2010) policy on Equity and Inclusive Education, and then will proceed to analyze the ways this policy manifests (or not) in the daily practices of the suburban classroom.

**Peel District School Board Policy 54 – Equity and Inclusive Education**

The Peel District School Board’s official policy regarding diversity, *Equity and Inclusive Education* Policy 54, was revised and approved in August 2010. The policy addresses eight areas: policy, leadership, school-community relations, inclusive curriculum and assessment, religious accommodation, school climate and the prevention of harassment and discrimination, professional learning, and accountability. The policy says:

a respectful school climate includes the active participation of underrepresented peoples. It is a climate that values all students, staff and families regardless of their race and ethnicity; gender; place of origin; citizenship; religion; creed; cultural and linguistic background; social and
economic status; sexual orientation; age; ability/disability; and any other immutable characteristics. (www.edu.on.ca/departments/diroff/policies/policy/_54.htm)

Equity and Inclusive Education is an equity-focused policy, which addresses structural inequality. As one of its guiding principles is the removal of “systemic barriers,” the policy stresses the importance of relevant curriculum along with the engagement of the local community and student leadership within the school (Equity and Inclusive Education, 2010, p. 2). It promotes religious accommodation and the creation of school climates that work against discrimination.

This policy seems robust and does not fall into the traps of assumed assimilation described by Marvasti and McKinney (2011). However, a policy on paper may differ from how it works in practice; a policy that successfully becomes a part of the school culture is a different matter. It was with this focus, that I proceeded with this research, alert to the inconsistencies of lived policy and how these contradictions were interpreted by youth. In addition, I argue that policies cannot be viewed in isolation and I ask in my analysis, how might other school policies work against the inclusive aims of this one? This question is highly relevant to the findings of this research that suggest there are exclusivities within the school community working against such policies of inclusion and equity.

Multiculturalism Act of 1988

These contradictory findings provoke the need for a consideration of the larger multicultural policy adopted by the federal government, and the degree to which these discourses have been absorbed by the youth in this study. Goonewardena, Rankin, and Wienstock (2004) suggest there is a great pride and attachment to the multicultural policies in Canada. The authors report that when the Canadian public in 1999 was asked what separated Canada from the United States, multiculturalism was the second most important factor after health care (p. 8). However, Goonewardena et al. (2004) document the gap between the policy and the results. They emphasize that in spite of such policies, higher concentrations of poverty are found in racialized communities:

A radical response to the socio-cultural diversity in Canada and Toronto, by contrast, could be better articulated as an immanent critique of the 1988 Act, by pointing to the gap between the hopes provoked by multiculturalism – citizenship beyond ethnocentrism as well as broader social and economic equality – and their limited actualization in reality. (Goonewardena et al., 2004, p. 9)
The gap between policy and reality that Gooewardena et al. (2004) describe is relevant to my study. For example, most of the students in their interviews refer to harmony in the school, and yet in the day-to-day workings of the class and in the subsequent focus group and teacher interview, the youth identify an underlying tension in the class that is fearful of difference.

**Mississauga Youth Plan**

Also addressing issues of diversity for youth living in the suburb is the 2009 *Mississauga Youth Plan*, which synthesizes data from youth surveys and public youth forums. The City of Mississauga, recognizing that a quarter of its population was under 24 years old, sought to understand the reality of youth lives to make policy recommendations regarding youth and civic engagement. The plan reports that “racism and exclusion were sub-themes that surfaced throughout the consultations; types of youth whether by race, ethnicity, socio–economic status, academic achievement, or interest tend to cluster in programs and activities to the exclusion of others” (*Mississauga Youth Plan*, 2009, p. 19). According to this report, the most common activity for young people is shopping. The report concludes that for new activities to be accessible to youth, improved public transportation and lower fees would be necessary. Reinforcing these findings are the recommendations Cameron, Racine, Offord, and Cairney (2004) make in their study on the affluent suburb of Richmond Hill, where they find wealth and class do not insulate youth from the risks of eventual homelessness. Their study outlines the need for more sustained community resources for youth programming and more engaging curriculum and pedagogy.

Other policies relevant to diversity in Mississauga are the priority funding policies that have been adopted by both the United Way and the Peel District School Board. The Region of Peel, in partnership with the Peel United Way, call their initiative *Neighbourhood Capacity Support Strategy*. The Peel District School Board’s neighbourhood strategy to supplement funding to schools is known as *The Differentiated Resources Program*. Other local policy initiatives by the Region of Peel pertain to poverty reduction strategies that address issues of insufficient affordable housing and food security (Region of Peel, 2012, *Poverty Reduction Strategy: Awareness, Access, Opportunity*). As well, the Region of Peel has adopted a policy to promote alternate modes of transportation (other than motor vehicles), including bicycling; of particular relevance to this research is the region’s focus on promoting walking in the *Active Transportation Plan* (2011).

**Diversity and Dissensus**

As the youth in this study appear to offer contradictory accounts of diversity within the school and suburb, Ranciere’s (2009) notion of “dissensus” is useful. The tensions in this school cannot be resolved into the comfort of consensus, but instead created dissensus, which Ranciere describes as having the
ability to “hold heterogeneous logics on the same stage in the same world” (p. 11).

This dissensus differs from the easy binary that simply positions, as Roger Webster (2000) does, the suburb as the city’s “other” (p. 2). Fiedler and Addie (2008) and Daniel (2010) warn against this outdated creation of a binary that pits urban against suburban. More generative to consider is Daniel’s (2010) assertion that the urban and suburban create each other, “for us to understand the urban, its relationship with the suburban needs to be conceptualized, explored and analyzed as another mutually constituted relationship” (p. 823). Daniel (2010) credits Sherene Razack (1998) for labeling this process of mutual constitution and Razack’s theories of racial encounter are most relevant to this discussion of diversity. By opening her book, Looking White People in the Eye, with a quotation from Fanon, Razack (1998) addresses the “interlocking oppressions” at work, as the dominant group encounters the non-dominant (p. 3). Her thesis is that these encounters, encumbered as they are by historical relations of oppression, cannot be ignored. Razack says:

> Encounters between dominant and subordinate groups cannot be ‘managed’ simply as pedagogical moments requiring cultural, racial, or gender sensitivity. Without an understanding of how responses to subordinate groups are socially organized to sustain existing power arrangements, we cannot hope to communicate across social hierarchies or work to eliminate them. (p. 8)

The implication for educators, then, is to maintain “a critical gaze through the tracings of relations of privilege and penalty” (Razack, 1998, p. 14). Relevant to the particulars of this suburban school, are tensions between a group who displays privilege and another group who responds negatively to that display. In terms of penalty, punishments, and suspensions were given more often to the group who was less privileged. Razack (1998) insists on a critique of our stories and storytelling, and I suggest that the stories (and their critiques) embodied in place-based, site-specific drama-work provide access to issues of diversity and privilege that were prevalent in the suburb Gans described in 1967, and still persist in the suburb today.

**Pedagogy**

**Poststructuralism and Education**

Post-structuralists, in general, rejected the idea that we could examine a static structure of differences that might give us some point of foundation for knowing the world. Post-structuralism sought to explain the emergence, becoming or genesis of structures: how systems such as language both come into being and how they mutate through time. (Colebrook, 2002, p. 3)
Evident in the literature is a tension between neoliberal measures in schools that demand that the outcome be known before the pedagogical encounter takes place and the poststructural pedagogies that insist that it is in the encounter that the learning does or does not take place, and that this cannot be predicted before the encounter. At the non-school based research site of Concord Floral, the artistic team openly talks about not knowing where the artistic pedagogy will go. In the school site, the pedagogical negotiation is different in the sense that the classroom is a space governed by outcomes that teachers are expected to use as the spine of their lesson plans. This pedagogical approach is designed to keep teachers accountable to the curriculum expectations and to ensure that what the government mandates to be taught is taught. This tension between neoliberal school reform and more progressive educators is a divide that may call for a micropolitical strategy in teaching. In understanding a teacher’s formal obligation to accountability and evaluations designed to show the successful achievement of outcomes, teachers can also teach micropolitically and poststructurally. In this sense, the teacher, as Brian Massumi (2011) might suggest, “reconstructs” the architecture of teaching and makes different the practice of teaching (p. 102).

Ellsworth’s (2005) descriptions of emergent and aesthetic pedagogy rejects the “all knowing” position of the critical pedagogue as teacher. Instead, the teacher and student learn as they proceed through an aesthetic pedagogy that is open-ended and invites the unexpected. Of pedagogy’s time and space she writes, “it is the transitional time of the self in motion toward an open future yet to be decided. It is the time of pure relationality. The space of learning is the space of self in relation” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 80). She makes a convincing argument for the inseparability of pedagogy, space, and social relations that pertains to the findings of this research in both the school site and in the rehearsal halls of Concord Floral. In an earlier publication, Ellsworth (1989) questions the rationalism inherent in critical pedagogy and suggests that even when there is open space made for dialogue, the power relations cannot be ignored. She charts the unsafe quality of her own classroom, and she concludes by accepting the unknowability of others. She asserts that there are no rules and that any pedagogy is relational and cannot be predicted in advance. She assertively and insightfully questions any assumptions about “what can be known” and “what should be done” (p. 323).

Lather (2013) acknowledges the uncertainty of knowledge and, drawing on Berlant, looks for “post-spectacular dedramatized story, a deflationary aesthetic that points to the insecurity of knowing” (p. 640). This deflationary aesthetic that Lather uses to describe research and methodology is also relevant to all three performances of suburb in the two sites: the school and the theatre. For Concord Floral, there is no pressure placed on the youth actors to emote, and as the youth speak naturally and quietly into the microphone, their performances are muted, modest, and intimate. In the school site, the performed rituals experiment with mask and video, and the results are rough and unpolished. The third performance of the
suburb by the suburb occurs as the participant and I walk during our interviews and we become spectators to the mushrooms, bird, and insect life in the school grounds. This aesthetic that Lather (2013) describes is what Deleuze (1997) may have called “minor” in that there was no spectacle, but a fragmentary and an understated aesthetic.

Poststructural tensions are evident in applied theatre and drama as the field seeks to redefine itself more responsively and sensitively, by positioning itself “beside” the participant rather than “in front” of her/him. In schools, teachers negotiate how to teach poststructurally with the constraints of neoliberal school reforms. Artistic pedagogies that make use of poststructural teaching strategies can create ways of working that realign the power relations of pedagogies and subvert the teacher from the position of being the sole holder of knowledge. Far from relinquishing political goals, poststructural approaches to applied theatre and drama are imbued with the political in their emerging discourses and practices that seek to formulate different practices in schools, realign student teacher relations, and question particular school policies.

**Drama Pedagogy**

Of concern for Gallagher (2000; 2007; 2008) and Gallagher, Freeman, and Wessels (2010) are the aesthetic dimensions of pedagogy and ethnographic methodology, both of which are crucial to this study. Gallagher contributes to the larger field of applied theatre that uses drama and theatre sociologically and addresses the social aesthetically. Gallagher (2007) and others (Gallagher & Wessels, 2011; Gallagher, Wessels, & Yaman Ntelioglou, 2012), use improvisation, devising, and verbatim theatre methodologically. Building on her work, I explore the methodological implications of site-specific, place-based ritual performances and the notion of a “minor” theatre as defined by Deleuze (1997). Of ritual, Scottish performance artist Adrian Howells says, “I’m struck by Mary Douglas, an anthropologist, who said that you can have a society without language but you cannot have a society without ritual; it’s fundamental” (Howells, as cited in Machon, 2013, p. 261).

This minor theatre invites the teacher and students to invent new practices or reinvent old practices of theatre and performance and to express youth perceptions and experiences of the suburb. As I was seeking a methodology that would produce data about place and space, I found site-specific/place-based performance offered a means to intentionally explore notions of location, localized practices/rituals, and the spaces created through social relations. This aesthetic methodology is “emplaced” and, as Pink (2009) suggests, acknowledges the connection of the participant, the researcher, and spatial environment.
Site-Specific and Place-Based Drama

Nicholson (2005) uses applied drama to synthesize the doing of drama with the watching or reflective practices associated with theatre, and she defines the emerging field as one of “hybrid practices” that confront shared social issues outside the spaces of conventional theatres (p. 2). She suggests applied drama has also emerged in response to material conditions that include “political uncertainty,” globalization, and migration (p.11). Like Gallagher, Nicholson says the purpose of applied drama is to facilitate engaged participation as a means of achieving the larger goal of amelioration of individual lives and the lives of communities (p. 16).

It can be argued, as Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson, and Katie Normington (2007) do, that all performance addresses issues of place and space. In site-specific/place-based practices, the site is integral to the work and the relational aspects of space are foregrounded. Govan et al. suggest social practices are equally important to the geography of place, “what becomes important is not just the geographical place in which the work is sited but also the social practices that are engendered as part of the space-making processes of the particular site that an artist may observe, articulate and manipulate” (p. 121). In the school site of this study, the student participants and their teacher become the artists who offer their perspective on the multiple social practices embedded in the sites of the suburban school. In the theatre site of the research, the youth actors and the creative team comprised of Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner create work that refers to the specific site of Concord Floral; however, the work is not performed in that site, but in a theatre.

In the site of the secondary school, the suburb acts as the context of the drama work. In this context, the youth-created text is enacted. It is important to clarify that by text, I do not mean an exclusively written text, but a text discovered and created through embodied work in the spaces of the suburban school and surrounding environment. Such a positioning situates the work within a larger movement at the intersection of performance art, visual art, and theatre, where interdisciplinary aesthetic practices have veered away from written texts. Part of this movement has also taken performance out of conventional theatres and scattered them in more unlikely places such as parking lots, malls, warehouses, streets, and public parks. Site-specific/place-based performance that creates new work in response to the particulars of site allows for a deeper analysis of place and a fuller creation of space. An example of site-specific work is Vitals produced by Beyond the March and set in a private home in Toronto’s west end. For the purposes of this research, I consider place as location, while space is comprised of social relations and associated affect, emotion, and movement.
Surfacing in the review of the relevant literature in the field of site-specific performance are issues that address fluctuating definitions of space (static, relational, or constituted by movement), assessments of process and social practices, as well as, the histories and mythologies that “haunt” place. Miwon Kwon (2004), dispirited with the ways in which site-specific work has been mainstreamed in galleries and museums, offers valuable warnings about the ossification of vital practices by institutions. She broadens the conceptualization of site-specific processes to include “context-specific, debate-specific, audience-specific, community-specific, [and] project-based” (p. 2). The drama work completed in both the theatre and the school sites of this inquiry, suggest it is closest to community-specific work. Kwon (2004) places her theorizing in between the nostalgic and antinostalgic, “countering both the nostalgic desire for a retrieval of rooted, place-bound identities on the one hand, and the antinostalgic embrace of a nomadic fluidity of subjectivity, identity, and spatiality on the other” (p. 8). She also theorizes notions of the “wrong place,” and imagines a “belonging-in-transience” (p. 8). These concepts have proved useful in this analysis of site-specific work in the school site.

Cathy Turner (2004) draws on de Certeau to emphasize the importance of movement and motion to the creation of space, “space is created by the ways in which place is moved through” (p. 373). Building on this idea of site-specific work “on the move,” Turner (2004) suggests “performance is a journey, not an object, and that site is encountered in process rather than offering a secure location within which to set up camp” (p. 377). Examples of performance work comprised of movement to explore place dynamically include bus rides (Nights in this City, 1995/1997, Tim Etchells, Forced Entertainment; Back Home, Urban Theatre Projects, 2007) and walking (Why Not Theatre, 2011; Springgay, 2011; Sotelo-Castro, Robinson, 2010; Heddon & Turner, 2010; Belasco & Hodge, 2007; Miles, 2007; Bradby & Lavery, 2007; Meyers, 2008).

Also influencing current spatial relations are the histories (both official and suppressed) that may still be present in the sites of site-specific work. Much of the site-specific performance literature addresses these histories, mythologies, and so-called hauntings of place and space (Kwon, 2002; Turner, 2004; Pearson, 1997). Turner (2004) concurs that site-specific work is well-suited to addressing “mytho-geography” and stresses that it also creates a “potential space” in which the participant or audience re-imagines space (p. 385). According to Kwon (2002), site-specific work productively generates space (as cited in Morris & Cant, 2006, p. 867).

Mackey (2007) suggests place-based performance is deeply rooted in a specific site. It differs from site-specific work because the creators are deeply embedded in the place, living and working as they do in the locale of the performance. In the case of this research, the creators of the performances of suburb in the site of the suburban school are the students and the flora and fauna of this particular place. As was
previously mentioned, *Concord Floral* refers to a particular site but is not performed there. As *Concord Floral* is an imagined story based on real events from the Ottawa suburb where Tannahill grew up, this work is not strictly place-based as defined by Mackey (2007) because the youth actors were not familiar with the specifics of Tannahill’s suburb (even though they live in other suburban areas adjacent to the city of Toronto). By inquiring into the relational spaces of the suburban school and rehearsal hall, a reading of the literature on site-specific performance evolves into a reading about place-based performance (Mackey 2007) in which inhabitants of a particular place perform in the place that is familiar to them.

**The Politics of Affect in Theatre and Drama in Education**

In the field of applied theatre, there is, significantly, a tension between work intended to create an effect or outcome, and work intended to focus more on affect (Jackson, 2007; Thompson, 2009). James Thompson (2009), having worked in international applied theatre projects, reconsiders the tensions in the field and critiques the “trauma industry” for its focus on outcomes (p. 22). Instead, he refocuses his attention on affect because, “by failing to recognize affect – bodily responses, sensations and aesthetic pleasure – much of the power of performance can be missed” (p. 7). He argues for practices he calls “ethnographic,” in the sense that time is taken to become familiar with communities: “the argument is, then, for an ethnographic perspective that starts with the knowledge and practices within a community before diagnoses, treatments or performance techniques are assumed to be appropriate” (p. 71). He argues against the arrogance of applied theatre practices that colonize, assuming the rightness of their position in spite of ignorance of local conditions, traditions, and histories of social relations.

Thompson (2009) advocates a return to aesthetics as a means of creating applied theatre beyond the confines of utility and says, “the affective turn for research, therefore is a demand for an engagement with programs that neither reduce complex experiences to indicators of effect nor read performances as simplistic diagnoses of the problems faced in people’s lives” (p. 118). Extending this idea, he argues that the impact of participatory theatre is not its message but its affect, and the “intensity of the experience that can both protect and yet draw people into the world around them – without insisting on the terms of that engagement” (p. 127). In the context of *Concord Floral*, the working atmosphere is highly affective, and both the creative team and the participating youth comment on this aspect of their work together. Affect has pedagogical implications that insist on learning as an emergent process dependant on the not-

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8 Significantly, Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner took the youth cast to visit and explore the real site of *Concord Floral*. However, the piece was not set there, and therefore this work is *site-referential*, rather than *site-specific*.  

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only-rational domain: “learning is an affective, felt state – comprised of many elements of awe, fear, love and intrigue – that is only diminished in its banishment to that part of the body called the mind” (Thompson 2009, p. 130).

Drawing, as he does, on Deleuze’s (1998) dismissal of an ascetic or dutiful attitude, what Deleuze calls “sad passions,” Thompson (2009) suggests that practitioners of applied theatre and drama approach work differently, positing joy as the basis for work. Ruddick (2010) points out that there is a danger in this interpretation of Deleuze and suggests that affect can also be experienced as a negative force that should not be ignored for its pedagogical and political potential. She suggests that if we avoid all that makes us uncomfortable, we may avoid difference and the discomfort experienced in the presence of alterity. Affect in its negative manifestations, according to Ruddick, also has to be considered, if we are not to entrench ourselves in the familiar, excluding all that is not like us. Ruddick says:

but the desire to avoid painful encounters might well lead us to steer clear of associations whose discomfort arises, in fact, from a social field that reinforces racism, sexism, class bias or other forms of oppression. How then do we traverse the uncomfortable divide presented by difference as alterity? (p. 26)

Ruddick’s perspective is highly relevant to this study, looking as it does, at youth experiences of diversity and the heterogeneous relations of suburban school space. Discomfort is not to be avoided, but engaged. Sad passions, says Ruddick, need to be acknowledged for what they may offer to thought and thinking (p. 35). Ruddick also helps to clarify that diversity is not necessarily fully categorized and she says, “it raises questions about difference not yet named or recognized, whether emerging from the joyful creativity of the human condition, or the dark capacity of capital to create and then exploit distinctions between peoples” (p. 41). Throughout the analysis included in the findings, I look for places to diversify categories, to name new ones or enlarge existing ones, and at the same time, I remain alert for categories and terminology that are redundant or no longer useful.

It is significant that affect has made its mark on a reconsideration of the intentions and practices of applied theatre and drama. It informs dialogic spatial relations because, “in looking at work relating to site-specific performance practice, one can identify vocabularies both of fragmentation (fracture, layering, gaps, incompleteness, absence) and of merging (relationship, dialogue, the past-in-present, presence)” (Turner, 2004, p. 389). Site-specific/place-based performance is well positioned pedagogically to explore the historical myths of the suburb and methodologically to generate data regarding current conditions in the suburb and the affective social relations as experienced by youth. In
the context of this inquiry, affect is present in all aspects of site-specific/place-based drama work that emerges from the histories and materiality of place.

**Walking in Pedagogy, Performance, and Ethnography**

Haptic engagement is close range and hands on. It is the engagement of a mindful body at work with materials and with the land, "sewing itself in" to the textures of the world along the pathways of sensory involvement. (Ingold, 2011, p. 133)

The walking interviews and subsequent encounters of this research practice catalyze the need for two strands of literature: new materialism that conceptualizes things as agentic and on walking as ethnographic, artistic, and performance-based practice. A discussion of new materialism is placed at the end of this chapter with the other theory but here I will turn to the literature on walking.

**Walking**

The prevailing themes in the literature on walking are sociality, itinerary, and the relations with the materiality of place. Regarding sociality, the walking practice is not done alone. To be more specific, it may happen alone but a person in a different geographic location is walking and communicating across distance, simultaneously. Alternatively, a person may start out alone and (intentionally) encounter others along the way. In spite of variation, walking in these examples is done accompanied by others.

In considering the question of itinerary, the literature ranges from following a fully planned to a fully improvisational itinerary. Lawrence Bradby and Carl Lavery (2007) refer to de Certeau’s drift:

> The body-based knowledge provided by the drift, this knowing through movement, is important. It permits us to experience place as something ephemeral and poetic, that is to say, as something lived. This, for me, is where the political aspect of the drift resides. Instead of accepting place in abstract terms as a picture or an image, the drift encourages you to recreate your own city. (p. 45)

In the walking interviews for *Concord Floral* and the school site, the walks are improvisational for the most part. In both sites, the weather intervenes, which either means shorter routes when it is cold, or dry routes away from wet ground after it rains. Over time, I become increasingly alert to the ways that the place intervenes and changes the quality of the discourse and the power relations between researcher and participant. In these moments, like Lavery (2007), we are recreating our own suburb (Bradby & Lavery, 2007, p. 45).
History: Walking as a Means to Claim the Urban as Public

Elihu Rubin (2012) writes about using the “derivé” or drift in his university classes, inspired and provoked by the Situationists’ refusal of the commercialization of art. As Rubin explains, this 1950s movement “viewed the city itself as its field of operations” (p. 177). Describing the ambition of the project, Rubin says it was “nothing short of disarming the rules that governed everyday life in capitalist society” (p. 187). Walking, considered in this way, intervenes in the givens of the everyday of urban life, with a degree of subversive intention.

Pedagogically, Rubin asks his students to “embrace disorientation as best they can, and to discover new rules that govern movement and walking in the city” (p. 188). As Rubin explains, the student practices of walking includes creating photo-essays and gathering found objects along the way. Interestingly, he separates this walking practice from the flâneur who is always on the alert for spectacle. The derivé, in contrast, according to Rubin, was a “tactic in an ongoing contest over the right to occupy the city, to represent its history and to determine its social meaning” (p. 178). I suggest that the walking interviews and the performances of ritual occupied the suburb momentarily, and in ways that differ from the youth’s usual outings, such as going to movies or shopping.

The Situationists were walking in the urban context of Paris, a very walkable city. As this research is situated in the suburb, it is a less likely context for walking, in that the suburb is designed for people to travel in cars rather than on foot. Rebecca Solnit (2000) says about the suburbs, “(they) are bereft of the natural glories and civic pleasures of those older spaces, and suburbanization has radically changed the scale and texture of everyday life, usually in ways inimical to getting about on foot” (p. 249). She contends that the suburbs are not an inviting place to walk as “suburban sprawls generally make dull places to walk, and a large subdivision can become numbingly repetitious at three miles an hour instead of thirty or sixty” (Solnit, 2000, p. 252). She says suburban planning is ending walking intentionally, and offers as evidence, the absence of sidewalks and public spaces. Worse still, she warns of the dangers of “suburbanizing minds,” by which she means that walking is no longer thought of as a means of transportation, pleasure, or socializing (p. 259). Although I agree there can be uniformity in the suburban landscape, and that neighbourhoods have been designed for cars, Walk and Roll is part of the Region of Peel’s new initiative based on its Active Transportation Study (2011) and it may work to reduce dependency on the automobile as the primary mode of suburban transportation.

Solnit (2000) also acknowledges the possible subversive intentions of walking saying, “walking has sometimes been, at least since the late eighteenth century, an act of resistance to the mainstream” (p. 267). She supports this contention by offering examples of artists through history who walked and
created art works that asked of viewers to participate by walking. One example, she says, is Kaprow who “was building environments for audiences and performers to walk through and participate in by the early 1960s” (p. 269).

According to Solnit (2000), walking was at its height during the beginning of the twentieth century. Since then, however, with industrialization and mechanization, the pace of life has increased and the patience for walking has decreased. For her, this loss now means more than a focus on the pace, as she laments the absence of walking as a social and artistic practice observing, “walking as a cultural activity, as a pleasure, as travel, as a way of getting around is fading, and with it goes an ancient and profound relationship between the body, world and imagination” (p. 250). Enticingly, Solnit (2000) describes the beauty and benefits of walking:

Walking calls attention to the simplest aspects of the act: the way rural walking measures the body and the earth against each other, the way urban walking elicits unpredictable social encounters. And to the most complex: the rich potential relations between thinking and the body; the way one person’s act can be an invitation to another’s imagination; the way every gesture can be imagined as a brief and invisible sculpture; the way walking reshapes the world by mapping it, treading paths into it, encountering it; the way each act reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place. (p. 276)

Solnit’s (2000) description does not take into account the realities of youth’s lives, either those who are not old enough to drive or those for whom car ownership is prohibitive. Also at issue may be the ableist designs of parks that are not fully accessible. As much as walking may have died off in terms of popularity, from the current literature in performance and applied theatre, we can see there may well be a renaissance of walking practices being charted on both sides of the Atlantic and in Australia.

**Walking Pedagogies: Setting Out, Destination, and Experimental Path**

Pedagogy and walking are not newly paired. Plato and Aristotle allegedly walked with their students. In the case of Socrates, he knew intellectually where he wanted his students to go, and he guided them there through a series of well-crafted questions. This walk had a clear learning destination. Ellsworth (2005), in contrast, writes about pedagogies that cannot know exactly where they are going and it is this very disorientation that engages thinking. She says:

If thinking is, as Gilles Deleuze and D. W. Winnicott suggest, a confrontation or encounter with an outside – an encounter with the unthought; if thinking is that space outside the actual that is filled with things in the making (virtualities, movements, trajectories that need release); if the unthought
is a sea of possible desires waiting their chance, their moment of actualization (Grosz & Eisenman, 2001, p. 61), then for pedagogy to put us in relation to thinking – it must create places in which to think without already knowing what we should think. (p. 54)

Ellsworth (2005) analyzes the architectural pedagogy of Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC that invites the visitor to experience it by moving by it. Lin says of her work, “I cannot see my architecture as a still moment but rather as a movement through space. I design the architecture more as an experimental path” (as cited in Ellsworth, 2005, p. 53). This architecture of pathways does not strictly insist on walking, as many veterans are injured and not able to walk; instead, this work invites a travelling through. This shaped, pedagogical journey asks the visitor to walk down past a black wall of names, and then walk back up to the level of the sidewalk. What happens in the mid part of the descent is unknown and variable. How the participant resumes walking on the level pavement is part of the uncertainty. Like Kaprow’s work, the varied possibilities that are on offer in this kind of pedagogical art ask the audience to experience them through motion. Lin describes a kind of sociality in this walk when the viewer sees in the polished stone both the names of the dead and her/his own reflection (p. 54). This pedagogy insists on movement, but is far from the fully known destination of Socrates.

In Canada, Dan Rubenstein (2013) writes about Stanley Vollant’s walking practice encompassing walks “between every First Nations community in Quebec and Labrador and a few in Ontario and New Brunswick” as a way of reclaiming traditional aboriginal ways of life (The Walrus, October 2013, p. 32). He documents the therapeutic properties of walking but adds that the walk is about more than physical health. Many of the walk participants have endured residential schools and various forms of violence. Vollant suggests that for those walkers, their pain must be felt, even as it is not allowed to weaken them by dwelling too much in the past. There is a spiritual component to this walking practice that is pedagogical with a clear purpose, but one that is not imposed on the participants in a uniform or prescribed way.

**Walking and Performance**

On April 20, 2013, at Harbourfront Theatre in Toronto, Andrea de Keijzer/Compagnie Je Suis Julio began her dance piece, *Our Last Picture* (2013) by blindfolding members of the audience. A member of the ensemble then led the audience member on a short walk outside. The walk ended with the dancer ushering the audience member into his/her seat in the theatre. On attending that performance, I experienced the one-on-one walking as the dancer held my arm and talked to me gently, helping me to feel secure. This performance practice engaged walking as a means to reconsider the assumed relations between the spectator and the performer.
In the literature on walking performance practices, there is a continuum between practices that are highly choreographed and those that are open to the whim of the walkers. Jenn Stephenson (2012) describes *Suburbia: Mapping the Non-Aristocratic in Lawrence Park* in which two guides take a walking audience through the streets of the former Toronto suburb of Lawrence Park. As the audience walk, they are told story after story – some of which are true and others are false. As well, Dustin Harvey and Robert Plowman (2012) with the Nova Scotia-based theatre company, *No Secrets*, use walking and interviews as part of their theatre piece *The Common*, described as:

Using the public spaces that make up Halifax’s largest urban green space, THE COMMON creates a theatrical walk from the North Common to Victoria Park in which you navigate with the help of a headset. The formation of the vast 240 acre plot of land, the mysterious natural creek buried underground, the immense gardens and the dominating buildings erected around them - all become a captivating backdrop for an intimate adventure that only exists between your ears. ([http://secrettheatre.org/2012/01/15/the-common/](http://secrettheatre.org/2012/01/15/the-common/))

Misha Meyer’s (2008) performance work creates walks randomly in terms of itinerary, but they are organized with a clear pedagogical purpose. Her work explores the layers and complexities of living in a contemporary place, or an adopted place in the case of immigrants and refugees. Myers, herself transplanted from the US to the UK, creates projects that provoke a question: how does the reality of contemporary mobility and immigration influence experiences of and relationships to space and new place? In her piece, *Homing Place*, she creates maps on which the walk is charted, as well as, the places that remind the participating walker of the place of home.

Meyers inquires into a “sedentarist bias” which assumes that the home base is the place of identity, and when that base is lost, identity is also lost simultaneously (Meyers 2010, p. 172). Of her own work, Meyers (2008) writes,

> these maps are both a structure for the walk and a residue or documentation of the walking as the walker transposes the places found in the actual environment with the remembered places inscribed on the map. What results is not a representation of either location, but a condensed autobiography of the walker’s life in the past and present. (p. 175)

In a second project, Meyers uses song as a means to create “dialoguing with their encompassing environment” (p. 172). Engaging innovatively with issues of global movement and diversity, she and her participants express place as a layering of immediate experience with memory and longing. This work embodies contemporary global mobility that asks us to live in many places at once, as several youth in this study also articulate.
Walking With: The Sociality of Location, Distance, and Proximity

In the literature that connects walking practices with performance, there are many examples of those who walk with others present in space and time, and those who undertake the walk in partnership in a distant location in what Joanne Whalley and Lee Miller (2007) describe as “bilocational” (p. 73). Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner (2010) describe the work of Sorrel Muggride who walks most often in Nottingham and Laura Nanni who walks here in Toronto (p. 19). In the case of Bradby and Lavery (2007), after walking together in the same place (Norwich) they wrote to each other across distance (Norwich to Leicester) to reflect on their experiences of the shared walk.

Walking With: Stranger, Client, Friend

The example of the Andrea de Keijzer piece is a walk between strangers, while the walking in my research is between people who know each other quite well, but who are not friends. Whalley and Miller (2007) describe Fiona Templeton’s work in New York City. Templeton meets her client in Times Square, and then travels with her or him on foot and by car. Lavery and Bradby (2007) explore walking as a means of witnessing through a “mobile site-specific performance” in which they ask questions of strangers regarding the location and regularity of their walks as well as the affective engagement created by walking (p. 41).

Heddon and Turner (2010) write “toponarratives” that they describe as “a collaborative, partial story of place constructed by at least two walkers” (p. 15). The interviews they conduct with artists while walking bear directly on this research “our fieldwork approach also allows us to attend to information from the sites walked through, things that drew our attention, that our walkers pointed out, surprising connections, disjunctions and juxtapositions” (p. 15).

Their fascinating account of artists experimenting with walking describes London artist Rachel Gomme’s Japanese butoh-inspired walking that “attends to the body’s intersections with its environment” (p. 16). In one of her pieces, Undergrowth, Gomme makes green markings where plants grow where they should not. In another piece, Ravel, Gomme knits while walking, and she incorporates bits of found objects into her knitting. Along the way, she talks with others about the knitting done by mothers and grandmothers.

Heddon and Turner (2010) stress this relational aspect of walking to intentionally “overwrite” the heroic solo walking practices of historic figures like Rousseau, Thoreau, and Wordsworth (p. 22). This minor walking practice attends to the social, and it responds to what is found along the way. They write that they were provoked to reconsider the notion of adventure and that adventure can be rescaled as, “to work
in one’s back yard is to take huge risks, while to walk the Pennine Way, as Simone Keynon reminds us, is simply to take one step after another” (Heddon & Turner 2010, p. 22).

**Immersive Performance**

Some walking performance practice happens not outside, but inside. Punchdrunk, a London theatre company, set their piece, *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable*, in an old letter-sorting administrative building in Paddington. Entering the performance site, the spectators are given white masks, and then are set free to walk through the multi-level space finding bits and pieces of dramatic action here and there. Punchdrunk has been described by Toronto *Globe and Mail* theatre critic, J. Kelly Nestruck as “an exciting British theatre company that has become insanely popular with young audiences in London and New York over the past decade for works that are like the *Grand Theft Auto* of immersive theatre” (Toronto Globe and Mail, January 5, 2014). Of Punchdrunk, Josephine Machon (2013) writes:

> the company has pioneered a form of immersive theatre in which roaming audiences experience intimately epic storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds. In the large-scale works, all audience participants are required to wear a carnivalesque mask that encourages liberation, can imply an invitation to role-play and ensures the audience adds an organic scenographic dimension within the work. (p. 3)

As well, *Sleep No More* was Punchdrunk’s site specific and immersive theatre piece based on Macbeth that began its run in New York’s McKittrick Hotel in March 2011.

Not all immersive performance take place on the large scale of Punchdrunk. More relevant to this research project are the one-on-one encounters that Machon (2013) describes in the work of Adrian Howells and his performances of rituals of eating and bathing. These one-on-one encounters are more like the walking interviews in my research that were one-on-one encounters between the researcher and participant.

Louise Ann Wilson, in her interview with Machon (2013), discusses walking and its importance in fostering the quality of attention needed in immersive performance practice:

> Immersion through walking, distance and duration are particular features of my work. The audience or participants, are asked to arrive in a particular place – often they will have travelled and planned just to get there and, from that moment, they’ll be taken on a journey requiring them to focus on where they are and leave their busy, often urban, lives and worries behind. (Wilson, 2013 as cited in Machon, 2013, p. 239)
She also writes about her relationship to the walking of her participant and how she intentionally keeps separate but present, “the physical journey the audience will take is one of the first things I develop but in the actual event I don’t step into their experience, I step back to hold the space so that they can enter in and become immersed” (Wilson, 2013, as cited in Machon, 2013, p. 240).

Machon (2013) identifies many ways that this kind of performance differs from text-based theatre presented in conventional theatres, which prefers a seated audience, readily positioned to watch and experience the performance. She suggests that audience involvement is crucial, and there is a “prioritization of the sensual world” (p. 70). Pertinent to this research is the relation of immersive performance practice to the place and space in which the work happens, which Machon underlines:

the significance of place and space is a key concern of such practice. This includes the specific venue used as the inspiration for the work, its architectural details and design as well as landscapes that are the site for the work. It can also incorporate a focus on geographical location, community and local culture, history and politics. In this way the site and wider location can work as the source of the material for the event as much as its physical frame. (p. 70)

According to Machon (2013), the role of the audience expands, offering many options for engagement including “audience-spectator-watcher-protagonist-percipient” (p. 74).

Theoretical Framework

Negotiated Relational Space

Massey (2005) begins her book, for space, by laying out three propositions: that space is the product of interrelations, it has multiple trajectories, and it is always “under construction” (p. 9). This perspective contrasts a view of space that is conceptualized as a fixed surface or an “expanse that we travel across” (p. 4). No longer is space conceptualized as a container, but as comprised of the interrelations amongst people and the interactive relations with neighbouring places including, in this case, the city of Toronto. According to Massey, space is never finished or closed, and she says, “perhaps we could imagine space as a ‘simultaneity of stories-so-far’” (p. 9). I suggest that the three performances of suburb – in the

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9 Jacques Ranciere (2008) is careful to point out that immobility is not passivity, and that the audience member may be engaged in ways that we will miss if we consider participation as only physical.

10 A “percipient” is a description that Meyers (2008) invented to describe a participant who becomes agentic in the process (p. 179).
classroom, at the theatre, and in the school grounds – constitute a kind of simultaneity of performances-so-far.

Massey (2005) seems well aware that the spatial includes “potentially dissonant (or concordant) narratives” (p. 71). She says, “if space is genuinely the sphere of multiplicity, if it is a realm of multiple trajectories, then there will be multiplicities too of the imaginations, theorizations, understandings and meanings” (Massey, 2005, p. 89). My research attends to the multiple trajectories negotiated in the spaces of the classroom, school grounds, and the theatre. Like Iris Marion Young (1990) who advocates for a cosmopolitanism that does not assimilate difference, Massey also stresses the need for “a fuller recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell” (p. 11). This co-existence of story and multiple perspectives is highly relevant to the questions that drive this study: first, what diverse performances of the suburb contribute to understanding youth living in the suburb and, in particular, their attitudes towards diversity. Second, how can we be increasingly different with regard to sociality, religion, language, race, ability, gender, and sexual orientation? Deleuze (1968/1994) broadens this discussion of difference by stressing the importance of differenciation that occurs when a process or practice achieves something “not yet.” These stories of diversity and differenciation comprise a series of stories-and-performances-so-far offering multiple perspectives of youth experiences of the suburb.

**Deleuze and Spatial Theory**

Theory is not used just for its potential to analyze data, but is integrated into the research design and every aspect of research implementation and analysis. In this consideration of the place of the suburb conducted in the sites of schools, the school grounds, and theatre rehearsal halls, what follows is analysis of multi-faceted relational encounters that are simultaneously pedagogical, ethnographic, and aesthetic. Deleuze’s (1968/1994, 1970/1988, 1980/1987, 1997) poststructural theory, and in particular, his theory of difference and minor theatre are crucial to the analysis of the empirical materials collected. Committed as he was to asking what philosophy might do, some of his other key concepts – encounters, composition, social assemblage, and becoming – deserve consideration as they are generative conceptually, methodologically, and analytically.11

11 How Deleuze and poststructuralism have been put to use methodologically will be addressed later and in more detail in the methodology chapter.
Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer the notions of smooth and striated space. Striated space is strictly codified, while smooth space “deterritorializes” regimented practices. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) say, “smooth spaces are not in themselves libidary. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us” (p. 551). Here Deleuze dismisses the salvation narrative of humanism, psychoanalysis, and structuralism and considers the potential for learning that changes, displaces, reconstitutes, confronts, invents, and switches.

In seeking smooth spaces that are less codified, Deleuze commits to creation rather than critique or making aesthetic judgments from a distanced viewpoint and judging art by established standards of beauty. Instead, the affective power of the aesthetic encounter and the intensity of the experience are what he seeks and advocates. In the case of Concord Floral, the social relations of the process both inside and outside the rehearsal hall are highly affective, and attention to affect is an intended part of the rehearsal process.

Alexander Means (2009) discusses Deleuze’s interpretation of Immanuel Kant’s concept of the aesthetic encounter, in which the affective intensity of an experience temporarily suspends a person’s power of judgment (p. 2). Although Kant then reabsorbs such moments back under the larger framework of rationality, Deleuze, in contrast, refuses to corral it back into the confines of reason, and he seeks to explore what affect, untethered, might create. Means says, “whereas Kant would have affect subordinated to reason, Deleuze allows it to proliferate on its own terms, make connections, and venture outside habitual posture and rigid moral prescriptions” (p. 3). He explains this has ethical dimensions, and notes, “here the affects generated through aesthetic experience signal moments of ethical potential where new sensibilities for thinking, feeling, seeing, and being with others might be imagined and practiced” (Means, 2009, p. 3). The aesthetic encounter, as envisioned by Deleuze, is not only a place of important affective pedagogy, but also the site of ethics and politics. Affect and aesthetics, then, can house political impulse.

**Openness of Space: Micropolitical Potential and Minor Intentions**

Conceptualizing space as open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics. (Massey, 2005, p. 59)

Another term that is useful from Deleuze is “social assemblage” that Means (2009) describes as “the dense complex, and interconnected relations specific to particular social formations. These assemblages are composed of various lines of visibility, enunciability, lines of force and lines of subjectification
which mix, mutate, and cohere in endless variations” (p. 9). As Means (2009) explains, this becomes a “tactical process” that Deleuze calls social cartography, “composed of material practices and deconstructive acts whereby subjects address the concrete and symbolic lines of enclosure which confront them, in order to bend the force of those lines against power” (p. 9). By taking “concrete and symbolic lines of enclosure” to mean the limits placed on social relations by the given conditions of place, we can see how affective space is further imbued with political and strategic purpose.

These acts, whether organized as drama pedagogy in the classroom or enacted by youth in their lives outside school, are political in that they “reconstruct” the social architecture in which they find themselves (Massumi, 2011). Means (2009) demonstrates the political potential of affect as a “key force in the production of political possibility” (p. 10). Michel Foucault (1977/1995a) writes about the myriad ways that bodies are disciplined and controlled, “these were always meticulous, often minute, techniques, but they had their importance: because they defined a certain mode of detailed political investment of the body, a ‘new micro-physics’ of power” (p. 139). When Sara Mills (2003) writes about this diffused disciplinary power, she suggests that it is relational and not imposed from above. As such, power is “unstable and in need of constant repetition to maintain; if it is productive as well as being repressive, then it is difficult to see power relations as simply negative and constraining” (p.47).

Mills’s suggestion of instability is important because it offers the possibility of making power circulate differently. Discipline asserts high levels of control, but it is not absolute, and there remains the possibility of action. Claire Colebrook (2002) suggests that the “post-structuralists looked at the opening, excess or instability of systems: the way languages, organisms, cultures and political systems necessarily mutate or become” (p. 3). With poststructuralism then, history and historical forces are no longer seen to unfold in a linear and predictable fashion but instead as irruptions and discontinuities. This linearity of history had implications for practices that, under humanism, offered promises/discourses of transformation and sure notions of social change. Many applied theatre practitioners are reassessing the practices in light of these large promises of transformation (Jackson, 2007; Thompson, 2009; Balfour, 2009).

Deleuze (1997), in his performance theory, suggests a language that is more modest and unsure, a kind of “stammerer of language” (p. 246). I suggest that the micropolitical acts of formulating different practices within schools, such as questioning student relations and school policies that create divisions, disadvantaging the most disadvantaged, have political, even if modest, repercussions. Similarly, in the social practices associated with the rehearsals of Concord Floral, the youth engage the artistic process with one another, in ways that reorder and renegotiate the givens of theatre, social relations, and the specifics of the “suburban”.

51
**Deleuze and “Minor” Performance**

Although Deleuze makes many references to the work of Artaud, only one piece of his writing focuses exclusively on theatre: *One Less Manifesto* (1997). To analyze this essay for its relevance to this research, I begin by exploring the concept of “becoming,” its association with the minor, and the theatre of Carmelo Bene. Deleuze (1997) writes about two kinds of minority (p. 255). The first refers to a majority that wields power over a minority. This study has minors as participants, and in this school research site, many students could be considered visible minorities. But Deleuze ascribes another meaning to minority, as that which unsettles established meanings and practices. O’Sullivan (2006) writes about Deleuze’s “minor practice” that deterritorializes the major by outlining three strategies: to deterritorialize the major language, to be political, and to be collective in its processes (p. 69-70).

Deleuze (1997) explains that major is a model that demands conformity, but that the minor has no model but is a process of becoming (p. 255). Colebrook (2002), like Deleuze, applies the concept of the minor to literature and cinema. In extending Colebrook’s Deleuzian idea of the minor (or non dominant culture) in cinema to the realm of drama and theatre, I recognize in her descriptions of “becoming different” through literature, part of the pull (both pleasure and risk) that drama/theatre/performance can have for those engaged in it. She writes, “we are no longer in a position of ordering judgment but become other through a confrontation with the forces that compose us” (p. 131). As Colebrook suggests, this process is entwined with desire – a desire “to expand or become other through what is more than oneself” (p. 135).

O’Sullivan (2006) underlines this aspect of becoming minor and says, “a minor practice must then be understood as always in process, as always becoming – as generating new forms through a break with, but also a utilization of, the old” (p. 73). This process of taking the old and reactivating it is exactly the process that Deleuze (1997) observes in the work of Italian theatre artist Carmelo Bene, who focuses on the minor characters in classical plays to create a theatre that is not comprised of conflicts and oppositional struggles, as audiences have come to expect from conventional theatre (p. 252). Kowsar (1986) suggests “Deleuze reminds us that Bene differs from Brecht in not believing in a ‘solution,’ at least any solution that can be provided by ideas offered in the theatre” (p. 25). This pose is not reactionary but one that recognizes that many conflicts have become so institutionalized and normalized, they no longer activate thinking. Instead, Bene seeks that which is not yet normalized.

When I return again to the place-based performance work of Sally Mackey (2007), it is possible to see how she, too, considers some of the work she describes as minor, in the sense that it puzzled some participants because of the absence of recognizable drama conventions (p. 188). About the changing roles played by the participants, she writes “this self-acknowledged, vacillating role continued throughout the evening creating a pleasurable tension between observed and observer” (p. 189). Mackey
assesses the unsettling quality of the work that cannot be easily recognized and categorized. This observation is relevant to the specific relational work in the school site and in the rehearsal halls, green rooms, and theatre hallways in the creation of Concord Floral. In the walking interviews in particular, the participants and I experience roles that are uncertain and changing, as we walk through the place of the school grounds actively responding to unexpected encounters.

Cull (2009) considers Deleuze’s envisioned theatre as wedded to thought, but not thought that is comfortable with “what it already thinks it knows” (Cull, 2009, p. 250). For Deleuze, Cull explains, the conditions for thinking exist in the confrontation with the unknown: “we only ‘truly think’ when we have difficulty in recognizing something” (p. 250). This “encounter” then, contrasts with an “object of recognition” that does not shift our thinking (p. 250). Theatre can be seen as a kind of pedagogy that does not seek to teach a particular lesson, but instead offers a confrontation with that which is unfamiliar.

**Bene’s “Humbler” Theatre**

*One less manifesto* refers to theatre that takes a step back from representations of power and reconsiders the power of theatre itself. Deleuze (1997) considers Bene’s subtraction of power from the plays that he performs as a means to “minorate” the art (p. 243). Deleuze writes, “for by shaping the form of a minority consciousness, art speaks to the strengths of becoming that are of another domain than that of power and measured representation” (p. 254).

Deleuze (1997) addresses the language of theatre, the subject matter, and the form of accepted theatre practices. In Bene, he sees theatre as different because “he changes not only the theatrical matter but also the form of theatre, which ceases to be a representation at the same time an actor ceases to be an actor” (p. 241). Cull (2009) suggests that Deleuze “develops the concept of ‘perpetual variation,’ a theatre that subtracts the organizing elements of theatrical representation – such as plot, character and dialogue– so that there can be a new potentiality of the nonrepresentative” (p. 247). He realigns the actor’s role as he dispensed with conventional definitions of actor and director and the text’s conventional focus on conflict. He calls theatre practitioners “operators” as they perform a kind of surgical excision of plays, subtracting “everything that would constitute an element of power, in language and in gestures, in the representation and in the represented” (p. 245).12

In Bene’s work, there is an excision of power in language, about which Kowsar (1986) suggests “continual variation…is assured every time a major language is truncated, broken down and scrambled”

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12 In the context of this research, the design of the drama work in the classroom was quite representative. The rituals as they evolved were illustrations of student life in the day-to-day of schooling.
Cull (2009) asserts, “it is not language itself that is the problem, so much as the codified ways in which it is used” (p. 248). Language use is constantly varied and he suggests that theatre should use language that insists on becoming “a foreigner in one’s own tongue” as if one is talking to oneself “in one’s own ear but, in the middle of the market, in the public square” (p. 246). It is not just the words spoken that change, but the manner in which they are spoken also changes, as he suggests whispering, mumbling and stammering (p. 247). Cull associates language with the capacity for affect and a performative function that can “act on bodies rather than merely represent them” (p. 246). In analyzing the final of the three performances of this research (to be discussed in greater depth in the findings), a non-representative encounter happened when a bird entered into the walking interview, acting on our bodies through its call, uttering a kind of minor language outside the strictures of the English language.

Deleuze’s (1997) theory and Bene’s theatre are relevant to this inquiry as they stress the importance of “uncertain” language and gesture. As well, like Thompson (2009), Bene’s work resists any tendency to present conflicts and moralize about solutions. More generally, Deleuze’s poststructural stance invites the relational spaces of pedagogy, dramatic art, and ethnography to aspire to the smooth space of becoming. As well, Delueze’s stance also seems to speak to the “deflationary aesthetic” that Lather (2013) describes.

**Sameness, Difference, and Differentiation: Deleuze**

The only constant in time, the only ‘Same’, is the power of not remaining the same. (Colebrook, 2002, p. 60)

Deleuze’s concept of difference, suggests that diversity and difference are really different things. Diversity, as has been discussed, depends on various identity categories while difference, and the process through which things, processes, and practices become different, are dynamic and highly pedagogical. May (2005) explains:

> difference is not a thing, it is a process. It unfolds – or better, it is an unfolding (and a folding, and a refolding). It is alive. Not with cells or with respiration, but with vitality. To ask what living consists in is to ask about this vitality at the heart of things. (p. 24)

Colebrook (2002) also analyzes the significance of Deleuze’s concept of difference, “life is difference, the power to think differently, to become different and to create differences” (p. 13). Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggests that the activities of difference happen in encounter, “difference is thus caused by connections and relations within and between different bodies, affecting each other and being affected, whether it is viruses, humans or sand” (p. 529). This is not a psychological transformation, but
an encounter with other forces, either animate or inanimate, which set difference and *differenciation* in process.

Deleuzian conceptualizations of difference suggest that difference, in itself, is diverse. It can refer to that which is not the same as either a Platonic ideal or a category or that which becomes different within itself as a kind of *differenciation*. Colebrook (2002) says, “difference is not the difference between different forms, or the difference from some original model; difference is the power that over and over again produces new forms” (p. 123). Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) explain that transcendence looks on difference as negative in that the image differs from the form. Deleuze flips this around with his concept of immanence and considers difference as positive. As Hultman and Lenz Taguchi explain, difference is, for Deleuze, “about *differenciation* – difference as itself, different in each new event taking place. This means that difference is a continuum and a multiplicity, rather than a difference in a system of separations and divisions” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 529). May (2005) suggests that “to see being as difference is at once to refuse to philosophize in terms of identities and to jettison the project of ontology as discovery” (p. 19). He outlines what philosophy, according to Deleuze, can do:

> In Deleuze’s hands, philosophy does not seek to offer a coherent framework from which we can see ourselves and our world whole. It does not put anything in its place. It does not tell us who we are or what we ought to do. Philosophy does not settle things. It disturbs them. Philosophy disturbs by moving beneath the stable world of identities to a world of difference that at once produces those identities and shows them to be little more than the froth of what there is. And it does this by creating concepts. Concepts reach beneath the identities our world presents to us in order to touch upon the world of difference that both constitutes and disrupts those identities. (May, 2005, p. 19)

The concepts of difference and becoming have political implications, provoking questions that ask how we might live together retaining difference and becoming different (as the earlier discussion of diversity outlined). These concepts of difference are particularly relevant to education because learning asks that a person become different, either through pedagogies, or in the relations developed with other students and with the material world of the environment. Concerned with the *not yet*, the educator is aware of the virtual and imagines how it can be made real. This approach positions education away from processes of mastering what is already known, or what has been determined as important to be known. For Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) positive difference shifts the focus from activities of categorization to bringing the possible into existence:

> A positive difference is affirmative of learning and transformation as a state of continuous becoming. The consequence of this way of thinking is that we are no longer interested in defining
an organism or body by its limitations, separateness or form. Instead we must extend and expand ourselves to that which is not yet. (p. 540)

This affirmative approach connects with Deleuze and Guattari’s *Body without Organs* about which Kylie Message (2010) suggests, “although it is a process that is directed toward a course of continual becoming, it cannot break away entirely from the system it desires to escape” (p. 38). As well, such an affirmative approach to difference positions the researcher from within rather than from without. Barad (2007) says, “we don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world and its differential becoming” (Barad, 2007, p. 185 as cited in Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 539 with emphasis added by Hultman & Lenz Taguchi). This place of learning is positioned inside rather than outside the process/person/thing being studied. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) advocate this approach for ethnographic empirical materials too, and they invite us to attend to and be affected by data. The researcher forms an inextricable part of the assemblage that comprises the research, and is therefore an integral part of the research encounter in both the collection of data and in their analysis.

**Applied Philosophy, Applied Theatre, and Drama in Education**

With respect to Deleuze’s work, Colebrook (2002) cautions that it is not enough to repeat what he said, but to apply it in whatever ways one might imagine so that it is “productive of new ways of saying and seeing” (p. 151). What follows are examples of Colebrook’s application of this concept of difference and how it enables thinking differently.

Colebrook (2002) clarifies the political implications of difference and the pull to sameness. According to her, Deleuze credits capitalism’s success on the need to be the same as others. She says, “being untimely, for Deleuze, meant being more than anti-capitalist. It meant disrupting the force that had allowed capitalism to emerge: the tendency to sameness, uniform quantification, the fixing of all becomings through one measure or ‘territory’ (of capital)” (Colebrook, 2002, 65). Colebrook’s identification of sameness is directly relevant to the discussion of consumerism and the enforcement of standards of sameness that surfaced in the school site of the research.

According to Colebrook (2002), Deleuzian notions of difference provide an alternative framework for thinking about racism. She asserts that racism is not always about exclusion, but is also evident in inclusions when difference still demands sameness, “for it is a racism that can only accept difference if it has already been tamed and recuperated by the same” (Colebrook, 2002, p. 76). This attitude to diversity is exactly what Marvasti and McKinney (2011) describe as difference that is tolerated because the ultimate aim is to assimilate it. Their approach to difference is relevant to the data that suggest great
diversity in the school, but paradoxically, a strong pull to sameness. This assimilationist stance to diversity provokes a highly relevant question to ask of the data I collect: what differences may be sacrificed to belong and to become accepted? Or more pertinently, how does that pull to sameness provoke reactive encounters that will not accept cohesion as defined by the most dominant and powerful in the context of the school?

Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggest in research, the researcher has to chart how difference works and the points at which difference manifests. They specify the nature of inquiry and what we as researchers can be looking for as “it is about taking notice of the differences and transformations that emerge in specific events” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 539). Guided by this commitment to difference, searching for the times in which a practice or process becomes different or differentiates, it is on these encounters that this research focuses. Analyzing these moments – analyzing differenciation in the three performances of suburb, in the sites of the classroom, school grounds and in Concord Floral rehearsals – is generative to understanding more fully drama and theatre pedagogy, the environs of the suburb, and the youth who live there.

**Relevance to Analysis-in-Motion**

At the start of my research, I conceptualized suburb and suburban as a kind of geographic identifier. My research questions asked: how might students living in suburban areas be different than their urban counterparts? How might suburban schooling differ from urban schools? What might the play Concord Floral have to add to a discussion of suburban identity and diversity? By dispensing with negative difference, or the difference between things, I was freed from categorization and, instead, I became intensely interested in the processes and practices that became different, or were set in motion, in the ethnographic and artistic encounter. This approach offered an intensity that both unsettled and broadened what I thought I knew about drama and ethnography. I had to leave behind what I had set out to do: to understand the suburban as a categorizable thing or entity.

When suburb was conceptualized as relational, process-oriented, and movement, only then did I sense that I would have anything to write about, and I experienced some of the freedom that Colebrook (2002) describes as “no longer seeing ourselves as a point of view detached from life” (p. 129). Colebrook’s statement suggests to me the importance of the ethics of proximity. Drama and the walking interviews allowed the participant and me to share common experiences, walking alongside each other. Both the social and material affected the relations with youth, the performances, and the creation of ethnography. What started as an inquiry into what the suburb was, later changed into an inquiry regarding the ways it
became different, through encounters with youth, the nonhuman, and the performances, all of which will be developed more fully in the findings chapter.

The New Relational Materialism(s)

Discursive practices and material phenomenon do not stand in a relationship of externality to each other; rather the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity. The relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither is reducible to the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other. Neither is articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. (Barad, 2007, p. 152 as cited in Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 529).

New materialism stresses the importance of the human and nonhuman, which challenges dualisms such as nature/culture and decentres the human. Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn (2010) suggest that Deleuze’s work, drawing on Spinoza, created a “philosophy of the body” from which the new materialism grew (p. 154). In charting the history of these ideas, they draw from Braidotti (2002), who considers embodied subjectivity, not psychologically nor as socially constructed, but as an embodied being who both takes in the forces acting on him/her and acts outwardly through affect. Significantly, this body is mobile and in motion, “a mobile entity, an enfleshed sort of memory that repeats and is capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations, while remaining faithful to itself. The Deleuzian body is ultimately an embodied memory” (Braidotti, 2000, p. 159 as cited in van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2010, p. 155).

With feminist and Deleuzian interest in the body, materialism places animate and inanimate bodies at the heart of this intellectual framework. Drawing on Spinoza, Jane Bennett (2004) suggests that in a vital materialism “bodies enhance their power in or as a heterogeneous assemblage” (p. 23). Bennett emphasizes Deleuze’s concept of absorption, which she describes as “a gathering of elements in a way that forms a coalition and yet preserves something of the agential impetus of each element” (p. 35). This notion of a coalition of elements effectively addresses one of the questions driving this research, namely the attempt to understand the political implications of being increasingly different while retaining rather than assimilating difference. Bennett says:

A theory of distributive agency, in contrast, does not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect. There are instead always a swarm of vitalities at play. The task becomes to identify the contours of the swarm and the kind of relations that obtain between its bits. (p. 31)
By provoking a consideration of the agency of the nonhuman, new materialism challenges anthropocentrism. Bennett (2004) explains that the new materialism does not just refer to human social structures and meanings, but expresses a “dogged resistance to anthropocentrism” and stresses the “agentic contributions of nonhuman forces” (p. xvi). Similarly Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (2010) suggest, “the human species is being relocated within a natural environment whose material forces themselves manifest certain agentic capacities in which the domain of unintended or unanticipated effects is considerably broadened” (p. 10). Massey (2005) also suggests:

Places…necessitate intervention; they pose a challenge. They implicate us, perforce, in the lives of human others, and in relations with nonhumans they ask us how we shall respond to our temporary meeting-up with these particular rocks and stones and trees. (p. 141)

For the purposes of this research, new materialism broadens the notion of diversity by including both the human and nonhuman.

Sarah Whatmore (2006) accounts for the ways that new materialism has broadened the field of cultural geography and its methodological implications for research practices. She describes the productive link between life and ecology:

This redirection of materialist concerns through the bodily enjoins the technologies of life and ecology, on the one hand, and of prehension and feeling, on the other, in refiguring the ontological disposition of research – drawing cultural geographers into new conversational associations; research practices and modes of address that collectively mark what I have called ‘more-than-human’ approaches to the world. (Whatmore, 2006, p. 602)

Whatmore says that new materialism works to “re-animate the missing ‘matter’ of landscape,” taking the human as just one of many ongoing co-constructors of the “socio-material assemblage” and that subjectivity is not located inside the individual but outside in the living and changing world (p. 603).

A change in analytical focus accompanies this moving away from discourse to practice, from looking for meaning to affect and moving from “politics of identity” to “politics of knowledge” (Whatmore, 2006, p. 604). Eschewing humanist practice that generates text and talk, new practices will engage more of the “sensory, bodily and affective registers” of the researcher and the researched (p. 606). In the practices of this research, drama, rehearsals, performance, and the walking interviews do just that; they engage the body through discursive and affective encounters. With respect to the third performance of the suburb, I would like to engage Kirby’s notion of the “literacy of matter” that conceptualizes matter as capable of
being the subject of conversation, or as the one engaging in conversation or speaking for itself (as cited in Van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2010, p 165).

Coole and Frost (2010), in the introduction of the book they co-edited, *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*, suggest that the current intellectual climate recognizes the insufficiency of cultural explanations that depend on discourse and language exclusively. They specify that materiality is more than matter, but that it is matter in relation, “for materiality is always something more than ‘mere’ matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable” (p. 9). They advocate for a consideration of human interaction with objects and the natural environment. The so-called natural environment of the grounds of the school that is analyzed in this research is not natural at all but cultivated, shaped, and maintained by human labour. In this reconstituted nature, we come into contact with the nonhuman. In considering that which is not human, the things (fungus, flora, insect, or fauna) cannot be thought of as static entities, but as participants in relational processes, with “an orientation that is posthumanist in the sense that it conceives matter itself as lively or exhibiting agency” (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 7).

Placing this new materialism in an historical context, Coole and Frost (2010) outline how the Enlightenment, as represented particularly by Rene Descartes and Sir Isaac Newton, considered matter as measurable and inert, waiting for forces to act upon it. The political implications of new materialism, Coole and Frost suggest, offer an alternative to the dominance of humans. They describe an “antipathy toward oppositional ways of thinking” (Coole & Frost 2010, p. 8) and concur with van der Tuin and Dolphijn (2010) who suggest that part of the new materialism is to work with dichotomies while “breaking through” dualism” (p. 156). This relational materialism provides an analytical framework from which to view the performances of youth in a suburban school and in rehearsals for *Concord Floral* as the youth forge their interactions with the material aspects of architecture, object, and the “more-than-human” world.

**Relevance for Educational Research and Methodologies**

New materialism helps us analyze and shift the structuring principles of these discussions by showing how classificatory negation involves a specific relationality, which is reductive. (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2011, p. 390)

Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) apply this relational materialist theory to studies in education. They consider the implications of this onto-epistemology for the practices and ethics of their research with young children, and begin by stating that poststructuralism has worked to problematize “the humanistic notion of the child and learner as an autonomous subject and detached from its environment” (p. 525).
They describe what Gallagher (2008) could term as a “methodological dilemma” and how their humanistic training had disciplined the manner in which they approached their data (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 2). During their analysis, when looking at photographs of young students in educational spaces, they found themselves drawn to the children more than the school environment.

Hultman and Lenz Taguchi say:

regardless of how theoretically informed we were of poststructural thinking about children as contextual and situational, our perceptual style and our habits of seeing still seemed to be guided by the same liberal humanistic notions of the child that we so long had sought to escape. (p. 525)

They specify that their work aims to challenge the habitual ways we see and the taken-for-granted ways that data are approached, and in so doing, contest the “anthropocentric gaze” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 526). They also question a reliance on discourse to understand the processes of education:

multiple forces are at work in the construction of the world where discourse is only one such force. As a consequence, our reality cannot be thought upon as socially constructed involving humans only, as is so often the case in educational research. Non-human forces are always involved in this construction. (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 529)

As well as concerning themselves with being (ontology) and what we can know (epistemology), Hultman and Lenz Taguchi’s (2010) approach disrupts binaries and dislocates the centrality of the researcher:

an onto-epistemological thinking thus clearly decentres the researcher as knowing subject and takes us beyond the dominating subject/object, human/non-human, as well as the discourse/matter and nature/culture dichotomies: it becomes impossible to isolate knowing from being and discourse from matter, they are mutually implicated. (p. 539)

The ethical dimension to this approach, according to Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), is:

a turn to relational materialism, where things and matter, usually perceived of as passive and immutable, are instead granted agency in their intra-activities, can be understood as promoting a more ethical research practice. This is because of its active engagements with what has previously been considered as minor, that is non-human matter and artefacts. (p. 540)

Rosi Braidotti (2010) also brings ethics into this discussion, “the nomadic ethico-political project focuses on becomings as pragmatic philosophy that stresses the need to act, to experiment with different modes of constituting subjectivity and different ways of inhabiting our corporeality” (p. 209). Difference is
implicated in this ethical project and Braidotti (2010) contends, “the adequate ethical question provides the subject with a frame for interaction and change, growth and movement. It affirms life as difference-at-work” (p. 215).

Deleuze’s conceptualization of difference is crucial to the analysis that follows in this inquiry. In foreshadowing the porous boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, he is the philosopher that many of the new materialists draw from. New materialism stresses the vibrancy of matter and the agentic capacities of the nonhuman, and is an ethical, ontological and epistemological viewpoint that decentres the human and anthropocentric ways of analyzing and understanding in practices of research. The centrality of becoming and continually differentiating make this theory highly applicable to the analysis practiced in this research that focuses on pedagogy and performance creation.

Conclusion

Space presents us with the social in the wildest sense: the challenge of our constitutive interrelatedness – and thus our collective implication in the outcomes of that interrelatedness; the radical contemporaneity of an ongoing multiplicity of others, human and non-human; the ongoing and ever specific project of the practices through which sociality is configured. (Massey, 2005, p. 195)

Literature regarding the fluctuating contemporary suburb contextualizes the school site and the setting of Concord Floral. As researcher, I keep in mind Massey’s (2005) contention that spaces are always under construction. This research demonstrates Massey’s notion of relational space as composed of multiple and simultaneous stories in progress. For Concord Floral, it evolves from its earlier presentation to the later one, and it also changes constantly, even during public performance. At Branch Secondary School, using a practice of place-based performance enacted by those who live close by, the youth performances of suburb manifest the vitality of the land, animal life, and humans as they co-exist in this suburban city. Deleuze’s concepts of the minor and of difference are crucial to the analysis of moments when difference comes into being. Walking performances shed light on the sociality and improvisational character of mobile pedagogical art-making and ethnographic interviewing. Scaffolded by new materialism, humanism is then over-written by a framework for thinking that decentres the human to include the nonhuman, such as objects, land, animals, and birds. This literature review sets the theoretical framework for this research and it offers tools for understanding more fully the youth experience of suburb and how the very notion of suburb may be outdated and in need of erasure. What is needed are new terms that better encompass the contradictions and layers of story that comprise the relational encounters of youth in the contemporary Toronto suburb.
To close this literature review, I would like to quote from one of the two people who first introduced new materialism. Braidotti (2010) adopts an ethical stance towards the future and future generations that she calls “intergenerational justice” (p. 215):

Hope is a sort of "dreaming forward," it is an anticipatory virtue that permeates our lives and activates them. It is a powerful motivating force grounded in our collective imaginings indeed. These collective imaginings express very grounded concerns for the multitude of "anybodies" (homotantum) that compose the human community lest our greed and selfishness destroy or diminish it for generations to come. Given that posterity per definition can never pay us back, this gesture is perfectly gratuitous.

Against the general lethargy, the rhetoric of selfish genes and possessive individualism on the one hand, and the dominant ideology of the melancholic lament on the other, hope rests with an affirmative ethics of sustainable futures, a deep and careless generosity, the ethics of nonprofit at an ontological level.

Why should we pursue this project?

For no reason at all. Reason has nothing to do with this. Let's just do it for the hell of it and the love of the world. (p. 217)
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY: ETHNOGRAPHY AND PLACE

We must follow a double path in politics, (Butler, 2001, p. 23) Butler urges, using familiar terms and categories but also “yielding our most fundamental categories” to what they rend unknown. This is the double(d) science I am calling for, a double task that works the necessary tensions that structure our methodology as fertile ground for the production of new practices. (Lather, 2008, p. 228)

Spatial Ethnography: Participatory, Relational, and Placed

Asking how youth perform the suburb was a way to inquire into youth attitudes regarding the place of the contemporary suburb, where these young people lived and studied. Ethnography seemed well-suited to the task as it demanded a long engagement with place to document the social relations through methods of observational field notes and participant interviews.

In this research, I analyze ethnographically three types of youth performances of suburb. In her work, Gallagher (2008) highlights the productive practice of taking “research into an art frame” (p. 131). In seeking to extend this practice, I was curious to create an arts-infused ethnography, in which I sought to integrate practices of drama and theatre into as many processes of the ethnography as possible. In addition to observing and participating in the drama and theatre as much as I could, drama was integrated into the focus group interviews. With reference to the walking individual interviews, I would argue that there were times when these became small or “minor” performances.

I worked to infuse drama and theatre methods into ethnographic practices to generate multiple modes of data. As both spatial and social arts, drama and theatre were used as a way to work alongside the youth to create what Gallagher (2008) suggests is a “shared reference point” (p. 75). These participatory methods enabled reflection on this shared experience in the subsequent interviews. As the researcher and participant were not strangers to each other, the interviews were arguably less awkward (although never free from the power relations associated with adult/youth and researcher/participant).

This methodological practice was highly relational and charted the multiple relations of youth to youth, youth to teachers, youth to adult artists, youth to me as ethnographer, and youth to nonhuman. Also important ethnographically was the opportunity to observe processes of knowing and coming to know in relation with others. This relational methodology was mobile in the sense that it was not a static process, but it responded to the particulars of the two sites and the participants. Gallagher (2008) calls this a “porous methodology,” that is “driven, often enough, by the explicit and immediate needs of the field” (p. 72). By charting the many relational and responsive aspects of ethnographic practice, this chapter
places particular emphasis on the moments when the ethnography was pedagogical, and conversely, when the pedagogies served the research methodologically.

Pink (2009) suggests that ethnographic relations have to engage the place of the research and she advocates for “a way of ethnographic learning and knowing by which the ethnographer seeks to participate in the emplaced activities of others through her or his own embodied engagements, thus offering an alternative route to ethnographic knowledge” (p. 79). Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997b) also considers the importance of place to methodology and suggests that:

A whole body of literature about place attachment is being researched and theorized (see, for example. Altman & Low, 1992; Blunt & Rose, 1994; Hiss, 1990; Massey, 1994) and perhaps we need to think about our physical as well as our theoretical grounding in our research projects. How are these physical and theoretical sites of knowing related and what are the effects of those relations? (p. 183)

I addressed St. Pierre’s (1997b) provocation by analyzing the materiality of the performances, the video, and the walking interviews as physical sites of knowledge-making. Focusing on physical grounding and site-specificity had implications for all stages of this research – beginning with the design that considered the material aspects of place, the ways that data were collected being mindful of site, and finally, how we integrated a consideration of place into the analysis. Pink and St. Pierre are not the first to feature the importance of place in ethnography, but in underlining its importance, they have productively informed the practices of this research.

To engage place through drama, I turned to Sally Mackey (2007) who describes “place-based” performances that are created in a place well known to the participants. This place-based approach stresses the importance of participants who have resided in the place of the performance because residents would bring their knowledge of the “local” to the work. Site-specificity has been integral to the design and the collection and analysis of data. What this meant was that the encounters under analysis could not be separated from a consideration of the site or place in which they happened.

To spatialize and mobilize the interview, the participant and I walked through the school grounds and neighbouring streets. In the case of Concord Floral, we walked through the streets of downtown Toronto. Together, we videotaped these walks using a hand-held camera that faced outward to avoid filming one another. This generated video data of the landscapes we passed through and documented the chance encounters of our drift. Interviewing while walking outside also provoked questions about the affordances of walking side-by-side as interview practice and how this might differ from interviews conducted face-to-face while seated inside.
As the space and place of the suburb, suburban school, and theatre were the foci of this research, moving in and about those places became necessary in ways that I could not have foreseen at the design stage of the process. This chapter on methodology charts not only the collection of data-on-the-move, but also the moments at which the ethnography itself became mobile in the sense that practices and understandings shifted or, using Deleuzian language, *differenciated* and became different. This analysis considers significant moments in which place was made through various artistic ethnographic practices, and when difference materialized as that which had not been before. To be specific: the ethnographic interview became something different when conducted while walking outside as a kind of shared act of performance. The focus group interviews in the first semester became different when drama was incorporated into them.

“Emplaced” relational pedagogical and methodological encounters occurred when the youth, as participants, and me, as researcher, responded to the unexpected invitations of the nonhuman (Pink, 2009, p. 25). Analyzed in this research are the times at which the participant and I were called to stop and become spectators to a performance given by mushrooms, birds, and butterflies. The active participation of the nonhuman during our walking interviews took strictly coded ethnographic interview practices and slipped them into a mode of performance in which the participant and I became surprised, but willing, spectators.

The collection of data was a vibrant time during which I actively experimented with different combinations of ethnographic and drama/theatre methods. Mapped in the pages that follow, however, are the paths and roadblocks that I encountered as I tried to make sense of the data with evolving conceptualizations of difference held at the forefront of my thinking.

This chapter documents and analyzes how early findings, from an initial engagement with the data and theory, informed subsequent methods and analysis. This early data analysis suggested as much as Branch was a highly multicultural school, there was a pull to sameness and a surprising fear of difference. In thinking about the social relations within the school and about my interest in the ways that difference is or is not assimilated into sameness, I began to recognize the implications for analyzing data that often depend on codes categorized by sameness. I was provoked to ask how I could respect the differences in the data without coding that would reduce difference to sameness? I began to realize that what I was looking for was what Patti Lather (2013) calls a “difference driven analytic” (p. 639).

Educational researchers often describe their work in geographic mapping terms, referring to place both metaphorically and literally. Britzman (1995) offers her writing dilemmas to fellow researchers by asking how one might order stories without normalizing them, “to heighten the detours of experience and
hence gesture toward experience as an unstable construct” (p. 234). Pink (2011) suggests that ethnography is a practice that “seeks routes to understanding the experiences and meanings of other people’s lives through different variations of being with, and doing things with them” (p. 270). This geographic imagery would suggest routes that lead to the destination of ethnographic knowledge. However, I want to stress that these paths of ethnographic learning were not linear. As this chapter will show, these challenges were not quickly resolved, and they provoked a theoretical analysis of coding. Eventually, computer software coding practices were replaced by the circular process of writing, revisiting data and theory, and writing again as a first attempt at diffractive analysis.

At times I felt adrift, or what Lather (2013) would describe as “lost.” She states, “here, perhaps, ‘getting lost’ might exactly be about an accountability to complexity and the political value of not being so sure” (Lather, 2013, p. 642). Although Lather makes a virtue of this lostness, when I was immersed in it, I found it very unsettling.

This methodology chapter will consider theory of methods, the sites and participants, the modes and practices of data collection, the challenging aporias of analysis, and the limitations and implications of this ethnography.

Sites and Participants: Recruitment and Demographics

Site One: Branch Secondary School

Mr. A and I had taught together for a number of years before I attended graduate school. In presenting the idea of the research to him, he seemed particularly interested, as drama and geography were the two subjects he taught at Branch Secondary School. He had been a creative and flexible teaching colleague, and I could see that youth responded well to his teaching approach and low-key demeanor. As he was willing to try a new approach to an already established unit in the dramatic arts program that focused on ritual, he seemed like the ideal teacher for this ethnography. He was curious to see how a new unit on local rituals would work pedagogically and what it might offer to an inquiry into the place of this suburban city of Mississauga.

After receiving ethical approval from the University of Toronto's Office of Research Ethics (August 12, 2011), I began to recruit the youth at Branch on the first day of class when I introduced the research project and explained what it would mean for them to participate. I outlined the various options available to them in terms of consent, and made it clear that their grades would not be affected if they chose not to participate. As well, I clarified that if they chose to withdraw from the research project, there would be no negative consequences.
As was previously described, I had interviewed Tannahill about his earlier site-specific work in suburban Toronto, and when his project, *Concord Floral*, materialized, we talked about my involvement as “collaborative researcher.” I met the other facilitators, Brubacher and Spooner, at the read-through on the first day of rehearsal. After receiving ethical approval from the University of Toronto's Office of Research Ethics (March 6, 2012), I began to recruit for *Concord Floral* on this first day when I introduced the project and distributed consent forms. I explained consent and the various participation options available. The entire group was willing to participate and none withdrew. In the second iteration of *Concord Floral*, there were three new actors, and each consented to the research.

**Participant Information: Grade Ten Drama Classes (Semester One and Semester Two)**

In the first semester class of 28, 14 were girls and 14 were boys. Thirteen of the youth spoke English as their first language. Three were bilingual, and they considered both English and another language equally as their first language. Other first languages were: Vietnamese, Tamil, Mandarin, Cantonese, Bosnian, Albanian, Russian, French and Creole, and Urdu. Youth identified themselves as: 11 White, two Brown, one Hindu, one Trinidadian, one Canadian Jamaican, one European, five Asian, and one bi-racial. Five youth did not identify their race. In terms of class, 16 identified as middle class, one rich, one “little rich,” one upper middle class, two lower middle class, one shifting middle class, and one “don’t worry about money.” Five said it was unknown or did not answer the question. Interestingly, eight of the youth had lived in Toronto previously. Twenty-three youth identified as heterosexual, four did not answer the question, and one identified as bi-sexual. Of those identified as heterosexual, one youth wrote “STRAIGHT” in upper case letters, one said “straight as a ruler,” and another underlined “straight.”

In the second semester, in a class of 26 youth, there were 17 different first languages spoken and 14 second languages. English was identified as a first language for 18 youth and eight identified diverse languages as their first language. Seventeen youth were born in Canada and nine were born outside Canada. There were nine Christians in the class, two Buddhists, two Hindus, three Muslims, two Agnostics, four with no religion, one who did not know, and two who did not answer. There were 20 youth who identified as middle class: one lower middle class, three upper middle class, one poor, and one lower class. In terms of ethnicity, youth identified as: one Azerbaijani, one Hispanic, one West Indian, one Caramel, two Black, one Trinidadian, one Jamaican/Irish, one Jamaican/Scot, one Jamaican/German, one African-Canadian, one Somali/Canadian, one Lebanese/Canadian, one Arab, one Brown (Pakistani), one Brown (Indian), one Indian/Greek, one Chinese/Vietnamese, two Vietnamese, two Chinese, and four White. Of the 26 youth, 11 had previously lived in Toronto, one in Etobicoke and one in Scarborough (other Toronto suburbs). The class was made up of 13 girls and 13 boys with 17 youth who identified as straight, one as “normal/straight,” one as heterosexual, one as “straight as a ruler
(I like girls),” one as “STRAIGHT,” three identified that they liked the opposite sex, one girl wrote straight with a line through it (I was not sure if this was a place of negotiation), and one youth identified as lesbian.

Site Two: Concord Floral Rehearsals at Tarragon Theatre, Videofag, and Theatre Passe Muraille

Participant Information

In the first cast, there were three White youth, one Persian, one Afro-Canadian, two South Asians, and one Egyptian. The second cast self-identified as four White, one Black, one South Asian, one Chinese, one East African, one Persian, and one Ukrainian. Six youth were born in Toronto, one in Scarborough, one in Hamilton, one in Oakville, and one in Malaysia. For most of the youth, they had spent their whole lives in Canada, but one youth had been here for two and a half years. All the youth spoke English as their first language. Other languages spoken were: French, Urdu, Somali, Persian, and a “little Ukranian.” They self-identified as eight straight (heterosexual), one bisexual, and one said, “no one is 100% straight, but sure, straight.” Nine youth identified as middle class and one identified “artist” as her class.

The youth involved ranged from grade nine to grade twelve. I observed differing levels of parental support and different places of origin. In terms of mobility, three youth had lived in other places that including Egypt, Malaysia, Dubai, and Sweden. Two youth had attended five schools while the rest had attended two or three. Another participant had faced a family move more locally, moving from the downtown core to a suburb. As she had attended a downtown Collegiate Institute, she did not feel very attached to the new suburban area. Thinking spatially and geographically, family moves featured in both sites of the research, provoking an analysis of mobility and transience and its relation to the changing nature of globalization and spatial identification.

Referring to the different levels of parental support, one of the factors in that difference was whether or not the youth was living with his/her parents. In the first cast, there was one boy who was living independently, working at a club while his mother lived in Egypt. The rest of the cast lived with their families who would often drop them off and pick them up to take them home. Some youth took public transit, which was a new experience for one particular girl. One Toronto-based boy had a Vespa, which was his 16th birthday present. His father was a musician who was helpful setting up speakers and electric guitars. Most of the parents who lived in and around Toronto attended the performances to support their child.
There were four boys and five girls involved in the first workshop production. Two of the boys were unable to return to the second production and one of the boys was replaced. Two new girls joined the second production replacing one of the girls, who left to film a movie in India. Of these youth, eight were from suburban areas and three attended downtown public secondary schools. One boy from suburban Oakville commuted to the Etobicoke School of the Arts in Toronto. In both the first and second cast, three youth attended specialized magnet fine arts high schools. The rest of the youth attended regular secondary schools in the public school system.

**Theory Of Methods: Drama, Video, Interviews**

The participatory methods chosen for this arts-infused ethnography included dramas (both place-based and ritualized), theatre rehearsals, and walking interviews. At Branch, drama was integrated into focus group interviews in the first semester and served as the vehicle for tough conversations across different groupings in the second semester. At Concord Floral, the focus group interviews were productive when self-conducted and when I was present to ask the questions of my interview protocol. These methods were participatory, and engaged both the researcher and participant in both active “doing” and reflective conversation.

**Participatory Two-Sited Ethnography**

This two-sited ethnography sought to create participatory methods that would engage researcher with the participants through the classroom and rehearsal activities. Gallagher (2008) writes, “using theater as we did, to reframe the research context often meant positioning the researcher as ‘doer’ rather than ‘observer’” (p. 68). The question of participation in this kind of educational ethnography refers to the degree to which a researcher engages with and works with those she/he is hoping to learn more about. Pink (2009) asks that ethnographers consider, “how researchers are themselves entangled in, participate in the production of, and are co-present in the ethnographic place they share with research participants, their materialities and power relations” (p. 33). The way this worked in the classroom was through my joining the drama groups, watching youth work, offering suggestions where I could, and helping with the video that they would be incorporating into their performances. At the Concord Floral site, I was much more of an observer. Although I did offer opinions at times during the rehearsals, I was most engaged in the “downtime,” which was before and after rehearsals and in the breaks. At both sites, the drama and theatre gave a forum into which both the researcher and participant could enter. During the interviews, we could reflect together on this shared drama experience.

At both sites, there were the shared engagements with the drama/theatre, the individual interviews that were walked through local neighbourhoods, and the focus groups that incorporated drama. I suggest that
walking and creating performances together are some examples of participatory processes through which we came to know one another. Over time, I became acquainted with some of the circumstances of the youth’s lives and pieced together a fragmented picture of the suburban contexts in which they lived.

**Interviews**

James Scheurich (1995) challenges the unquestioned procedures or practices of interviewing, transcribing, and interpreting. He suggests that interviewing is a complex process, and that according to a postmodern perspective, an interview cannot seamlessly represent the reality of the interviewee. Scheurich says the interview is really a two-part process, where the first part begins with the interview itself and the second with the interpretation of the interview or data analysis. He argues against the decontextualized interview that is transformed through coding and from which the story of the research is made. He states “the researcher uses the dead, decontextualized monads of meaning, the tightly boundaried containers, the numbing objectifications, to construct generalizations which are, in the modernist dream, used to predict, control and reform” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 241). Instead, he asserts there is a level of complexity and indeterminateness that eludes such tidy analysis as, “interactions and meaning are a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences” (p. 243). He challenges the modernist notion that reality can be known “through careful, comprehensive, systematic study” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 244). He also identifies the performed nature of interview interactions by saying, “a participant may be saying what she thinks she ought to say; in fact, much of the interaction may be infused with a shift between performed or censured statements and unperformed and uncensored statements” (p. 244).

Of particular interest to the themes of this research is Scheurich’s (1995) contention that the modernist interview process reduces the different to the same, where “the Other (interviewee) is reduced and refashioned to fit the modernist prison of the Same (the researcher’s project)” (p. 246). While he does not deny the power differential in the research interview relationship, he suggests that there is something that exceeds the binary of domination/resistance. According to Scheurich, the many factors that could influence interviews include other research pursuits, the disciplines from which we come, “epistemological inclinations,” “institutional imperatives,” “conceptual schemes about storytelling,” “social positionality,” “macrocultural frames,” and “individual idiosyncracies” (p. 249). If the interview could be a place of experimentation as Scheurich suggests, then indeterminacy should be highlighted, rather than ignored. In my research, there was a sense of experimentation in the walking interviews, but this evolved over time. Another experiment was the on-the-spot decision to start an impromptu focus group interview in class in response to a moment of intensity that required discussion.
Pink (2009) considers the importance of the materiality of the environment in the ethnographic interview, where “the talk of an interview is not simply performative and embodied, but that it is more fully situated in that it is an emplaced activity that engages not only the performative body but the sensing body in relation to its total environment” (Pink, 2009, p. 84). Pink’s interpretation would suggest that the interview would be both relational and responsive to particular bodies in particular places. Pink (2009) stresses the sensory activity and the importance of the environment of the interview whether walking or seated:

Throughout interviews, whether sitting, standing, or moving, both ethnographer and research participants continue to be active participants in their environments, using their whole bodies, all their senses, available props and the ground under their feet, to narrate, perform, communicate and represent their experience. (p. 85)

Pink (2009) also considers the interview as more than just talk between people. She has reconceptualized it as a multisensory event and as a “process through which we might learn (in multiple ways) about how research participants represent and categorize their experiences, values, moralities, other people and things (and more) by attending to their treatments of the senses” (p. 81). In both sites of the research the place of the interview and its multisensory qualities were important. As well, in some of the focus groups, the youth discussed the importance of their affective relations to the making of place.

**Drama Used Methodologically**

The drama and video methods were connected in the sense that the records of the drama in both the school and Concord Floral sites were videorecordings. Not all the content of the video was drama, but all the drama was videotaped. This separation of the video from the drama methods was misleading because the two were intertwined. I will discuss this overlap and integration of the two methods later in the chapter. To supplement the video, I also took field notes and made audiotapes of the rehearsals.

Drama used as data was central to this ethnography and I drew heavily from Gallagher’s (2007) experiments using improvisation with youth participants as a means to explore their experiences of surveillance in urban schools. Gallagher (2007) argues, however, that drama is not just another form of data, but that it creates the means to participate in the work of youth alongside them. According to Gallagher, this approach helps to facilitate qualitatively different kinds of conversations in individual and focus group interviews. Drama, then, could shift the methodological process and heighten the relational potential between the researcher and participant, and in turn, strengthen other aspects of ethnographic data creation and co-created knowledge building. According to Gallagher (2007), drama elicits different kinds of stories while also providing an activity in which both the researcher and the participants can...
participate. As she says “we conducted participatory research with the youth in this study because we understood one of the primary tenets of drama itself as a research methodology to be that the fictional, active, and even unconscious world of the drama elicits understandings and utterances that would otherwise be inaccessible” (p. 128).

**Performed Place-Based Ritual as Drama Method**

At both sites, there were rituals observed inside the frame of the drama and theatre work, and outside the frame in the social spaces of the school and rehearsal hall. At the school site, the rituals of schooling, which the youth enacted in the spaces of the school and school grounds where they originally occurred, were highly instructional, familiarizing me with the socio-spatial context of the school. Although I had been a teacher at Branch for eight years and had completed my Master’s research at this site, I knew little about the initiation rituals, the ritualized nature of school fights, or the territorial tensions.

For Concord Floral, depicted inside the frame of the play were the rituals of the field party and the ritual of revenge. The social rituals outside the frame of the play included eating/snacking together, daily “check-ins,” and doing homework.

The focus on rituals in school came about as a way to extend the existing grade ten drama curriculum. In the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines, there are specific expectations that refer to ritual (in the particular context of ancient Greece) and in the grade ten program at Branch, there was an existing unit on ancient ritual. Mr. A and I altered this unit to make it more contemporary and relevant to the lives of the youth while also serving the purposes of the research. We asked the youth to produce rituals built from their experiences at school and in this local pocket of suburb. Methodologically, we sought to understand the everyday, to analyze what had become normative and accepted for youth in the coded practices of schooling, and what this might say about youth attitudes to diversity.

We used a loose definition of ritual to guide this work and specified that these rituals would focus on a life transition after which the person involved would be changed. Our approach proved to be very productive because the youth created rituals of socio-spatial exclusions, including the power dynamics of space. Documented were rituals of fights, conflicts over territory in the school hallways, tensions regarding gender relations, the consumer ritual of prom, exclusions of unsupervised sports, initiation, and dating rituals. Also enacted were ritualized family meals, disordered eating, car rides, and amusement parks.

We used the term ritual to mean an event or a turning point in a person’s life. The youth may have understood this as an expectation for resolution as they frequently presented moral or happy endings. It
would have been useful to offer Victor Turner’s (1982) concept of “social dramas,” which he breaks down into four stages: “breach, crisis, redress, and either reintegration or recognition of schism” (p. 61). Had we discussed the range of possible outcomes of the ritual, (including Turner’s two outcomes, integration or non assimilation) the endings might not have been so predictable. I offer this not as a critique of the youth-performed rituals, but as a shortcoming in our framing of the notion of ritual and our instructions guiding their drama work. This merits mention here because the way the pedagogy was framed influenced the kind of drama data that we collected. This was one instance of the pedagogy affecting the methodology.  

At the site of Concord Floral, there were four aspects to the rituals observed. These were: the rituals to prepare the youth ensemble for rehearsal, the ritual of rehearsal, the rituals depicted within the frame of the play, and the social rituals outside the frame of the play. The first of these social rituals were the check-ins and check-outs that opened and closed every rehearsal. As well, there were warm up rituals and singing that brought the cast together, readying them for the aesthetic and collective work ahead. The rituals within the frame of the play included the ritual of the field party during which local boys violated a girl, and the ritual of revenge enacted by the girl’s friend as she sought redress from the guilty boys as a form of justice. In one focus group interview in particular, the youth and I spent a long time discussing the ritual of the field party and the sexual assault that was the central incident of the play. The play as a whole could be interpreted as a ritual of revenge, or avenging an injustice as outlined by Turner, because:

social drama form occurs on all levels of social organization from state to family. A social drama is initiated when the peaceful tenor of regular, norm-governed social life is interrupted by the breach of a rule controlling one of its salient relationships. (p. 92)

These rituals will be analyzed more fully in the findings but using ritual methodologically generated important drama data and Turner’s theories on ritual offer a means to analyze the broader social relations present in both the school and rehearsal sites.

13 Turner’s (1982) notion of “star-groupers,” or those who issue the redress is also relevant to the social ritual outside the frame of the drama class work (p. 69). In the “social drama” of the second semester class, I would argue that the “star groupers” were redressing those in the class who were not aligning with their notion of a good drama class. This conflict will be discussed in more detail in the findings but it merits mention here because Turner’s concepts of social drama and star groupers bear relation to the rituals (both depicted in the drama and outside the drama in the social domain of the class).

14 The other aspect of Turner’s “social drama” I found relevant here was its reflexive quality. He states, “since social dramas suspend normal everyday role playing, they interrupt the flow of social life and force a group to take
Sally Mackey (2007) observes that place-based work differs from some site-specific work, in that the people involved have a deep knowledge of the place. In her research inquiring into *Feast*, she documents a year-long project intended to explore the urban, both politically and poetically. Situated in two south London allotments, the project involved the growing of food and several performance celebrations culminating in a 400-person “performed feast” (Mackey, 2007, p. 182). Here, she inquires into the ways that a performance of place could contribute to an understanding of place and “what function performance can have in demonstrating place” (Mackey, 2007, p. 181). She describes the performance as breaking down the boundaries of “day and night, childhood and adulthood” (Mackey, 2007, p. 187) and this acted as a disruption of the usual. About this performance, she states:

> this reviewing of a known and tended place appeared to change the assumptions and perceptions of those usually inhabiting the space. This re-envisioning of the everyday stands as one part of an unfolding assemblage of performing place that I am suggesting: to perform place is to reframe the familiar tangentially (Mackey, 2007, p. 187).

Methodologically, Mackey’s work has informed my research because this project also looked to understand the everyday of schooling, which had also been taken for granted. Mackey’s articulation of the process as one of reframing “the familiar tangentially” is a particularly apt description of the drama practices I used in this research.

**Walking**

The walking interview was an activity in which the participant and I both engaged, although the agenda of questions was mine alone. As will be discussed in the findings later, my agenda was interrupted by unexpected encounters. To discuss the methodological affordances of walking to individual interviews, I turn to other dedicated walkers and ethnographers who have used walking in their practices. Solnit (2000) suggests “one would expect that postmodern theory would have much to say about walking, given that mobility and corporeality have been among its major themes – and when corporeality gets mobile, it walks” (p. 27). According to Pink (2009), walking has enhanced the relational capacities of ethnography cognizance of its own behavior in relation to its own values, even to question at times the value of those values. In other words, dramas induce and contain reflexive processes and generate cultural frames in which reflexivity can find a legitimate place” (Turner, 1982, p. 92). This framework had relevance to the story of *Concord Floral* and to the social tensions that erupted in the second semester at Branch. The social drama was so intense that the youth confronted each other (through the guise of the focus group interview) to consider their conflicting values and perceived exclusivities.
because it is “the idea that walking with others – sharing their step, style and rhythm – [that]
creates an affinity, empathy, sense of belonging with them has long since been acknowledged by
ethnographers” (p. 76). As well as developing affinity, Pink (2009) identifies the common experience
created between participant and researcher, where “by walking with someone, it is thus possible to learn
to inhabit a similar place to them, although as I have pointed out for any ‘shared experience’, here again
similarity does not mean sameness” (Pink, 2009, p. 77).

Bradby and Lavery (2007), whose shared experience of walking was discussed in the chapter reviewing
relevant literature, also comment on the different speeds and differing amounts of talk in a walk. They
remark on the differing affective states experienced while walking. In response to Lavery’s (2007)
comment about feeling like he was moving into a different frame of mind, he writes that he thinks he is
becoming “enchanted” (p. 47). He suggests something that I found quite remarkable – that he and
Bradby were audience to the performing city. He provocatively closes his letter by asking, “if there is a
way of seeing both city and ourselves as performers?” (p. 48).

Lavery (2007) draws on Lefebvre (2004) to suggest that the “city articulates itself through rhythms”
(Lavery, 2007, p. 49). This idea suggests to me that place – the suburb in my research and the city in
Lebevbre’s case – was alive and wishing to articulate itself. The methodological significance here shows
how ethnographic practice shifts from focusing on hunting for clues regarding a static suburb to a
practice that develops in relation to the suburb now regarded as something alive and agentic. As the
participant and I witnessed the suburb’s performance of itself through mushrooms, birds, and butterflies,
the place of the suburb was no longer the passive setting to our walking interview, but an active
participant. This active participant offered new sources of data to the research. As Amanda Rogers
(2012) suggests, “such performances thus imaginatively re-construct urban space and provide
opportunities for unexpected meetings or encounters” (p. 69). I conclude that this is a very different
ethnography than one that used performance as “a window onto geography” and instead, ethnographic
performances create suburban space and as Rogers suggests, “geography remains integral to the material
event of performance” (p. 71). Pink asks a provocative question (2009), “given that places are
continually constituted, rather than fixed, then how can we understand the role of the emplaced
ethnographer as a participant in and eventually author of the places she or he studies?” (p. 30). What I
suggest later in my analysis is that the ethnographer no longer tries to learn what something is, instead
tries to learn what processes do.

Methodologically, the classroom drama, rehearsals of Concord Floral, and the “performance” of the
nonhuman asked that the participants and I be spectators for one another, listening and absorbing,
realigning the traditional roles of researcher and participant. Between us, place was created as we walked
and reflected on what had been performed. These dramas were as much about place as they were place-creating. This double utility of drama provided data for the research, but it also provided the youth with the opportunity to create a place for themselves in the suburban streets as they walked, and in the school hallways during class time, where they were not necessarily welcome. For the Concord Floral youth, they were an active presence in theatres geared to adults, not young people. Secondly, they created important relational space as they moved from suburb to city on public transit. Drawing on Massumi’s (2011) notion of “reconstructive architecture,” these youth, through their artistic practices and social relations, inhabited the existing architecture of the suburb and city differently (p. 102).

As Bradby and Lavery’s (2007) article incited me more reading on walking practices and their intersections with performance; I began to sense that one methodology might be sliding into another. Looking at the performative aspects of walking with another person, both alert to the environment and the encounters with the nonhuman, I began to see how the interview could become a kind of performance, and therefore, another kind of performance of suburb I had not previously considered. Lather (2013) suggests about these instances in which an event pushes open the very categories that try to contain it “here, a new kind of object comes to attention, an object ‘pulled out of shape by its framings’ and, equally importantly, ‘framings pulled out of shape by the object’” (p. 639). When the interview provoked a new kind of framing as performance, I was curious to learn how the codified practice of ethnographic interview might open.15

**Data Collection**

To describe the details of the actual practices of data collection, I will now consider the ethnographic methods of drama, video, observational field notes, and interview methods that fluctuated in response to the participants, the variety of opportunities available, and the material agency of the sites.

**Place-Based Rituals of Schooling and Scripted Play**

Inspired by Mackey (2007), the place-based performances at Branch created drama data from which to learn about youth experiences of the suburb. To create the place-based performances of ritual, the youth began by touring the school looking for the places where they had experienced emotional “cold” and

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15 Bradby and Lavery (2007) associate walking practice with affect, and here I mention the affect that motivated me to experiment with integrating walking into the interviews. Methodologically, it was a practice that I experimented with partly because I wanted to explore the places of the school intentionally and relationally with the youth, but partly because I was restless having to sit for such long periods of time in the classroom and rehearsal hall.
“hot spots,” as well as the places where they had seen power enacted either positively or negatively.\textsuperscript{16} At the end of the tour, the youth returned to the classroom. There, on an enlarged map of the school, they placed red dots on the places where they had felt happy and blue dots to mark the places where they had felt sad or disturbed. In addition, they wrote their stories of power relations they had witnessed in the school on Post-it-Notes and attached them to the map in the space outside the school perimeter. Posting them on the edge of the school map kept them from obscuring the clusters of red and blue dots that had already been placed on the map. Using this tour through the school and their recollection of previous encounters as research, the youth built their place-based school rituals in small groups. Asking the youth to create dramatized rituals of schooling created a source of data about the social relations found outside the classroom in the halls, cafeteria, bathrooms, and school grounds.

The culminating project in this unit asked the youth to incorporate both video and mask into the performed rituals. Some of the youth used video to create a setting for their ritual while others used it to tell part of their dramatized story. The video was integral to some of the performances and quite peripheral to others.

At the \textit{Concord Floral} site, the drama data were collected differently because of the different nature of the work. The youth rehearsed a scripted play that was instructive as it demonstrated the negotiations of spatial relations, including both the social and aesthetic. Rogers (2010) emphasizes the openness of scripted work and states:

scripts also create multiple meanings, emotional effects, and transgressive potentials according to their performative context. Whilst scripts do not enable a form of free play in their discursive enactment, they do mediate ideas and embodied responses that alter their identity forming and interpretive possibilities. (p. 70)

Working with the script as the basis for the daily rehearsals, I observed the aesthetic choices and the negotiations between the artistic team and the youth. I also collected data from observational time backstage and from the youth-facilitated post-show talk-backs with the audience.

The third performance happened on the school site when the participants and I were engaged as spectators in the encounter with the nonhumans. All three performances generated valuable data as the youth simultaneously authored or created place through their different modes of engagement. In these

three performances of suburb, I could see what Massey (2005) calls a “multiplicity of trajectories” (p. 63) and ethnographic “stories-so-far” (p. 9). In my analysis, I do not compare the performances or look for the ways that they are the same; rather, in recognizing their uniqueness, I analyze them for their different contributions to conceptualizing youth living in the suburbs.

**Interview: Relational and Mobile**

Nairn, Munro, and Smith (2005) draw on Wanda Pillow (2003) to describe their poststructural interviews as “uncomfortable,” in the sense that they seek to know while recognizing that their knowing is “tenuous” (p. 222). They stress the importance of trying to “interrogate who we are in relation to those we study” (p. 223). In drawing attention to the body and embodiment of the researcher, they, like Schuerich (1995), try to tease out the assumptions and prior learning at play in the interview. They understand it is not possible to be conscious of all the ways physical presence and embodied interviewers can be read by those they interview. Unlike these researchers, I did not depend on local teachers to recommend youth for participation. By the time I was ready to interview, I had already spent months in the classroom working on drama alongside the teacher and youth. We were not strangers, and as much as I encountered times in the interviews when I felt that they were being performed and that the interviewees were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear, we were entering into the interview with some investment in the research relationship. I would not say that we had established a safe space of any sort because in classrooms, trust and safety may be elusive and, as Nicholson (2002) suggests, they need to be negotiated again and again. Any one-on-one conversation with a teacher or adult in a position of power always has the potential to be uncomfortable at a certain level, but it was an advantage that we were not entering into the interviews “cold” as our first contact.

At the site of the school, because the school grounds were relatively deserted, the youth were not really visible to other youth as we walked and talked. In the Concord Floral site, as there were few places in the rehearsal halls and theatres in which to interview youth out of sight of the other youth, walking outside provided a place to talk without being overheard. Walking with an adult could have made the participant feel uncomfortable, and although nothing of this sort was expressed, I have no way of knowing if a walking interview created more stress or discomfort than a seated one inside.

Nairn et al. (2005) provide an example suggesting the importance of moving out of highly coded spaces in the school to improve the quality of interview exchange. They describe a stilted interview conducted in the school office that qualitatively changes once the youth start to move through the school. With the youth in charge, the conversation starts to flow more smoothly. This suggests interviews can change once the participants move out of those spaces that are often highly encoded with power; once the
interview becomes mobile, the relations with participants can shift. Such strategies cast youth in the role of “place expert” and researchers in the role of learner. What Nairn et al. suggest is that the moving interview is important, but also they point to the need to negotiate the roles within the interview. Nairn et al. drew on Reinhartz who suggests that “if you want to listen to a particular group, you have to go and hear them in their space, on their terms, and the interview comes a little closer to this goal when the youth initiate their own process of conveying information about their school” (as cited in Nairn et al., 2005, p. 235).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that an interview is a “conversation with a purpose” (1985, p. 268, as cited in Schuerich, 1995, p. 240). The degree to which a conversation had purpose varied in the walking interviews conducted in this research. I would start with my interview protocol, but often the interview would head in a different direction, initiating an improvised exchange. During the so-called interruptions in the nonhuman encounters, the purpose of the walking interviews was suspended. At these moments, the interview shifted, and I was no longer leading it. Both of us, participant and researcher, kept the interview going as we observed the nonhuman participants becoming active in the relational exchange. This will be discussed in greater detail in the findings chapter, but these incidents deserve mention here because methodologically, they were important to the kinds of data that were collected. This also shifted the power relations of the interview practice and altered the ways that we could come to know this suburban environment.

To illustrate the kind of disruptions we encountered, I offer an example and show its importance to researcher/participant co-creation of knowledge. The youth participant, Anna (English language, Canadian/Jamaican, middle class, heterosexual), had chosen to walk through a particular stand of trees without a clear idea of what she would find there. Our “coming upon” the mushrooms took the interview from something I controlled with my prepared questions to a suspension of the agenda in this unexpected encounter. The affective intensity of our elation increased the moment we started to recognize the extent to which the mushrooms had spread over the ground. In the moment of seeing the mushrooms, we were both learning “in and as part of the world” (Pink, 2007, p. 270). The interview moved from what Pink (2007) describes as a data collecting exercise to a “shared conversation through which new ways of knowing are produced” (p. 271). Although I cannot account for the learning of the participant, I not only learned about what grows on the school grounds in November, but I also learned that the relational quality of our formal interview had the capacity to become different and that the pleasures of the uncanny and the unexpected were opportunities for learning. Perhaps we were experiencing what Pink (2007) has described as, “producing knowledge with others, in movement and through engagement with a material, sensory and social environment” (p. 272).
I would like to switch focus from the school site to the Concord Floral site, where many of the individual interviews happened in the hallways and stairwells of the theatre, or outside in the sun-filled courtyard at Canadian Stage. These interviews were partially successful as we reflected on the social dynamics and content of the emerging play and play processes, but it was unclear for me what I should be asking. I did not see clearly how Concord Floral fit with the school site. Thinking that the common link might be a pedagogical one – that the rehearsal hall and the drama classroom were both sites of pedagogy – I ended up asking questions as to how the work done in the rehearsal hall was the same or different than the work that they would do in classrooms. The answers were interesting, but not particularly engaging or unpredictable. Although I had a prepared set of questions, during these interviews, I was trying to formulate what it was that I really wanted to ask.

One exception to this was the interview with Norah Alexic (English, French, Urdu, straight, South Asian, middle class), who was both a student at Branch and an actor in Concord Floral. Her interview was very productive in that it offered data that put the two sites into relation as she reflected on the events in the play and made associations with the local context of Mississauga. A second exception worth noting was the use of the interview as a means of defusing some social tension in the site of Concord Floral. Some of the youth had become frustrated with one of the actors, and so to mitigate his interference in their social time, I engaged him in an individual interview.

Focus Group Interviews

Returning to the notion of interview as a conversation with a purpose, conversation in the first semester focus groups followed several drama activities designed for youth to explore what it meant to live in the suburb in the present and to compare their lives to historic images of the nuclear suburban family. In the second semester, the focus groups were designed to provoke discussion about the social tensions within the class.

I integrated drama into the focus group interviews in the first semester. Instead of talking with the youth, I had them engage with the subject of “youth living in the suburbs” through various genres of drama that included improvisation and small acts of devising. As already mentioned, Gallagher (2007) demonstrates in her own work, “the research entered the art frame” and in this case, dramatic arts entered the research frame (p. 131). The work began with getting youth to stand somewhere on a continuum as they considered notions of race, class, and gender. In response to some of the early interviews with the youth in which the notion of “cool” had surfaced as a category of power, I organized an activity for them to try

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These pseudonyms were chosen by the youth and the identifiers were self-identified.
to articulate what cool was and why it wielded power. I asked them to create an instructional manual on how to be a Mississauga youth.

Projected on the wall of the classroom were historical photographs of the suburb depicting it as White, middle class, and heteronormative. In response to that image, one youth remarked, “I don’t know anyone like that.” The youth then created dramatized counter-stories that challenged this mythic and outdated image of the suburb. In contrast to the photograph, the dramatized scenes presented families that were struggling with unspecified tensions between parents and their teenage children. After looking at each other’s work, the youth discussed its relation to the context of Mississauga. While the group was eating pizza, Mr. A asked about what part of their identities the suburb comprised. There were parts of the suburb the youth claimed were comfortable and other parts they feared to visit at night because they considered these streets dangerous and best to be avoided.

There was a delight or giddiness in being together, and one of the more reluctant youth left the room calling over her shoulder saying she loved the topic. I was struck by how her engagement had grown. When she was asked to use drama to explore her own life, she had become much more enthusiastic than in some of the previous classes. Another youth said, “best after-school ever.” This was a highly relational activity in which the youth were most willing to talk to each other. Mr. A’s presence was an asset in this work, as the youth were clearly fond of him and their affective bond was palpable. This group, however, cannot be taken as representational of the class as a whole, as these were youth who were willing to stay after school, and this self-selecting group did not include those for whom school and drama were not enjoyable. This meant many voices were missing from this discussion. Nevertheless, this encounter through drama offered so much in terms of ethnographic learning about the youth and their suburb. The youth learned from each other as they planned the drama and discussed with each other what they had created. The food was also significant in the way it extended the discussion. The ritual of eating together in both sites, the school and Concord Floral, cannot be overemphasized. The presence of food enhanced conversations and fostered an atmosphere of camaraderie. These experiments effectively fused drama and focus groups, therefore creating hybridized methods that were particularly informative.

During the second semester, the class formation was very different from the first class and some acute social tensions were percolating. In response to this different class, I did not use drama activities in the focus group interviews, but gave the two groups video cameras to record the conversations that followed a set of questions I had posted on the blackboard. The questions were intended as a starting point for the discussion in groups without either the teacher or me present. One group then engaged the other, and with a certain level of discomfort, they made known their issues of relational concern. The intensity of
this discussion carried over into a debriefing session, largely facilitated by the teacher Mr. A, who probed the youth about their differences and the divisive social relations within the class.

These leaderless discussion groups generated important content regarding difference and exclusivity. Gallagher (2007) describes getting her research participants to design their own questions in order to create co-investigators of them. She says, “our persistent interests in engaging our youth as co-investigators in this inquiry compelled us to invite them to devise their own final interview protocols” (p. 177). Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007) in their book, *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, suggest this format of a leaderless discussion group fosters social relations they consider to be more important than the content of the discussion. In my research, the leaderless conversations served a purpose other than just group building. For example, one particular group was challenged on their insularity and exclusivity. Another aspect of talking across difference in these focus groups was one boy’s shocked recognition that one of the girls in the class was lesbian. Both of these incidents will be analyzed in further detail in the findings chapter but methodologically, these leaderless focus groups created affectively-charged discussions about difference and social division. At the site of *Concord Floral*, I experimented with youth-led groups who talked to each other on their lunch break. Although one group answered the questions with considerable engagement and good humour, one boy dominated the other group while another student, a girl in the group, remained largely silent.

The drama methods were very different at the *Concord Floral* site, and here I mostly observed the rehearsals. There were no groups into which I could move and participate in the way I had in the classroom. However, I would argue that my participation happened in other ways, creating social relations that fed the ethnographic interviews productively. This is relevant to the methodology because when we entered into interviews together, I had already spent a considerable amount of time with the youth in break times, and most importantly, in the check-ins and check-outs.  

In the course of the rehearsals, I offered ideas from time to time, and the artistic team occasionally looked for my opinion, but for most of the time, I observed. As soon as the rehearsal broke, however, I would conduct focus groups and individual interviews in either the sitting room of the theatre, or on one occasion, walking through the neighbourhood where the theatre was located. As time was short in these breaks, the interviews I completed were site-specific, in the sense that they were conducted in the lobbies, sitting rooms, hallways, and stairwells of the theatres. They were also site-specific because I

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18 At the beginning of every rehearsal, the cast and artistic team and I would gather in a circle and talk about what was of significance about our day. The content of these conversations is confidential and forms no part of the research other than its description as an important relational ritual that opened and closed rehearsals.
would ask questions about the specifics of the site, and how the givens of the rooms and rehearsal spaces affected them and the social relations between them. I also asked how their social relations created place.

Following the interviews, I would generate interview questions I wanted to ask the youth as follow up, building on what they had said in their initial, longer interviews. One follow-up answer came to me in the form of a text message that Kiara (English first language; female; Black; no one is 100% straight but sure, straight; artist class) sent to me from the suburban bus stop where she had been waiting for 45 minutes and wanted me to know about it. This communication initiated by Kiara demonstrated her engagement in the research because it was important for her to tell me about the wait times she faced on her trip home on public transit.

There is one final aspect of the Concord Floral focus group interviews that needs to be addressed. Given that the relations among the youth were largely affirmative, I suspected this social connection enhanced the focus groups. The Concord Floral focus group interviews were more engaging than the individual interviews on a number of levels. Particularly informative was the focus group interview held between the shows on the last day of the performances. This will be analyzed in more detail in the findings chapter, but what was significant methodologically, was that the interview acted as a place of pedagogy where we discussed the violence within the frame of the play. This then affected the performance of one of the actors that evening, and it acts as an example of the intersection of pedagogy and the aesthetic choices made possible through ethnographic focus groups.

**Video**

As requested by the school principal, to avoid disrupting classes, I conducted individual interviews with youth during the lunch hour. As we walked to places of interest in the school grounds, the route was videorecorded. Video was used in multiple ways in both semesters. As was already described, the youth filmed the classroom presentations and the walking interviews through the school grounds and adjoining neighbourhood. Video was incorporated into their culminating ritual drama project and a Speaker’s Corner camera was set up in the classroom with a question to invite youth replies. 19

The video camera in the walking interviews did not focus on the youth, but was focused outwardly on the neighbourhood and school grounds. As well, on sunny days, the youth filmed the shadows of the researcher and participant, the neighbourhood streets, and the biodiversity of the school grounds. The

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19 Speaker’s Corner was a City TV series composed of video clips the public recorded in a store-front booth located on Queen St. West in Toronto.
video created a kind of moving portrait of the suburban neighbourhood. Without the camera focused on the face and body of the participant, some chance footage was created that documented the rhythm of youth feet in the act of walking. These small hand-held cameras did not produce polished or smooth quality video. It shifted and lurched as the youth videotaped while in motion. This created a record of the embodied nature of both walking and the practices of ethnographic documentation. Although this was not discussed with the youth, the outward focus of the camera was an attempt to make them feel more comfortable in the conversation and less the object of study. The disadvantage of choosing not to focus the camera squarely on the participant was that there was little opportunity to return to the gestures and embodied expression at a later time, and so, this whole vocabulary was lost.

Although I tried to experiment with different ways to record the movement of bodies in rehearsal, they were cumbersome and, in the end, video was the best method I could find. During the rehearsals of *Concord Floral*, I experimented with other methods of recording movement through space. I researched Laban movement notation, but it was too static and labour intensive. I experimented with following youth as they moved through the space of the rehearsal hall, my pen mimicking their route on my page. My pen moved as the youth moved, but all this created was a tangle of penned scratchings. Videorecording movement was important for several reasons. It showed who was marginalized in space and for how long, it showed the embodied nature of drama and performance, and it was crucial to my understandings of space as relational and undergoing constant change. It also provided a record of the developing spatial literacies the youth were acquiring and the importance of space to dramatized storytelling.

Sarah Pink (2003) suggests that when video is created, knowledge has been created. According to her, knowledge is not created later in analysis but in the video creation, “engaging with the visual not simply as a mode of recording data or illustrating text, but as the medium through which new knowledge and critiques may be created” (Pink, 2007, p. 13). There are three aspects of this statement that deserve consideration. First, the creation of the video acts as a form of knowledge-making. Second, as the video is made, the researcher shapes the data by making analytical choices moment-to-moment. As the data are being collected, the researcher attends to what is of interest to the inquiry, what is surprising, and what was not known before. In the moment, there are specific decisions pertaining to the participant, as well as, the necessary response to the environment that include avoiding puddles, approaching animals, and wind.

The analysis that happens in the moment of data collection shapes the creation of the data. This is important for two reasons. It disrupts the neat sequencing of data collection and analysis in that there is some analysis that goes into the framing of the data creation as it is being created. The data cannot be
considered unmediated as they were shaped in the moment of their creation. The third aspect of Pink’s quote deserving consideration is that videotaping also documents the moments when knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and the participant. This means the video is a form of knowledge in itself, mediates the data, and also documents the co-creation of knowledge. An example of the latter happened when one of the youth who had written STRAIGHT on his sheet of identifiers was able to imagine, in this walking interview, the difficulty of approaching someone of the same sex in the context of the school. He was thinking aloud in the interview, and this knowledge-in-the-making about sexual orientation was documented by the video.

Video’s capacity to chart the passing of time produced another significant contribution to the research. Every few days, through all the seasons I was at Branch, I would take a short video of the apple tree growing on the side lawn of the school. This tree featured in the youth performances of ritual, and it also became a marker of time and seasonal change. One morning, I arrived at the school to see that the tree had been cut down leaving only a stump behind. I was shocked and recognized my own attachment to that particular tree. I could have spent time explaining what I saw in rich written description, but in the whirlwind of classroom life, the tight scheduling of interviews, and my long commute, there was not a lot of time to sit and write. The video had a certain efficiency that writing did not, and for this reason, I depended on it to document the passage of time and also my affective attachment to the materiality of the school site.

Gallagher and Kim (2008) suggest that broadening the ways that youth make use of the camera is important as it distributes the power relations and widens the “aesthetic and knowledge producing sphere of the research” (p. 109). At the Branch site, I tried using a kind of Speaker’s Corner by setting up a video camera at one end of the classroom with a question attached to it.\textsuperscript{20} The youth could film one another at an appropriate or convenient time during the class. I asked for jokes about Mississauga, what would be one thing they would change about the school if they could, and if they had $5,000, how would they spend that money. This format generated data that engaged their humour, imagination, and lateral thinking skills in ways that were different from the interviews. There is a freshness to these sequences and a bold awareness that they were performing. One of the advantages of the Speaker’s Corner was that it could be done in class time and was not relegated to a lunch break when only the most dedicated drama youth would attend.

\textsuperscript{20} Andrew Kushnir from Toronto theatre company, Project: Humanity, offered this suggestion to me. He had written a verbatim play, \textit{The Middle Place}, based on interviews videorecorded with youth.
There were also times when youth contributed to the video data without being asked. On one occasion, a youth, on a whim, picked up the camera and created footage that was intentionally made blurry by moving it back and forth very quickly. A second example shows footage of one youth chasing another with a feather duster through the space of the classroom. In this case, the camera, operated by a youth, gave another frame to the activities of the drama classroom I had missed as I circulated through the groups participating in the creation of their drama work. These small hand-held video cameras were unintimidating and could be picked up easily by the youth. Although I did not solicit these youth-created videos, they showed some of the playful simultaneous stories that comprised the space of the classroom.

Video was an important part of *Concord Floral* as the youth on the stage often acted in front of projections that established the location of the scene. At other times, a projection was focused on the actor directly. This video was created by a professional videographer and was integral to the performed piece. Some of this video footage was taped when the cast had the opportunity to visit the real site of Concord Floral. When we arrived at the site of once extensive greenhouses, however, we found it was being demolished to clear the ground for new condominium construction. We watched the cranes and bulldozers noisily destroy what we had come to see. Tannahill’s videographer, Sam Lebel-Wong, filmed the destruction, while I filmed how the youth and the artistic collaborators reacted to these unexpected events. I filmed the videographer filming, but we were both filming for different purposes. The videographer’s video would be projected onto the youth actors in performance while my video footage was used to document the social relations and the youth encounter with the material conditions of the “real” place of *Concord Floral*.

My other ethnographic video from the *Concord Floral* site included the filming of a walking focus group interview, individual interviews, rehearsals, notes after runs, social activities in the Theatre Passe Muraille greenroom, and the youth-led post-performance talk-backs during which the audience asked questions of the actors.

Pink (2007) suggests that the positionality of the ethnographer/videographer needs to be analyzed and advocates the placement of the researcher in the frame of the camera (p. 27). This positioning of the researcher visibly in the frame of the video is relevant to the times when I videotaped my shadow, when I video-recorded my field notes, and when I used video to document my ethnographic practice as a kind of metadata.

On the laptop on which I was recording my field notes, I used the recording function to audio record some of the rehearsal conversations. I did not expect that the sound of my typing on the keyboard could also be heard. This practice actively wove the ethnographic processes of creating data with the aesthetic
and social processes of rehearsal. Provoked by this experience, I started to film my pen on the page as I took field notes by hand and my attempts to visually map the movement of the youth through space. Filming my own ethnographic practices made the processes visible as data. As well, this video documented my embodied presence and the relational encounter of the researcher to the data as they were being recorded. My presence, as researcher, was palpable; it was not invisible or silent. As Frankham and Smears (2012) suggest, “getting involved, then, is not only unavoidable but plays an essential part in helping us to acknowledge how we are a part of what we are trying to understand” (p. 367).

Chance was involved in filming: what you happened to see, what you happened to miss, and what you will never know that you missed. Not everything was videotaped, and as a result, memory had to act as an equally important archive for the events that transpired. While there is no device for a full capture of all the dimensions of relational space, it was the affective intensity of memory that helped to nuance aspects of relational space that were not filmed.

**Theories for Analysis**

**Aporia and Getting Stalled**

With Deleuze and Guattari, difference does not exist in opposition to sameness; rather, difference is immanent to sameness. In other words, while becoming is directional (away from sameness), the movement creates something unique and particular *within* that would render the entire category imperceptible. Becoming, then, is immanent to (not outside of) the social field to which it applies. (Jackson, 2013, p. 115)

In creating what Fine and Weis (1996) call “writing stories,” I offer an account of the methodological practices of this ethnographic analysis (p. 253). I discuss earlier ethnographic writing in light of later writing, and the considerable challenges faced when analyzing data especially while trying to preserve their difference, rather than reducing them to sameness through coding.

It needs to be said that this story of the ethnography is an unbalanced one. There was great intellectual and creative pleasure experienced in the invention of multiple ways of collecting data, but it was in the analysis stage that the research became stalled. Gallagher (2008), in the introduction to her edited book on qualitative research, *The Methodological Dilemma: Creative, Critical and Collaborative Approaches to Qualitative Research*, suggests that the “roadblocks” in research should not be avoided, but experienced for the pedagogy in them as “scholars know how much intellectual satisfaction can be derived from the roadblocks and missteps, the difficulties of research in the field of education” (p. 2).
This account of the analysis attends to a considerable roadblock, which was unexpected as the collection of data was especially engaging as I experimented with combining methods to see what they might become. An example of this experimentation was the integration of drama into the focus groups in the first semester, and the integration of walking within the individual interviews. Encountering a less robust set of analytical practices, I entered into conversation with my supervisor and attended the *Summer Qualitative Research Institute* at Metropolitan Manchester University. I was offered generative ideas that enabled the analysis to resume, but more on its own terms while keeping my questions in the foreground.

In the early analysis of the data, sameness and difference surfaced as a topic of considerable conversation in the walking interviews and in the place-based performances of ritual at Branch Secondary School. In examining this theme of sameness and difference, I have asked how the methodology might avoid reducing the various media or modalities into the sameness of text? How, in my analysis, could I work to keep difference as difference rather than looking for sameness through processes of categorizing and coding? The problem is not only that coding might force data into ill-fitting categories, but that data coding software insists on data being transcribed into text documents. This practice reduces the richness of gesture and vocal intonation to printed words on a flat page, causing the erasure of the body and the materiality of the environment in which the words are spoken. In other words, when words are removed from their context and the bodies that speak them, affect is also removed. I had to ask with reference to the video and drama data: how, in my analysis, might they remain different, and not be reduced to text through transcriptions? Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997b) suggests “as the breakdown of humanist language and practice accelerates, we will encounter difference at every turn: different theories that frame research, different research methodologies, and different representations of research” (p. 186). What I had not yet found was how I could proceed differently.\(^1\)

In weighing whether to code or not, the whole project slowed to a stop while I considered how to attend to this considerable quandary and intellectual discomfort. Lather (2012) calls this an *aporia* and Jackson and Mazzei (2012) define it as “a puzzle, conundrum, that which poses a difficulty in logic because it presents evidence for more than one truth. An aporia is a paradox” (p. 17). Given how I was reacting to the distancing and boredom of computer coding programs, I asked myself what might enliven the analysis.

\(^{21}\) For large projects, coding, and the organizing that it allows, is useful, but as Gallagher suggested to me in a supervisory meeting in which we discussed my questions, there may be new and more engaging ways to use it.
Understanding the need to build a case to support my decision not to use coding software, I sought theory that would help me piece together an alternative means of engaging empirical materials to make sense of them. The theorists include: Lather (2012), MacLure (2013), St. Pierre (1997a; 1997b) Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), Lenz Taguchi (2012), Gallagher (2007, 2008), and Gallagher and Kim (2008). This theoretical analysis brings the concept of difference to the fore, embraces a kind of circularity of approach, and suggests the generative practices of making use of site, place, and space in ethnographic design, collecting empirical materials, and analyzing data.

**Non-Sequential Analysis and Site Specificity**

Another of the central points of this chapter is that non-sequential analysis, and the centrality of place at all stages of the research, helped to invigorate the design, the collection of empirical materials, and the analysis. To clarify what is meant by non-sequential analysis, I have to emphasize two points. First, analysis did not always happen after the collection of data, but also during that process. Scheurich (1995) suggests that the interview happens twice: once when it is conducted and later when it is analyzed. Regarding video, Pink (2007) also suggests there is knowledge made in the making of the video, not just in the later stage of analysis. Secondly, as I learned in this research and in previous research projects acting as an assistant to Dr. Kathleen Gallagher, early analysis could inform how methods are to be used in subsequent collections of data. In this particular project, I worked on the ritual performances of place with a group of grade ten youth in the fall semester and a second group in the winter semester. I looked at the early data from the first semester, and recognized the themes of sameness and difference, and took that thematic focus into the design of the methods used in the second semester class. I did not repeat the process of the first semester, but in response to the data, to the particular youth, and the specificity of their social relations, I was able to design the methods differently. I include some of that early data here to suggest what was becoming visible:

Blueberry (Vietnamese first language; English, French and other languages; straight; female; Asian; shifting middle class; poor eye sight): I just think that everyone right now at high school and middle school they - it’s not like to themselves but they’re on a leash of their friends. Like they’re being held back on a leash, or something. Like people, I mean some people will be unique but then sometimes inside they feel like, “is this too strange like are people talking about me behind my back” and so most people would just stay on the leash and do what everyone is doing.

(Individual interview, November 9, 2011)
Horacio (Urdu first language; English, French other languages; straight: male; Brown; middle class; fully able): And then you’re like nervous of approaching new kids too. You’re just scared like how they’re going to judge you. Or because you’re not really comfortable around them – if you had your own friends there – you’d be more comfortable – you could talk about whatever – say whatever – but like you don’t want to be judged by somebody instantly by like what you wear, what you say or what you look like.

(Individual interview, November 15, 2011)

This rather circular nature of the design, collection, and analysis suggests not only the advantages of having several sites, but also the chance to refine and reinvent an original design in the same site. These methodological findings suggest it is a circular approach that sweeps early work into later work in dynamic ways that enliven the ongoing design, data collection, and analysis. This approach is important because it challenged what I had originally thought I was seeing: a robust and engaging collection of data followed by a rather sedentary analysis stage. The apparent discrepancy included the proliferation of modes of collection (video, drama, field notes – written and video, still photographs, artifacts) and the much less engaging computer software coding of data that leads to analysis. In this schema, the first stage is highly corporeal and mobile, while analysis largely involves writing, diagramming, reading, and thinking. But as my analysis developed, I moved beyond this kind of dichotomous thinking by getting theory to interfere with this dualism. I began to realize the processes were far more dynamic than they originally appeared. Although I had felt disengaged from computer software coding analysis programs, I began to see that analysis could be done differently.

Writing as Analytical Strategy: “Diffract the Data With Theory”

Writing as method (Richardson, 1990; St. Pierre, 1997a) was invaluable to this early analytical process and provided me with avenues for thought and the reimagining of the next part of the research. To chart this process, here I include quotations or excerpts of writing I completed at an earlier stage of the methodological analysis and which document how I was trying to make sense of my collected data. This earlier writing occurred after some video analysis and after reading some of the interview transcriptions. As this work took place a year ago in June 2013, this early analysis served a double purpose: it charted the evolution of thinking and analysis, but it also became a kind of data about ethnographic process. These pieces of writing from an earlier stage of the ethnography acted as a kind of sandbox in which I tried out ideas, engaged with theory, and then left it behind for a period of time until I could return to it. The following is an example of writing from a year ago when I first tried to write this chapter on methodology:
This is the story of this analysis. One of the stories. I wrote a paper on some of the early findings of this research and saw a pull to sameness that some of the youth participants were willing to talk about in their interviews. In the second semester the new class was quite divided into social or affinity groups that were endlessly fascinating. Here I recognized another pull to sameness but it was different. As I came to look at sameness and difference, I started to recognize that these were categories like other categories that depend on sameness to even fashion the category itself. I realized that I wanted to respect difference as difference and not look for the ways that it is the same as other data. Because of my strong aversion to coding in both Atlas ti and in N’Vivo, I did not know how to analyze without depending on these programs which seem to me organizational tools rather than analytic ones. (Ethnographic writing, Wessels, June 2013)

St. Pierre (1997a) writes about writing that veers away from an outline saying:

it stalls, gets stuck, thumbs its nose at order, goes someplace the author did not know existed ahead of time, stumbles over its sense, spins around its middle foregoing ends, wraps idea around idea in some overloaded imbrication that flies out of control into a place of no return. (p. 414)

In my writing, I see the identification of aporia, but I have not yet found a way to proceed. This analytical dialogue with an earlier thinking self was my attempt to make the analysis relational.

This writing story, comprised of several installments, documented the questions as they emerged in what Gallagher (2007) has coined as a “problem-posing ethnography” (p.175). If corporeality, mobility, and difference have catalyzed and informed the collection of data through drama, video, and walking interview methods, might they also inform the analysis of the data? Lather (2013) suggests that, “data get lived in new ways. And so we move into pleasure and surprise in engaging with theory” (p. 639). What happens to data when they are considered mobile, corporeal, and different? Some of these questions ask: does placing early writing into encounter with later writing really make it relational? Can analytical processes be relational? Does my own writing interfere with later writing in much the same way that theory interferes with the writing and sense-making process?

Towards an Analysis of “Unassimilated” Differences

Returning to the notion of aporia as kind of a puzzle or paradox (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 17), it is important to understand how this aporia arose out of an entanglement with emerging data, early writing, and theory. In writing about the project early in the process, I encountered the ideas of Iris Marion Young (1990) who refutes the assimilation of difference aimed at social cohesion. I wondered what
might be the methodological and analytical implications of keeping difference at the forefront of my thinking. If coding depended on categories defined by sameness and similarity, I felt a strong disconnect between what I had come to understand as analysis and my efforts to hold on to difference as difference. If part of my emerging thesis was a stance that advocated a proliferation of difference, and if coding depended on sameness, how could I use coding as the basis of my analysis? I felt that I had stumbled upon another justification for not coding, but I faced a vacuum in terms of analytical tools or approaches to analysis. The following writing comes from my presentation at the *Summer Qualitative Institute* as I tried to engage the others in my session with my questions:

I am here at this institute to learn more about how, as Maggie MacLure suggests, coding could be done differently. **SLIDE 24** I’m also here to learn how others have used diffraction that Lenz Taguchi (2012) **SLIDE 25** suggests is unlike reflection in that it “entails the processing of ongoing differences” (p. 268). She cites Barad, “diffraction as a methodology is about studying how differences get made in such a process and the effects that differences make; what is excluded and how these differences and exclusions matter” (p. 30 cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2012). I present this here today, interested in other stories of research that found ways out of this paradox. Or perhaps you have worked within aporias, keeping the tensions present and alive rather than trying to resolve them or create some sort of synthesis. (Presentation of research at the *Summer Qualitative Research Institute*, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2013)

In trying to formulate for myself what Lather’s (2013) “difference driven analytic” might mean, I began to see that my practices of data analysis needed to be framed as respecting the unassimilated difference of data by not reducing them to textual sameness (p. 639). Pink (2007) considers this in relation to visual data, “images and words contextualize each other, forming not a complete record of the research but a set of different representations and strands of it” (p. 120). Her notion of strands is useful in that it retains the rhizomatic nature of different modes of data as separate and different from each other. As MacLure (2013) suggests, rather than all methods funnelling into one mode of knowledge, they are kept unassimilated and different, informing the ethnography in different ways instead of using data as if they were all the same. Pink’s (2007) larger purpose here is to challenge the habituated process of turning the visual into the textual. Her view is “not to translate visual evidence into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) knowledge” (p. 119). She dismantles the notion that one medium illustrates another, saying, “I use each of these media to represent the various stories of the research in different ways” (Pink, 2007, p. 120). Each medium used in the research evokes different elements of the fieldwork experience. This aversion to fusing different modes of data is very relevant to my intention in analysis, which was to respect rather than reduce difference.
The mechanical work of programs designed for computers to analyze data may be a useful organizational tool, but in my experience it dims the mind rather than engages it, and distances the coder from the data. The transcribed text flattens the sense of inquiry and dynamic engagement experienced in the field. In contrast to the mechanical function of looking at text on a computer screen and highlighting the text with an appropriate code, this account is one of making connections in and amongst the data, and keeping close to the data so they retain their affective capacity. Lenz Taguchi (2012) suggests:

Diffractive analysis requires us to engage in an event of reading and becoming with (Harraway, 2008) the data, rather than reading it from a distance and as separate or apart from it. In the event that emerges, the data are understood as a co-constitutive force, working with and upon the researcher, as the researcher is working with the data. (p. 272)

In a participatory ethnography that seeks to be in close proximity to the participants as the data are collected, why then in the analysis stage would a positivist stance be adopted that places the analyst in a distanced and objective position to “claim knowledge”? I looked to create analysis that extended rather than deadened the deep engagement of the fieldwork. I considered how analysis might be kept lively, embodied, and engaged with imagination and affective/intellectual response. As I will discuss later, I will draw on the work of Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010, 2012) as well as MacLure (2013) to guide these practices of analysis.

**Coding**

In my experience of coding in previous projects, where I used N’Vivo and Atlas ti with interview transcriptions, video transcriptions, and field notes, I found I was distanced from the data. In highlighting and organizing transcriptions according to codes, I found the data lost some of their affective power. There is some debate about coding and St. Pierre (1997b) is against it. In contrast, MacLure (2013) suggests coding may have some legitimate uses, but it has to be reimagined. St. Pierre (1997b) writes about data that refuse to be coded, as “data that were uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of category” (p. 179). Scheurich (1995) discusses the difficulties of coding interview data in particular, saying “the indeterminate totality of the interview always exceeds and transgresses our attempts to capture and categorize” (p. 249).

MacLure (2013) offers several reasons to support her claim that coding is suspect, “for poststructuralism, coding offends on a number of fronts” (p. 167). She states that when an ethnographer codes data using computer software, there is a pulling back from the data and that ethics are undermined when the researcher moves away from the participant to observe from a distance. Drawing on Miller (1988), MacLure states that coding enacts a kind of ‘“panoptic immunity’ of the liberal subject entitled to
interrogate and dissect the lives and business of others, while preserving the privacy, intactness and autonomy of his (or her) own, ‘secret’ self” (p. 168). Another ethical tension she describes is the freezing of youth into categories that may explain them, but at the same time does not represent them fairly. MacLure (2013) eloquently warns of the dangers of this kind of coding that falsely defines youth and young people “that hold them in place” (p. 174).

Building her argument, MacLure (2013) states there is a single logic with coding into which all data have to fit. For example, all data have to align with the sameness of “genus to species; category to instance; general to particular” (p. 168). Drawing on Deleuze (1994), MacLure identifies sameness in the relations between data that include “relations of identity, similarity, analogy or opposition” (p. 168). She describes how this method of creating order within analysis may contain that which really cannot be contained, as well as explaining that which might not be explicable “within the schema of representation, things frozen in the places allotted to them by the structure that comprehends them – in the double sense of enclosing them, and of rendering them comprehensible” (p. 169).

Of real relevance to this project is MacLure’s (2013) concern with mobility and the moments at which a process or practice differentiates. She suggests that coding “cannot cope with difference in itself – as movement, change and emergence” (p. 169). In urging researchers to look for “that which coding misses – movement, difference, singularity, emergence, and the entanglements of matter and language,” MacLure does not suggest that coding needs to be dispensed with all together, but that coding has to be done differently (p. 171).

St. Pierre (2011) also questions coding and the way that it distances the researcher from the data:

> twenty years ago, I did not believe that coding data was analysis, and I haven’t changed my mind. It’s certainly something one can do with data – label and sort (and count) – but I’m not sure one would do it if one had never heard of it. There are many ways to “stay close to the data”, (conventional data, that is), for example reading transcripts and field notes and listening to tapes repeatedly. (p. 621)

St. Pierre (2011), like MacLure (2013), sees that coding is not entirely avoidable as words in themselves are codes, “if a word is data, isn’t a code (a word) data as well? Do we code codes?” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 622). The development of codes comes from the researcher looking to find themes developed from the research questions. But had I confined my codes to my research questions, I would have missed that which I could not understand enough to even formulate questions about. While not offering any recipe for analysis, St. Pierre (2011) stresses the importance of reading theory and working the theory with the
data through writing, saying “my advice is to read, and analysis, whatever it is, will follow” (p. 622). This advice was useful in that it did not prescribe formulaic steps.

Here, theory, thinking, and the events of the research were entangled, and through writing, a kind of provisional sense-in-the-making was made. In looking at the data, I also looked at the participants who as St. Pierre (2011) suggests are not objects of the research, but “provoateurs” (p. 620). Like Meyers, (2008) who asserts the agency of *percipient* participants (p. 172), St. Pierre (2011) looks to their provocative capacities that act upon the researcher.

MacLure (2013) suggests an experimental approach that looks for that which cannot be captured, or what she calls (drawing on Smith, 1995) “rebel becomings” (p.171). According to her, this process is slow and full of pleasure, and requires an immersion in the tiniest of details rather than a stepping back. MacLure (2013) suggests that there is something pleasurable about the coding process that keeps closure at bay. She acknowledges that the strength of coding is that it is slow and avoids foreclosing meaning quickly. Gallagher (2008) considers the merits of an open reading saying, “an open rather than a closed reading means that there are limitless possible interpretations of a moment” (p. 68). With regard to this research, my process was not one of “languorous” pleasure as MacLure asserts (p. 174). Mine was more riddled with worry about that which I could not understand. It was a kind of anxious waiting, and hoping that hunches would develop into something worth writing about.

MacLure (2013) says wisely that representational research is important, but explains that there is another “logic,” which comes from the “assemblage” (p. 165). This approach does not force the creative researcher to move from innovation in the collection stage to semi-positivist practice in the analysis stage. As this reading, thinking, and writing have to be open processes so that they can respond to the theory and the data, there cannot be a *how to* in the same way that certain methods and methodologies can be described *step by step*. As this is the most open part of the process and requires the longest engagement with theory, I suggest this is a stage of drift in which lateral thinking stretches what you thought you knew, to try, as Lather (2013) suggests, “to unhinge one’s own understandings” (p. 639).

**Proceeding Without Codes: Holding Open Meaning**

The following writing suggests several ways to approach data trying to create an “open reading.” This approach does not try to settle the analysis, but keeps available different possible questions to ask in analysis:

I have been thinking about looking at data, especially visual but recorded field notes as well, as realist - as representing something and as performative - as doing something. In terms of the
performative, I could ask what particular pieces of data are, what they do, what they say, what they make known and what they imagine as possible? To look at data relationally, in what ways do they connect or disrupt connection between people? In looking at data as story – what is the story, told to whom and for what reason? And if the data produce pedagogy, how is this done, between whom and for what reason, and what does it produce? (Ethnographic writing, Wessels, June 2013)

My analysis began with wide reading, and a decision not to settle quickly on what an event meant or what it produced. St. Pierre (2011) read and followed a trail through the citations and references of others saying, “as scholars have done for centuries, I followed the citational trail from one text to another, finding and reading on my own” (p. 620). What she describes is not the finding of a theory and then sticking to it, but showing how this is a fluid and laterally-moving process in which coming upon theory may loosen the grasp of previous theories. St. Pierre says, “I formed and then shed attachments to scholars and their theories as I read, and those shifts taught me there would always be another sentence in another book that might well shatter my life again” (p. 620). Theory, then, was a thing in motion, not a stance that one held onto tightly, but one that could be displaced and erased by a subsequent one. What she describes is the ability to be affected by theory, as thought becomes a visceral event. New theory may unsettle theory just read. Theory, then, has agency that can call the researcher to respond.

I held open the aporias that seemed so puzzling and the experiences in the field that were beyond my explanation like the nonhuman encounters in the school grounds. A specific example from my research comes from the Concord Floral site where I thought I had encountered the limits of joyous relationality associated with collective art-making. What I came to find out was that my understandings had to shift as I encountered new data. My understandings could not settle, but had to become mobile as I considered my assumptions. My initial settling of understanding was followed by an unsettling. New data invited, or even insisted, on a reconsideration of the closure of thinking. Both data and theory asked that I as the researcher respond.

For the purposes of this thesis, my encounters with theory include Massey’s (2005) relational space, Deleuze’s (1968/1994) concept of difference, and the work of the new materialists who include the nonhuman as part of their ontological framework. In looking at that first set of data, I looked at them for both what they might mean and how they worked performatively. In other words, I asked what the data (in this case particular dramas of youth rituals that the youth created) did. In approaching later data analysis, I read and reread the interview transcripts and watched the video recorded interviews. I read theory and wrote field notes as a means of thinking through what I was seeing.
Theoretical Encounters: Difference as a Methodological Tool

In analysis, looking for the moments when things or processes become different alters an analytical process that looks for the same or a category that depends on sameness into which a thing, person, or nonhuman can be slotted. Deleuze’s (1968/1994) concept of difference can be made productive as an analytical tool. In looking for differenciations, when a process, or practice becomes different, I came to recognize that this research was as much about making space and shaping place through drama as it was about using drama as a method that would illustrate or explain space. On returning to the concepts expressed by Rogers (2012) and Pink (2009), I could see that the research was not a window into the suburb, but that it charted what the suburb did and what it could become through the youth and their art-making.

Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggest that research, and particularly research data analysis is “about taking notice of the differences and transformations that emerge in specific events” (p. 539). With this significant shift in analytical focus, I began to see how difference came into being. To be specific, I understood more fully how the suburban and urban constituted each other as youth living in the suburb encountered urban artists as they worked on rehearsals of a play in Toronto about the suburbs. I began to see how the human and nonhuman encountered each other to create relational space. I cannot say specifically how the human encounter changed the mushrooms or the bird or the butterfly because I just have no means with which to gauge that. I do know that the human/nonhuman encounter influenced the interview in terms of renegotiated power relations. It also became a kind of site-based improvisation with open possibility instead of the more predictable exchange of questions and answers that often comprise a conventional interview.

Lenz Taguchi (2012) explains the workings of diffractive analysis by saying, “knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part of the world (Barad, 2007, p. 185)” (cited in Lenz Taguchi, p. 271). Lenz Taguchi works against interpretivism and states:

as an act of thinking, interpretation in reflective analysis is about reflecting sameness (as in mirroring), or identifying differences from some thing previously identified and acknowledged; a thing, an identity, a category, a discursive theme or a subject position. (p. 269)

This mode of analysis for emplaced ethnographies such as this one, considers the nonhuman and inanimate as inseparable and integral to place. Lenz Taguchi states:

to understand this we need to move, ontologically, from identifying bodies as separate entities with distinct borders to think in terms of processes of entanglements and interdependences in processes
of an ongoing co-constitutive co-existence of different kinds of bodies (human as well as non-human or more-than- humans) (Alaimo, 2010; Barad, 2007). (p. 271)

This practice is a material and discursive one that uses “intractivity,” a concept taken from physics:

referring to the relationships between multiple bodies (both human and nonhuman) that are understood not to have clear and distinct boundaries from one another: rather they are always affecting or being affected by each other in an interdependent and mutual relationship as a condition for their existence. (Barad, 2007, p.152 cited in Lenz Taguchi, 2012, p. 271)

What does this mean in practice? In trying to create a responsive and relational approach to data, Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) analyze video data by following what is of interest to the youth participant. They assert that by practicing analysis this way, findings are created differently. They do not separate the research participant from the materiality of the environment, but focus on the movement and physical interactions with any given architecture.

Lenz Taguchi (2012) says she looks for “how the data interferes with the sensibilities of our bodyminds and what this brings to the event of reading the data” (p. 272). Her analysis insists on proximity to the data and a consideration of their affective force. Her theory assumes that the data, as material entities, are agentive. Lenz Taguchi describes the data as a “constitutive force working with and upon me in the event of reading the data” (p. 274). As I read the data, I looked for what affected me rather than trying to uncover a truth or essence contained within the data. This affective approach differs from analytical practice that sorts and keeps the researcher in full control of the data. Conversely Lenz Taguchi’s process acknowledges that the data is actively producing response in the analyst. It is not that the researcher has lost control, but she/he has relinquished the tight grip to be able to respond to the data.

The data are not separate from the researcher; rather, the researcher is part of the data and is also implicated in all the processes of their creation. Instead of this being an analytical problem, it represents one of the sources of interference that becomes fruitful in terms of reading the data. I altered the data before I even started to collect them, by being present, using cameras, speaking up, and being integral to the conceptualizing of the drama pedagogy that would act as drama data. This engagement was more than simply being present with my identity markers and as a carrier, or circulator of institutional power. The boundary between the data and my thinking, theorizing, and designing, blurred.

Lenz Taguchi (2012) is not suggesting that the data are there for me to experience transformation or some such individual or personal goal, but that there is an ethical responsibility that concerns the material consequences of the research on future generations. Lenz Taguchi (2012) considers this kind of
analysis as a material engagement with the data and as what Braidotti (2010) would call “intergenerational justice” (p.215). Lenz Taguchi (2012) says:

What is produced as knowing in the diffractive analysis is thus a material-discursive reality where that which has been considered passive and minor is now seen as active and forceful in its intra-activities with other bodies. Diffractive analysis makes us aware of our embodied involvement in the materiality of the event of analyzing data. The diffractive analysis and Deleuzian approach is simultaneously about intervention and invention; responsibility and ethics. A feminist researcher who engages in diffractive analysis is committed to understanding how we as researchers are responsibly engaged in shaping the future for humans, non-humans and the material environment in our production of knowledge (Barad, 1999: 7–8), because productions of knowledge are also productions of reality that will always have specific material consequence. (p. 278)

**Approaches to Video Analysis**

How does diffractive analysis work with video-recorded drama and theatre data? I suggest that viewing video in analysis is a new experience of a familiar encounter. Viewing the video, I was not asked to respond in the same way I did when I was present in the initial encounter. The exchange or interview no longer depended on decisions made in the moment. Although the social relations were now set, the interview could be set in motion somewhat differently in the encounter with theory. In approaching the analysis of the video data, Pink (2007) suggests that we cannot take video as a realist text from which we come to understand the participants. Although she says that photography and video bear some relationship to “reality,” Pink also says, “reality is not solely visible or observable, images have no fixed or single meanings and are not capable of capturing an objective reality” (p. 32). This mediated nature of video data limits the scope of what can be understood and acts as a reminder of the postmodern view of qualitative research; that it is, at best, a partial account from which only partial understandings are possible.

Pink (2007) also suggests that framing conventions are culturally embedded and that photography has changed and disciplined the way that we see. Gallagher and Kim (2008) and MacLure, Holmes, MacRae, and Jones (2010) suggest that video can be used for so much more than just its capacity to document. Video, in this project, explored several conventions as it was inserted into the dramatized rituals as setting, as surveillance footage, as a bird’s eye view of a dinner table conversation, as instructional video for a theme park, and as historical footage of prom. The youth played with the genres of video-making and inserted them into the dramas to create hybrid artistic work.
Gallagher and Kim (2008) suggest that the video needs to be viewed by the participants to co-create the analysis (p. 112). At the Branch site, there was the opportunity to watch the video alongside the youth when I asked a group of second-semester youth to view the video from the first semester and to make comments as a kind of shared data analysis, a process that has been experimented with by Dunn (2010) and Gallagher, Wessels, and Yaman Ntelioglou (2013).

**Video Analysis: The Particulars**

To begin the video analysis, I watched all the video data and made notes using computer “Stickies.” By choosing to create the note as a floating translucent window, the document could be made transparent and overlaid on the video as it played. This practice meant that I did not have to move back and forth from Flip video screen to the Word screen, making the process more efficient. I made notes of themes and things that surprised me as I watched. I transcribed certain phrases and exchanges that I thought might be useful to the analysis. At the end of this work, I had a binder of notes that were as extensive as the field notes I had collected in the two classrooms and in the theatre. In addition to my notes, when I saw a piece of video that was of particular interest, I would create a video clip and photographic still, thinking that I might string these clips together to get multiple voices and viewpoints on a similar issue or event. I labeled these clips carefully so that I could gather them together at a later date.

It could be argued that the clips I made in Flip were a kind of coding. One of the arguments against coding is that it distances the researcher from the event and the place in which the event took place. In making these video clips, I did not experience any of the distancing I felt when I did textual analysis with N’Vivo or Atlas ti. Also, the titles I used were more open descriptions than strict codes. For example, in my video footage of the outside of the school in the spring, I label one of the videos “Branch spring trees in bloom” and from the Concord Floral site, “Concord Floral rehearsal April 29 sunshine 2.”

Video data acted as a reminder of the events that had already taken place. There was a record, however partial, of not just the words spoken, but gestures, movements, and the particulars of place. The video did not divorce words from the bodies who spoke them, and also more of the materiality of speech was present. This was not to say that video was or can be complete, but it did keep words with bodies and the gestures that accompanied them. For this reason alone, I suggest this kind of organizing of video was a more fully embodied mode of re-experiencing the encounter than reading flattened written accounts. It is significant that when I needed to remind myself of a particular incident, I usually returned to the video or the video clips I made rather than to my extensive video notes. I was drawn to this video record of the event to look again with curiosity and feeling, which Pink (2009) suggests is a kind of “re-encounter” with the original event (p. 121). By returning to the video rather than the transcriptions, I experienced
both its affective intensity and its agency. One of the central points of this chapter is that reducing all data to transcribed text reduces the agentic capacity of the empirical materials and their ability to affect the researcher.

One particular example of the useful difference of methods occurred when I was revisiting the transcription of the interview and the videotaped version of the same interview. This sequence was one in which the participant and I were walking through the school grounds to a place she had chosen and where we unexpectedly came across a widespread patch of mushrooms. Had I depended on transcriptions alone, I would have passed over the encounter as a non-event, because so much of what happened was beyond language and could not be written down. “[Laughter]” as it is written on the transcription, does not quite capture the wildness of the hilarity in our voices the way the video did. This encounter was not about language, nor was it expressed through language alone. I underline that in transcription the body is obviously missing, as is affect; equally important though is the absence of the environment in which the encounter took place. This example supports Pink (2007) and MacLure’s (2013) contention that reducing one method into another erases what that very difference might provide to the analysis.

**Self Reflexivity**

MacLure (2013) and Gallagher (2008) suggest than open readings take time. The following excerpt acknowledges time, waiting, and the data that has agentic power and affective intensity:

> Is there something to be said for waiting some time before beginning to write about methodology? I have as highlights in my memory of the ethnographic experience, two significant moments when walking and interviewing outside. The first was coming across an unexpected patch of mushrooms growing in the grove of pine trees on the school grounds and the second was when we were interrupted by bird song. Why is it that these moments are etched so deeply in my memory? (Ethnographic writing, Wessels, June 2013)

In choosing walking interviews, I was also acknowledging how much I had been sitting as researcher. Desperate to get out of my seat, I wondered how I could walk with the youth through the places of the school. I was motivated both by my curiosity about place and going to the places in the school that interested the youth, but I also felt the need to get moving myself. I see now how I was trying to make my body present in the research practices. I did this because I wanted to make my ethnographic processes visible as a way of claiming their importance in the course of events and encounters. I was not an invisible observer, and as such, I wanted to document my presence in the two sites. Perhaps an analogy would be that I wanted to move from the position of an omniscient researcher to researching in
the first person. In reading about the writing I did at two stages in the analysis, and in reading my claim that I was trying to make this relational or dialogical, I also saw the extent to which I was bristling against the limitations of individual scholarship.

**Limitations and Implications of Various Methods**

There were limitations to some of the methods, and these include: the timing of the interviews as specified by the principal, the challenge of taking detailed field notes while actively participating in the activities of the classroom, the power relations associated with the research practices, and the individual work of the dissertation researcher. The implications for future methodological experiments include the continued hybridization of arts and ethnographic methods and the exploration of the mutuality of pedagogy and ethnography. Finally, there is great potential for continued methodological innovation in analyses that are driven by difference rather than sameness. In future work, drama could be integrated into the analysis stage more fully and robustly.

There were limitations associated with the rituals that we asked the youth to present. We stressed the transformational quality of a ritual and that for the person involved, he/she will metaphorically and psychologically end in a different place than where he/she began. Some of the rituals ended with a kind of happy ending that weakened the work by resolving too easily the problem depicted. If I were to have the chance to repeat this activity, I would ask the youth to create scenes that are free from the schema of ritual. Alternatively, I could use Turner’s (1982) schema that can lead to an integration of the person into the society, or the recognition that there are differences that make assimilation impossible.

**Youth Comment on Methodological Practice**

In the interviews conducted at the school site, I asked the youth to reflect on the research process as they experienced it. Of course, this is problematic in the sense that youth might have felt hesitant about telling me about their reservations. There is a range of opinion expressed about the effect the presence of a researcher has in the classroom. Often a youth would say that they liked that I participated and that I did not sit off to the side observing them. Comments such as these closely resembled what I told the youth on the first day regarding my participation in their class: that I would not sit to the side and write notes, but intended to fully participate in the drama class. I will not include these data here as they just repeat what I had said, and I suspect that they were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. More interesting were the comments from youth who said that they felt ill at ease with the filming or other aspects of the research practice. One youth, Valarie (English, Chinese, Vietnamese first languages; straight; female; Asian; middle class; Buddhist), in the walking individual interview, recognized that she
had been brought up to respect and even defer to power. She told me that she could not honestly say that the research did not represent a kind of power to her and that she was unsettled, slightly, by my presence.

Valarie: When I see other people, I think they don’t mind it because you’re very active in our class and everything – you’re not sitting back watching everything –

Anne: Yeah.

Valarie: which would intimidate us.

Anne: Yeah.

Valarie: But for myself- like I’ve grown up really disciplined and the whole authority, power and like, school – it really affects me where I’m going to be on my best behaviour, I’m not going to do anything bad. (Valarie, Individual interview, Semester 1, Branch Secondary School, November 24, 2011)

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Anne: So what about this idea of having research in classrooms? Do you think it changes what is going on or at a certain point, do you just sort of forget about it?

Blueberry: Now I forget about it but it’s because you’re not here every single day. I think at first we were cautious about how we act and everything. Because it is drama class, right, so we are more freer. But yeah, I think with the presence of the camera, I think at first we held ourselves. Or if we do, we would try to not swear or make mistakes or anything. (Blueberry, Individual interview, Semester 1, Branch Secondary School, November 9, 2011)

By recognizing the permanence of video footage, some of the youth changed their attitude to drama. They sensed the pressure to make work of a certain standard. In the usual, more ephemeral, work of the drama class, without a researcher present, there is less pressure because no permanent record is made. These comments suggest that this is one of the ways that the process of ethnography, in particular the video camera, influenced the drama pedagogy. Filming then, can affect the very process it is trying to understand, and as such, it cannot be taken as a transparent record of the drama class and its practices. As Gallagher and Kim (2008) suggest, “like its predecessor the still camera, the presence of the video camera is not neutral: it affects that which it films, including, in this case, our relationship with the research participants and their relationship to each other and their space” (p. 107).
Choices made by youth videographers sometimes created problems. For example, one youth created significant tensions with the other youth as he took his filming job very seriously and managed to annoy the group he was setting out to videotape. The camera, in his hands, gave him a sense of power that others found invasive. In an interview, I asked Blueberry about this incident:

Anne: But how has the presence of the camera been in the class – maybe it has changed for you – maybe you feel differently now than you did in the beginning, I don’t know.

Blueberry: At first I was okay with it but at times there was just another teacher with us but like now it’s okay. I’m not camera shy, I just didn’t like it shoved in my face.

(Blueberry; Individual interview; Semester 1; Branch Secondary School; November 9, 2011)

Interviewing as Participatory Method and Analytical Practice

Timing

Some youth in the class were reluctant to give up part of a lunch break, and one student could not come at all because he was involved in lunchtime school athletics. The principal requested, in my initial interview with him, that the interviews not take away from class time. Restricting interviews to the lunchtime caused some time conflicts for the youth, but for the most part they arrived on time and ready to walk outside with me as I asked interview questions. In the second semester, there was more reluctance to give up the lunchtime to participate in interviews.

Although I tried to respect his wishes, it was not always possible. There were times when an event would happen in the class and I asked a few youth to form an impromptu focus group to discuss what had happened. The Speaker’s Corner camera in the class offered the youth the chance to talk to the camera when they saw fit during the class. I also took the liberty of interviewing some youth in the second semester in class so I would have a broader set of interviews other than those from only the most motivated youth.

For Concord Floral, the individual interviews had to be fit into rather short breaks, and they consequently happened less frequently. This scheduling issue was also one I could have addressed more intentionally.

There is certainly much more to be developed in terms of drama and walking methods as they combine creatively and productively. There are implications for other modes of drama used methodologically in future research that is place-based, outwardly-focused, and community-engaged.
Pedagogies of Ethnography

There are also implications regarding the relationship between methodology and pedagogy. Gallagher and Wessels (2011) suggest that research conducted in drama classrooms can often blur the distinction between methodological and pedagogical practice. This ethnography acted as a kind of pedagogy by offering learning about youth experiences of suburb. At the same time, the ethnography analyzed various pedagogies found in schools and in the theatre rehearsal hall. These pedagogies took place inside and outside conventional classrooms. There were also extraneous pedagogies that happened unintentionally and without design, just outside the frame of the planned pedagogy.

Pedagogies also took place in what Ellsworth (2005) calls “anomalous places of learning,” which were fully outside classrooms, yet designed to create pedagogical encounters through art (p. 5). The rehearsal halls of Concord Floral housed pedagogies of this sort. Apart from learning about theatre creation and the social pedagogies led by Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner, there was also peer-to-peer pedagogy as the youth instructed each other about artistic practice and social relations. In the Branch first semester and Concord Floral focus group interviews, the youth also demonstrated pedagogical exchanges between the researcher and the participants, and between each other. I learned about the youth and their schooling as we walked, and we both learned from the diversity of life in the school grounds as we encountered the nonhuman.

Throughout this research, I was alert for the intersections of ethnography and pedagogy, and also for the ways that ethnography became different through practice and encounters with youth. The video was used pedagogically so that the teacher could give feedback to youth about their work. The youth, with their teacher Mr. A, watched the video footage of the final culminating projects and together, they discussed how they could be improved. The integration of digital technology into the classroom was part of the institutional agenda mandated at the school board level, and the principal explained this to me in our initial meeting. In this way, the digital video for the research contributed to a larger board-wide initiative in digital pedagogy and learning. This example shows ethnography contributing to pedagogy.

Conclusion

Pink (2009) states “to know as others do, we need to engage in practices with them, making participation central to this task” (p. 34). Although achieving this goal of knowing as others do may be elusive, in shared activities of walking and creating performance of place together, the youth and I have come to know each other and the place of the suburb, however partially. I cannot know as they know, but in the process of trying, I have worked to maintain difference as difference. When categories were suspended in
the ethnographic encounter – when we did not know what we were witnessing – it was in those suspensions of quick judgment that there was the beginning of learning.

This chapter discusses multiple modes of data collection. For inquiries into the social relations of space, drama is an ideal method for its capacity to engage affectively differences of positionality and differences of opinion. Inquiring into the geographies of place, place-based performance is methodologically productive. In striving to bring vitality to analysis, writing and diffractive analysis make central the importance of the agency of empirical materials. This affective intensity of both the data and theory diffract the data in ways that challenge the sorting of conventional coding practice. Seeking to keep difference at the forefront of analytical thinking is both challenging and productive, even if it is just in the preliminary stages of such practices. This chapter closes with my writing about the fragmented learnings of this research as a means of ushering you, as reader, from the methodology into the findings.

Learnings: longings; hope for the future; uneasy gender relations and spanning two places at once (being here and there at the same time); place does not define a person completely and some of the ways in which it does; place, and performances of place are a point of meeting difference; how hard it is to welcome; the pain of being made to feel unwelcome; mobility can come from not having enough money to stay in one place; are notions of roots and attachment to place really a function of money and stable incomes, kept stable by not losing jobs and not scattering families through divorce?; boredom; a boy who stresses on paper that he is straight and will imagine in our walking interview what it might be like to approach another boy; the interview, drama performance, and walking became places of imagining for the participant and learning for the researcher about what it might be like to be different or more than what you are; forces of consumption are at work in the classroom; class divisions and income disparity; a girl goes out to her balcony every night to photograph the evening. (Ethnographic writing, June 2013)
CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS:

PRACTICES OF LOOKING OUTWARD TO AND BEYOND THE NEARBY

This chapter considers a proliferation of performances of suburb: in the classroom, in the theatre, and in the school grounds. Included is a plurality of points of view – youth at school, youth outside in the school grounds, youth as emergent artists, youth as actors, youth as spectators, theatre artist (Tannahill), social dramaturge (Brubacher concerned with the social aspects of play creation as integral to the dramaturgy of the theatre piece), choreographer (Spooner), teacher (Mr. A), and ethnographic researcher (me).

The social relations of the suburb, as they are depicted, consist of contested viewpoints in which difference is ambiguously both shunned and embraced. Huq (2013) says about the suburb:

suburbia has frequently been examined from a town planning or geographical perspective, but there is an urgent need to consider the suburbs as dynamic social and cultural spaces, and to re-centre them so that they are no longer forgotten peripheral spaces. (p. 35)

The findings consider the affective dimensions of youth working together as they depict territorial and social exclusivities. These artistic and social pedagogies create joyous encounters for the youth and expose the divide of social groupings. I document the differences of class and the insufficiency of local infrastructure that suggest aspects of neoliberalism as they manifest in the location of the school and in youth lives. Place-based rituals, Speaker’s Corner videos, walking interviews, theatre rehearsals, and performances of the nonhuman propose a non-definitive performance of suburb. Each separate performance exists as a dimension, layer, or fragment of suburb and in bringing them into relation to form this chapter, I do not create a coherent larger whole, but work to maintain the integrity of the fragments as diverse and different. This accumulation and juxtaposition of portraits and landscapes of the suburb, created through drama and theatre pedagogies, is intended to retain their vitality as different.

How Can We Be Increasingly Different and Find New Language to Talk About it?

What happens to the question: how can we be increasingly different when it is framed by Deleuze’s (1968/1994) concept of difference? Negative difference would lead me to ask: how can we be different and unassimilated from each other? Positive difference would ask how processes and practices can become increasingly different as they evolve and metamorphose from one way of doing things to another? I would like to suggest that this chapter considers both conceptualizations of difference. These conceptualizations are significant because the act of looking to understand how difference is perceived
and acted upon can serve to “break down the barriers in the quest for more heterogeneous and egalitarian spaces” (Sibley, 2001, p. 241).

Susan Ruddick (2010) asks how can we name differences that are outside the usual categories or the not-already-named. In my analysis, I seek to find the not-already-named, but not as a move to reduce difference nor to minimize the importance of those categories. This practice is intended to offer discussion about that which is not usually discussed when the categories are confined to race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, and language. Ruddick (2010) suggests the importance of both creativity and capital as the milieu in which difference can be considered. Provoked to take another look at the data, I keep in mind Ruddick’s question regarding differences not-yet-named, to see what might lie outside the familiar and the already categorized. In other words, I stay alert for what I have been disciplined to think an ethnographer should be looking for. How can we, as researchers, look differently in a state of suspended definitions and then write with refreshed words? Though I am uncertain that this is possible, I believe it is worth trying.

To clarify, I will look for other identifiers in this analysis, as Ruddick suggests, but in the data, there are specific gendered, classed, and raced relations at work in the socio-spaces I studied. I try to avoid reductive identities by focusing on processes and practices rather than individuals and their identities. There is a difference between identities used to categorize people and the ways that space is produced as gendered, raced, and classed. I am less interested in how people, things, and practices fall into categories, and instead I want to know how space is produced relationally, intersecting youth with gender, race, ability, and class.

These findings have been propelled by an epistemological question that asks how opening categories so they become broader may help to nuance understandings of the heterogeneity within that larger category. I return to this notion of categorization because it affects what we know and how we can or might learn. Throughout this research process, I have been interested in suspending reductive categories as well as attending to finer-grained understandings of difference.

**How Might We Encounter Difference Differently?**

Looking at both difference and differenciation in these three performances of suburb is a means of valuing both equity and creativity. This chapter examines differences within social groupings and differences within practices of drama and theatre pedagogy and ethnographic interviewing. I would like to suggest that what follows are examples, different as they are, of youth working with a political imaginary through drama and theatre.
Deleuze (1968/1994) in *Difference and Repetition* does not advocate a kind of personal transformation, but instead, he proposes that one is in constant relation with other bodies, whether those bodies are human or otherwise. If, as he suggests, that encounter is the site of thought, what happens when the encounter is difficult? Ruddick (2010) suggests that the encounter with difference can produce fear. She states it is this interrogation of fear we must attend to, as “we must remain open to interrogating the bases of our fears of (or indifference to) alterity, open to discomfort that is the ‘dark precursor’ to a new political imaginary” (p. 24).

**Performance One: Concord Floral: Mobile and Relational Pedagogies with Youth**

**A Dramaturgy of Questions**

Forced Entertainment’s UK production of *That Night Follows Day* and Ontroerend Goed’s Belgian production of *Once and For All We’re Gonna Tell You Who We Are So Shut Up and Listen* are acclaimed works that have toured internationally and constitute an emerging genre of theatre that engages children and youth as actors in productions conceived of and directed by professional theatre artists. In the fall of 2012, Toronto’s Suburban Beast theatre company presented the second play in its trilogy about the suburbs called *Concord Floral*. For one month preceding the performance, four times a week, youth travelled after school and after university classes from the suburbs of Vaughan, Etobicoke, Scarborough, and Mississauga to rehearsal halls in downtown Toronto: Tarragon Theatre, Videofag in Kensington Market, and finally to Theatre Passe Muraille where the play, *Concord Floral*, was performed for the public in November 2012.

There have been two different versions of *Concord Floral*. The first one began as a slim script by Jordan Tannahill, developed by the other facilitators with the youth actors. Together, they created lengthy movement sequences with the youth running, dancing, and cheerleading. This first working process was closer to the devising work of *That Night Follows Day* and *Once and For All We’re Gonna Tell You Who We Are So Shut Up and Listen*. The second production had a more fully developed script by Tannahill (2012). In collaboration with choreographer Cara Spooner and social dramaturge Erin Brubacher (who attended to the dramaturgy of the play and the social pedagogies of the rehearsals), Tannahill facilitated a process of working from his script with a cast of ten youth, of whom eight lived in suburban Toronto and two lived downtown.

In both versions of the play, the events that took place within the frame of the play were set in suburban homes: a school and an abandoned green house space, Concord Floral. In the later version of the play, it was more explicit that one of the girls attending the ritual of “field party” was sexually assaulted (the act
was referred to but not depicted). As part of the preparation for the play, the cast visited the real site of Concord Floral, and when we arrived at the Vaughan location, we were astonished by, and appreciated the irony of, finding the greenhouses partially demolished to make room for condominiums, ultimately taking the space that had been informally claimed by youth and privatizing it. The play, *Concord Floral*, then, referred to this site, but the performances did not take place there.

On analyzing the interviews and the video data I collected throughout the process, there was a sense of happiness, a kind of giddy desire on the part of the participants, artistic team, and me as researcher, to be in the room with one another. Both the senior artists and the youth mentioned these positive relations, and I wrote about it in my field notes. For the most part, the youth travelled long distances to come to rehearsal; they often brought homework, and used the meal breaks to study. The artists were balancing many projects and jobs simultaneously, and these included the opening of Tannahill’s artist space in Kensington Market, Brubacher’s work as Director of Education for Tarragon Theatre, and Spooner’s independent choreography. It seemed that all of us looked to the rehearsals of *Concord Floral* as a welcome place in our busy days. This affective atmosphere seemed to illustrate what Deleuze describes as compositional relations and smooth space. There were cell phone distractions, moments of gossip, and references made to family tensions and to the absence of youth-governed space in their own suburban communities, but for the most part, this was a space that youth hurried to, as they were eager to find out how the piece would develop as the group worked together in the rehearsal ahead.

Massey (2005) stresses the relational nature of space. This conceptualization of space provoked the question: What could the social relations in the space of the rehearsal and performance of a play about youth in the suburbs contribute to an understanding of the space and place of the suburb? These youth who lived in the suburbs travelled into the city to prepare a play about the suburbs. By doing so, they placed the suburb in relation to the urban. In carrying whatever “suburbanism” with them, they encountered not only the experience of the play, but also, as noted in the interviews, new experiences and long wait times on public transit, as well as the pleasures of good cheap food in Kensington Market in downtown Toronto where one of the rehearsal halls was located (Walks, 2014, p. 1471). From the start, it is important to state that the place-based identities of the youth were neither fixed nor homogeneous as one youth had only lived in Canada for two and a half years and another had just moved to the suburb from the downtown core. Of her relation to the suburb, she said “I feel like I don’t live in the suburbs, I just sleep there” (Kiara, English first language; female; black; no one is 100% straight but sure, straight; artist class; focus group interview, October 13, 2012).

Regarding *Concord Floral*, in which professional artists engaged non-professional youth as actors to play roles in a story that focused on suburban youth, here I analyze the artistic, social, and ethical
pedagogies of encounter that contributed to a generative milieu in which art and learning took place. I consider the ethical complexities of rehearsal and performance practices that engaged youth as actors and how the ethics of these choices played out in the particular circumstances of this production. Deleuzian (1975/1986) notions of the minor and Massey’s (2005) concept of relational space open the terms of discussion for work that was differently positioned as both professional and non-professional, both adult and youth theatre, and both aesthetic and pedagogical.

The intentions of the artistic team were to make a strong aesthetic piece, but they were also highly concerned with the social relations between the youth and between the youth and the artists. The team worked to cultivate the social relations as intentionally as the aesthetics of the piece. In this sense, I consider the piece not only pedagogical in terms of aesthetic learning, but also that the social dimensions of learning were considered essential to the ethics of the work. As well, in their interviews, the artistic collaborators suggested that the social relationality contributed to the aesthetics of the work. The theatre rehearsal process had strong pedagogical aspirations and I argue that the youth also actively shaped the pedagogical practices of both the aesthetic and social dimensions of the piece.

Claire Bishop (2012), in her study of contemporary participatory art forms, outlines work that is “delegated” in which people who are engaged in the performance or artwork “perform an aspect of their identities” (p. 219). Originally, I thought that Concord Floral might be a piece of delegated performance as I assumed the youth had been engaged for their age and locational identities. I came to recognize, however, that Concord Floral asked that actors play parts that draw on themselves, but were not synonymous with self. The extent to which the self was portrayed was left up to the individual actor, and, as a result, the label of “delegated performance” did not seem quite apt. Bishop, however, devotes a chapter of her study to pedagogical art, and I would contend that Concord Floral fits more comfortably here. She states:

pedagogic art projects therefore foreground and crystallize one of the most central problems of all artistic practice in the social field: they require us to examine our assumptions about both fields of operation, and to ponder the productive overlaps and incompatibilities that might arise for their experimental conjunction, with the consequences of perpetually reinventing both. (Bishop, 2012, p. 274)

As Concord Floral aspired to be highly relational and highly aesthetic, I discuss the processes of rehearsal and performance as pedagogically open in ways that refresh notions of pedagogy, beyond euphemistic associations with either didacticsm or compromised aesthetic. As well, I look to see the ways that pedagogy might enliven theatre practices of rehearsal. Bishop (2012) writes about the “dual
In discussing the art community’s interest in pedagogy, Bishop (2012) notes a fascinating reversal of the commonly accepted notion that artists are the ones called upon to revitalize pedagogy. Instead, she suggests the art world also looks to pedagogy for inspiration. Apparent in this pedagogical turn is a recognition of the capacity of educational institutions to focus on process rather than product, and thereby escape some of the product-oriented practices in the art world. Bishop qualifies this naïve view of educational institutions by frankly describing the neoliberal realities of education. Nonetheless, her documentation of the history of participatory art reverses an assumed relation between professional artists and schools. At play is a more mutual exchange of pedagogical and art practices without the favouring of one over the other.

Helen Nicholson (2013), in her discussion of politically and socially motivated applied theatre, suggests that detailed accounts of theatre practice are “strangely absent,” including what she calls “aesthetic strategies, dramaturgies, their aural and visual qualities or sense of emotional engagement” (p. 2). Taking up her invitation, I focus on the specific practices of Concord Floral that include the aesthetic strategies and dramaturgies that engaged the participants relationally and affectively in ways that called on their knowledge of, and various attachments to, the suburb. In my analysis, I address the material and discursive practices of the piece to place it better within the larger context of performance work that is breaking down the rigid boundaries between aesthetic and pedagogical, professional and amateur, and suburban and urban. To stay true to the intentions of this research, I also analyze the elements of the rehearsal and relational practices that Nicholson invites, and I remain alert for the ways that Concord Floral creates a performance of the place of the suburb bringing to light the tensions associated with the master categories of youth, suburban youth, and emergent artist.

**Simultaneity of Pedagogies-So-Far**

In recognizing the inferred negative connotations of pedagogical, I suggest that this judgment may come from assumptions about pedagogy that equate it with dullness and repetition, or the kinds of teaching and learning that are associated with the worst of schooling. How might a close examination of the pedagogies of this process help to reconsider this common aversion to pedagogical? Gallagher and Booth
(2003) in their edited work, *How Theatre Educates: Convergences and Counterpoints*, discuss the intersection of theatre and pedagogy. Gallagher (2003) writes in her introduction “theatre for education, then, might demand that the borders on learning keep moving out, so that schools and theatres can be sites for both community-building and social change” (p. 12). My pedagogical analysis of *Concord Floral* focuses on instances of the “borders on learning moving out.”

Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) says, “pedagogy takes place at the turbulent point of matter crossing into mind, experience into knowledge, stability into potential, knowledge as promise and provocation into bodies in action, doing and making” (p. 164). She suggests that pedagogy is not a settled place in that it takes learning from the world into the mind, and by doing so, creates the potential for ongoing provocations and invitations to learning. As I discuss practices and processes observed in this research, the discussion does not unfold in straight predictable lines, but in fits and starts.

Significantly, Massey (2005) suggests space is comprised of simultaneous stories-so-far. I build on her idea to suggest that this relational space of performance-making was comprised of pedagogies-so-far. The various simultaneous pedagogies offered youth the opportunity to learn about aesthetic work and the social relations that created the generative, and political, milieu in which the work took place. Most often these aesthetic and spatial pedagogies occurred in a milieu of relational joy experienced by the youth cast, the artistic facilitators, and me. However, the social relations were, at times, also strained. There were moments in which insensitive sexually-suggestive comments were made by one of the male actors that caused that affective atmosphere to instantly become uncomfortable and unsettled. This example of the fragility of gender relations in rehearsal was ironic, given that this rehearsal was for a play telling a story about gender-based violence. The affective atmosphere of the rehearsal responded to the social relations between the youth and between the youth and the artistic team. This affective intensity, both affectionate and troubled, had both ethical and political implications, or as Massey succinctly suggests, “it is a world being made, through relations, and there lies the politics” (Massey, 2005, p. 15).

To discuss the learning associated with *Concord Floral*, I draw on Ellsworth’s (2005) notions of pedagogy that suggest that learning is not predetermined before the event of people coming together. In the particular case of this research site, the facilitating artistic team remarked in their individual interviews that they had not worked together before and were feeling their way through the process as they went along. I would argue that the affective domain of the pedagogy in this production created a milieu of smooth spatial learning for the becoming-artist that included attention paid to their fuller lives, not just their functional role as actors in this play. One of the youth, Norah Alexic, (English; French; Urdu; straight; South Asian; middle class) described how she too was feeling her way as she began this artistic work:
You know Jordan just wrote this and you’re like, “oh my God he’s probably done this”, like I had the idea “oh my God, he’s probably so used to all these artsy collaborations and things, and we’re all like supposed to be right on the ball”. It was – at the beginning, I felt a little, “okay I have to make sure to get everything perfect” and like, sometimes when I’m with myself, I’m like, “oh shoot, what am I doing? I have to stay on task,” and then once we started to get to know everyone a lot more and we were so used to each other, it became so much more easier, so I didn’t – then like if I didn’t get something I’d be like, “okay, like I just don’t get it, can you just show it to me?” And they’d be like, “okay, sure.” And everyone was just so kind, it wasn’t that bad at all. It wasn’t judgmental. (Norah Alexic, Individual interview, Concord Floral, June 21, 2012)

The cultivation of this social, artistic, and pedagogical space was important for the youth because they did not all come from families that understood their aspirations to develop as artists. In one focus group interview, Sofia (English; French and a little Ukranian; White, straight; female; Ukranian; middle class), explained that this gap in understanding caused considerable conflict with her parents. In the interview, she talked about her exchange with another of the young artists:

like even how I was talking to Hugh, and he’s like, “well in the end, it’s not gonna be like your parents’ decision, it’s gonna be yours, so you should do like what you want to do with your life.”

So yeah, I think that I don’t have the closest relationship with my parents. (Focus group interview, September 10, 2012)

These examples show the milieu created by both the artistic team and the youth who understood the desire to explore what it means to be an artist-in-the-making.

From the data of interviews, field notes, and videos collected from the Concord Floral process, the youth and the team of professional artists described pedagogies that were ongoing, (mostly) affirmative, and lateral in the sense of exchange. These pedagogies were both informal and formal, preplanned and improvisational, as the adult facilitators reacted to the evolving circumstances and social relations created through the rehearsals. I use a broad understanding of pedagogy here that encompasses moments of learning, whether they were initiated by the facilitators or from the youth themselves. The pedagogy did not just flow, as might be expected, from the artists to the youth because, as experts in their own experiences of suburban schools and neighbourhoods, often the youth offered their insights that asked the artistic team to reconsider certain aspects of the production. I would argue that even small negotiations between the youth were acts with pedagogical intent, in the sense that they took place because one person wanted the other to learn something. This pedagogy among the youth actors happened as they met with each other on social media, socialized in the green room, and, as one of the
youth coined it, “subwayed” in together from the suburbs (Norah Alexic, Individual interview, Concord Floral, June 21, 2012).

Pedagogy, however, is not categorically good, and I want to be clear that just because a production has pedagogical strengths does not mean that it is necessarily ethical. Familiar to those in education are pedagogies that fail youth and which are unethical for the harm they cause. For these reasons, I look closely at the ethical and political dimensions of pedagogy in this professional production that engaged youth. In focusing analysis on the milieu, Bryant (2011) posits that it is less about judging and more about looking and learning:

Rather than judging acts, the question will be one of exploring the generative field in which acts are produced. And this is a painstaking and laborious task that requires constant engagement with the milieu. It is a question of learning. (p. 41)

By analyzing the “generative field in which acts are produced,” I illustrate the interdependence of pedagogy, ethics, and milieu to the learning of artists-in-the-making (Bryant, 2011, p. 41). I conclude by considering the relevance of this interdependence of pedagogy, ethics, and milieu to the larger study and what this production and its practices can say about unassimilated difference in the social relations of art making and in the suburb.

**Guide Book**

Following my presentation of the findings of the multiple pedagogies at work in this rehearsal process, I focus on the ethics of youth participation and the production of space comprised of complex gendered social relations. In assessing the affective domain outside the frame of the play, I address the ethics of joy, but also what I suspect are its limits. From this analysis comes a greater understanding of the relationality associated with youth in transit as they move from one place to another. Finally, in trying to formulate vocabulary with which to discuss this kind of hybrid work, I contextualize *Concord Floral* with other theatre practices that Tannahill identified as influential.

One of the strengths of analyzing spatially is that it offers the capacity for multiple trajectories. This chapter addresses two such trajectories: first, the trajectory outside the frame of the play, which is a ritual of largely positive relations, and second, the trajectory at the heart of the play, namely a ritual of violence and gendered relations of dominance. This chapter analyzes the ways that the events within the frame of the play are juxtaposed with the social relations outside the frame of the play and what this says about the contemporary suburbs as lived by these youth.
Trajectory One: The Social Relations Depicted in the Play

This play is about gender-based violence, but it avoids generating solutions. Instead, it explores the repercussions of this violent act and the subsequent hauntings in the lives of these suburban youth. The events within the frame of the play will be considered in more detail after the analysis of the social relations outside the frame of the play. For now, the following excerpt gives a taste of how the play begins:

I was hanging out at the AMC with a friend of mine and I told him I was doing a play. Like, rehearsing for this play or whatever. And he said: ‘nah, theatre sucks man. And I was like: ‘have you ever seen a play?’ And he’s like: ‘well its all just hither this and hither that.’ He’s like movies are always going to be better than plays. Like for one, movies are in 3D now.

I told him: well you should come to this play. It’s going to be in 3D.

Projected title appears:
Concord Floral: 3D

(Concord Floral script by Jordan Tannahill, 2012)

Trajectory Two: The Rehearsal as Relational Space

In a cold rehearsal hall on a humid and warm day – wine coloured leaves on the sidewalk, a run in my pantyhose – new hall – the other one is now under renovation. There is talk as people arrive – laughter – Nomad PhD is sweeping the floor and Sofia is studying for a test. Kiara has a class cancelled so is here on time. Talked to Michael about consent. Miranda has arrived with a pizza bag – we haven’t talked about consent yet. Seeing who is missing. Hero is talking about how he gets here – a bus from Union – “there’s a bus that goes straight to Union.” Check-in is about to start –“is it okay if I get a glass of water” – “sure, of course” says Erin. (Field notes, October 4, 2012).

In Concord Floral, the commitment to youth and aesthetic innovation were both highly prized aspirations, and as Brubacher, one of the artists remarked, it was through the intensity of the social relations that strong aesthetic work became possible. This is not a finding that will be new to drama teachers or applied theatre practitioners, but Brubacher’s role of social dramaturge made prominent the
social and relational aspects of the work of rehearsal and public performance. In writing about her role, Brubacher (2013) said:

In playmaking, the dramaturge is often the unpacker – who, through asking questions and making proposals, often rigorously highlights overlooked details in the text that have weight, not immediately, or perhaps consciously, perceived. A social dramaturge applies the same attention to words collaborators use with each other that a dramaturge might apply to words employed in a script. If a dramaturge is a professional inside/outside eye on the form and content of work, the social dramaturge looks at how and why the work is being done. (p. 2)

Brubacher coined the term social dramaturge to describe the crafting of the social relations around the frame of the play. This practice was not part of the development of the play text, but was a significant part of the development of the production of the play. It was not curation or the public pedagogy surrounding or extending the play, but a conscious relational tending to the people participating in the production. This work was careful and brought an intentional aspect of attention and care to this milieu. It both benefited the play and became integral to the co-production of the play, but it was not part of the literary script of the play.

Tannahill suggested that this role of social dramaturge was invented in response to the presence of the youth actors, “someone who designs and facilitates processes, creative processes that happen within the work and within its relationship to the audiences. How is it that non-professional performers’ experience of our project is facilitated?” (Tannahill interview, November 16, 2012). The artists shared a commitment to collaborative relations in which the aesthetic, ethical, and social were valued. Analyzing these practices offers vocabularies with which to speak about this unique genre of hybrid theatre practice and to heed Alan Read’s (1993) warning: “Outmoded forms of reference such as ‘political theatre’ and ‘community arts’ limit thought to partitioned realms which have very little to do with the complexities of real contexts” (p. 1).

A series of conceptual and theoretical provocations guide the analysis of empirical material. This production sits squarely between notions of political theatre and community arts, and suggests, as does Read (1993), that the binary of community arts and political theatre is outmoded. Jackson (2011), in her work on socially engaged art, suggests the centrality of the social and its inseparability from the artistic endeavor observing, “I try to explore the social aspirations of socially engaged projects less as the extra–aesthetic milieu that legitimates or compromises the aesthetic act and more as the unraveling of the frame that would cast ‘the social’ as ‘extra’”(p. 16). There are works of art, particularly relational art, where the social act is the art. Comprised of social interventions, there is no artistic product. In the Review of
Relevant Literature, some of the performative walking practices cited act as examples of relational art of this kind. I argue that *Concord Floral* was intentionally relational, and that through practices of social pedagogies, the artistic team and the youth co-created a milieu that was conducive for the effective development of the piece, but that the relational and social were not the work itself. Unquestionably, the social relations affected the rehearsals and performance, but the social relations were not the performance. This was a piece of art created and aided, but not comprised of these relations. The performers performed a *play* for the audience and joined them in a post performance talk-back, but this was not a piece of relational art.

**The Ethics of Casting Youth to Play Youth**

As the data show, the artistic, pedagogic, and ethical aspects of this process were intertwined. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) say of books, “there is no difference between what a book talks about and how it was made” (p. 4). This statement is more than just suggesting a work has to have a suitable form or that it cannot be separated from its form. This statement also suggests if the created work espouses an ethical position, then how it is made has to also reflect those ethics or put those ethics into action through the processes of making of the book.

Tannahill, in an interview, made it clear that having youth play youth was preferable to youth being played by actors who were older and professionally trained. Youth actors brought to the rehearsal hall and performance spaces an expertise that came from their lived lives. I argue that the presence of these youth as they engaged with the collaborative processes guided by Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner, offered a kind of minor theatre in which the power relations of theatre could be stretched, reworked, and actively negotiated as acts of artistic pedagogy and pedagogical aesthetics.

In thinking about the youth playing themselves and asking ethical questions about a presumed tension regarding representation, this question is more complex than one might think on first glance. For instance, during a focus group interview, one of the youth participants, Kiara, suggested it was not that they were simply playing themselves, but “we’re playing ourselves, or we’re playing ourselves playing ourselves” (Focus group interview, *Concord Floral*, Tarragon Theatre, October 13, 2013). In a post-performance discussion, Gertrude (English; French and Persian; straight; female; middle class; Persian) said, “we play different versions of ourselves” (Video transcription, post-performance discussion, *Concord Floral*, November 6, 2012). This important distinction does not suggest that the youth actors were simply playing themselves somewhat transparently, but that they recognized the layers of performance in their performance of self/youth. Awareness of the gap between the performance of self
and the performance of the performance of self allowed for agency and removed some of the potential for exploitation of youth stories as framed by adults.

Tannahill specified that he did not choose the youth because of their address, or because they were from the suburbs, but because he was interested in them as people and as becoming artists:

> if I cast only within Vaughan or only within a certain limited throw, I think it would've felt too much like I was, kind of interested in them for very specific reasons beyond what - I think I'm more interested in them as human beings, and as artists, as opposed to geographic subjects. (Tannahill interview, *Concord Floral*, November 16, 2012)

With this sensibility, the emerging artistic identity trumps the spatial or locational identity. If the stated intentions of the work are to foster artistic growth through aesthetic and social pedagogies, does that change the ethics of engaging youth for their age and the place in which they live? If the youth are engaged as developing artists, then there is pedagogical intent, from which the youth can potentially benefit. I would argue this pedagogical intent has the potential to change the ethics of relations.

The “artist-becoming” may be one of the mobile identities that Ruddick (2010) encourages scholars to look for that lie beyond the confines of conventional sociological categories. According to Tannahill, the *Concord Floral* project targeted the “becoming-artist” as the group they set out to engage. The fact that eight of these youth lived in suburban areas was useful to the production, but it was not the central concern of the artistic team. In quite a Deleuzian way, Tannahill was concerned with the differenciation of the artistic work of the youth as it became different, in relational encounter with the others, the text and the audience.

That said, although the geographic identities may have not been the most important consideration for the artistic team, might there be something in the suburbanness of the youth that provoked them to be part of this production? Might the performance have become an embodiment of their suburban lives even though it was not necessarily intended? To address these questions, I draw on the data from the post-performance talk-backs that were led by the youth themselves, during which much was said about the particulars of their home streets, neighbourhoods, and Cineplexes as gathering places.

**The Ethics of Writing a Play Not Comprised of Youth Experiences**

Tannahill discussed the ethics involved in his decision to write the play from his own experiences and from his own imagination. Although the youth actors contributed to the development of the play, he was very clear, “air tight,” as he said in an interview, that this was his script. In so doing, he avoided what he called:
murky gray areas that one can get into when you’re actively extrapolating on the personal experiences of those individuals, because what might feel safe in a rehearsal context to share, becomes very different when it is presented to the public and I think there’s a lot of pitfalls that can come from sharing valuable material, well I mean, any material from the personal lives of the cast. (Tannahill interview, Concord Floral, November 16, 2012)

Certainly, there are ways to work with youth ethically as they tell their stories, but I respect Tannahill and his team for treading carefully, especially in light of a restricted time frame for rehearsals. In his interview, however, Tannahill said much of the play was informed by the fact that it had been workshopped with the same cast months earlier. From this earlier experience, he explained, the youth had become integrated into his writing of the characters:

even the very structure of the play was heavily informed by the questions they were asking, the sort of things that were happening in their lives, and so they were very much present in my own personal dramaturgy of the piece. (Tannahill interview, Concord Floral, November 16, 2012)

In this sense then, the youth were hired, like any actor, to take on a part written by someone else. Some youth articulated resonances they found in the play with their own lives, but Tannahill was careful to point out this was not based on their experiences, but his. His clarity about telling his own story, and his taking responsibility for it, ensured the youth did not have to face a situation of regret from having said too much, or from not having really understood how exposed they might feel in performance.

When I asked Norah Alexic about the relevance of this play to her life, she remarked on three things. She mentioned a close female friendship; she talked about bullying and its prominence in the media; and she described the Cineplex was the place she would also go with her friends. Further evidence to support the centrality of the Cineplex in the social lives of youth was found in the video footage from the youth-run, post-performance audience discussions.

In this excerpt, I share Kiara’s account of her life and the points of intersection with the play:

It’s very significant for me because, for the majority of the cast, whether they live in the city or the suburbs, they do have a place to hang out or whatever but for me, I literally don’t have a place. Like I go to the city to do anything, like I don’t have a place at all – not even a friend’s house. So the city is my Concord Floral. (Video transcription, post-performance audience discussion, November 10, 2012)

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22 The opening scene of the play is set at a suburban Cineplex.
Kiara’s words are very significant and feature prominently in this analysis. They say much about her life in the suburb that she considered inhospitable; “I feel isolated in the suburbs because it’s more like everyone’s watching and everyone knows me, but they don’t actually know me” (Focus group interview, November 7, 2012). She continued in the focus group interview to say living in her suburb made her self-conscious, and in response to highly religious neighbours, she changed the way she dressed. This is a suburb that made her feel “not welcome,” and in this non-youth-friendly-space, Kiara recognized that she was being watched and judged (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, November 7, 2012). This suspicion of youth and the casual surveillance she felt may reflect what Henry Giroux (2009) has called the “demonization of youth” (p. 10).

**Pedagogies of Transit: The Creation of Mobile Space**

Another space of social learning described by the youth occurred outside the theatre altogether when the youth were in transit, either coming into the city to rehearsals, or returning to their homes in the suburbs afterwards. The youth accounts of travelling and being in transit were important areas of inquiry, according to Clifford James (1989), who says, “‘travel’ suggests at least profane activity, following public routes and beaten tracks. How do populations, classes and genders travel? What kind of knowledges, stories and theories do they produce? A crucial research agenda opens up” (Inscriptions 5, http://culturalstudies.ucsc.edu/PUBS/Inscriptions/vol_5/v5_top.html).

I suggest that the processes of building the production that included both collaborative rehearsals and formalized social interaction before and after the rehearsal along with the travel to and from the suburb, acted, for some of the youth, as a materialization of the spaces that they could not find in their lives, either at school or in their communities. I want to be clear: I am not identifying a lack in any individual person, but a lack in the current configuration of suburban space where the pressures on land to be developed into commodified spaces preclude open social and recreational space for youth. Many of the youth talked about gathering at the mall or the Cineplex, but, as Norah Alexic remarked, those spaces were spaces with a purpose geared towards a kind of organized activity (shopping and movie going). She contrasted that space with the space where youth could congregate and said, “you’re not going for one purpose, you’re going there to kind of be. Everything is different, when it’s like that, your mindset is different” (Norah Alexic, Individual interview, Concord Floral, June 21, 2012).

When we visited the real space of Concord Floral in Vaughan, we were shocked to discover that the area was being bulldozed and cleared for the construction of condominiums. For some of the youth, there was a sense of attachment to this place that they had only known through their imagining of the site stimulated by Tannahill’s script. Was this a place that had come to represent their longings for
independent space? I cannot say with any certainty, but in the interviews and post performance talk-backs, the youth identified an absence of places to congregate. In an interview, Norah Alexic commented on her context of Mississauga:

I didn’t notice it before until now, now I don’t feel like it’s that big of a deal. But I think it is a little bit of a challenge now that I think of it, ‘cause – I think of like what – what would I even do after school or whatever on weekends and it’d always be only situations like, it’s an adult filled, controlled location like movies or going shopping or whatever. (Norah Alexic, Individual interview, June 21, 2012)

Michael (English and French; straight; Caucasian; middle class; male) remarked about his life in the context of the suburb of Oakville:

I can totally relate to the thing about Concord Floral, because in suburbia it’s just – there’s a bunch of streets where there’s all the people, and then the forests – there’s no one there - there’s a lot of green that is just totally unoccupied. So when you want to do something – whether go to the movies – ‘cause there’s nothing else open and there’s only so many movies you can watch – that gets boring after a while. And you go, “why don’t we just roam the streets? Because there’s nobody out right now. It’s just gonna to be us.” (Video transcription, post performance audience discussion, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 10, 2012)

He described two things. At night when the streets are deserted, this space became the place to gather with his friends and walk. Malone (2002) suggests that for some youth, the only space available for youth to gather is the street, “for many young people the street is the stage for performance, where they construct their social identity in relation to their peers and other members of society” (Malone, 2002, p. 163). For Michael, this statement seems to hold true. Of note is the fact that Michael made no mention of being threatened by police or other people at night on the streets; however, within the context of Australia, Malone describes curfews and detainment policies that have been put in place to curb youth presence in the streets at night. She also asks a pertinent question that points to the intersectionality of youth, gender, and race in the space of the street, “whose needs and values are privileged in the architecture of our city streets?” (p. 167).

The streets at night may be experienced differently by different bodies, and Michael, as a White male, may not encounter any of the fears his Black or female peers might feel. As Sara Ahmed (2004) suggests, not all bodies feel fear in the same way, and nor do others perceive them as fearful in the same way. She says, “fear is felt differently by different bodies, in the sense that there is a relationship to space and mobility at stake in the differential organization of fear itself” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 68). Michael may be
comfortable at night walking the streets, but for Kiara, a Black girl who has recently moved to the suburbs and is without a peer group, this option may not be available to her.

Sibley (1995) writes about how youth are constructed into a dangerous threat saying, “space is implicated in the construction of deviancy” (p. 86). What he seems to suggest is that youth are seen to transgress the border between childhood and adulthood, as “adolescents may be threatening to adults because they transgress the adult/child boundary and appear discrepant in adult spaces” (p. 34). He builds this argument stating, “difference in a strongly classified and strongly framed assemblage would be seen as deviance and a threat to the power structure” (p. 80). Alexander Means (2013) also addresses this construction of youth deviancy and suggests that young people are blamed for social conditions that are beyond their making, “urban youth tend to be positioned as either “endangered” or “dangerous,” while social problems are increasingly framed in terms of the supposed criminal pathology of young people” (p. 32). Means refers to urban youth, but I would argue that this statement also holds true for youth scattered throughout the contemporary postmetropolis. Giroux (2009) suggests this blaming and punishing approach to youth is connected to neoliberalism’s abdication of responsibility for investment in social infrastructure and its commercialization of childhood and youth. Giroux (2009) says:

Too many youth within the degraded economic, political, and cultural geography occupy a "dead zone" in which the spectacle of commodification exists side by side with the imposing threat of massive debt, bankruptcy, the prison-industrial complex, and the elimination of basic civil liberties. Rather than investing in the public good and solving social problems, the state now punishes those who are caught in the downward spiral of its economic policies. (p. 11)

Returning to Michael and his interviews, I highlight the importance of walking to his relational space with peers because mobility is important to the creation of temporary relational space by the youth involved in this play and by other youth involved in the broader research project. Michael identified walking as a means of creating relational space with his friends, but when he walked alone in the city, he experienced it as the site of his independence:

I feel like if I was from another, like, era, I would have to always be with them and like tag along with them [his parents]. But um, this era, this era of technology gives me more freedom, so I think, something I identify myself with is the, is the age that I’m growing up in. (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 10, 2013)

Walking in the city then became a kind of experiment in putting his “boyness” and his “suburbanness” in motion. For another youth, Norah Alexic, the travel into the city to meet and work with new youth was a welcome addition to the small group of French Immersion students she had known throughout her
schooling (coincidentally at Branch Secondary School in Mississauga). She talked about being with the “same” people and encountering the “same conversations.” In the city rehearsals of this play, she found something that was different. It was not that there was not any conversation at school, but that, over time, the conversations had become predictable.

In terms of travel from the suburbs, for Sofia who lived in Etobicoke, the process of taking transit was new and different:

Before I became part of this process, like in May or whenever, I've never actually bussed downtown, ever alone. Like if I went downtown, then I'd just go to the Eaton Centre or something once with my friends or whatever. So then, like the very first day that I bussed, the guy, he was like, “oh, you take the 511 street car.” So I was like, “what's a street car? Is that like a bus or something?” He's like, “No, no, no it's that thing.” So I was like, “oh, ok. So do you have to like pay for it separately?” And he's like, “No, no you paid for it already with your, like, bus ticket.” I was like, “okay.” So after I went there, then I was just waiting like right beside the street car, but then apparently, like the street car – it moves up, so then after the guy – I was just standing there, the guy was not opening the door or anything. And then eventually he opened it, he's like, “yeah, you can just wait over there.” And I was like, “where?” And he's like, “where all those people are waiting.” And I was like, “Okay. Got it.” So yeah I guess, ‘cause I was the only one who was – like I was bussing alone, ‘cause I didn't know anyone else who was like going in my direction or anything. So, I guess that caused me to become like more mature, like you all were saying and everything. And, just I guess, like even coming home, like at a later time, like I would never come home like, that late or anything. And like it did bring up arguments, like with my parents, and like this past year we had - ‘cause I was slowly like maturing more and more - then I guess, we had more arguments. I think that... this process, – definitely did, like, shape me to who I am today. Because I definitely did go a huge step from like, from before, because like I used to never go downtown. I used to just always, pretty much just stay home and like, just hang out with friends or like movies or stuff or whatever. (Sofia, Focus group interview, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 10, 2012)

According to these data collected in this research, the youth talked about the move away not just from the suburb, but also from family roles and expectations. There was learning at many levels in this

23 She was a grade twelve student and not part of the grade ten class in which my research was conducted, but as she straddled both sites of the research, her insights and comments were very helpful.
movement from place to place, as Sofia linked mobility to her own maturity and the friction it caused with her parents.

A study conducted by Brown, Mackett, Gong, Kitazawa, and Perkins (2008) on youth mobility suggests that girls take public transit more often while boys walk or ride their bikes. This study does not conclude that girls have more local and restricted lives, just that they have different patterns of mobility. The youth in my study seem to follow the pattern described by Brown et al., in that the girls talked about their time on public transit as important social time and Michael talked about his walking both at night and in the city. In both cases, the travel created a relational space suspended between places without supervision by adults. This creation of micro spaces in transit and walking in the city, produced open spaces for youth as they slipped from what is known into what is not. These, I would argue, were differenciations for the becoming-adult as well as the becoming-artist. Norah Alexic described her “subwaying” as a means to continue the conversation about rehearsal and as the means for getting to know the others in the cast:

I think what was cool about it, was that, even also after the rehearsals like we all subwayed home and stuff, so we’d still end up talking about it. And I think that’s the part where I really got to know them more too, and once you get into that, I guess, relationship, it was easier to work with them and I got to understand like how they thought. But like I realized there was such a difference, ’cause like when we were all hanging out – it’d be like, we’d have fun and then as soon as, I noticed such a change in them when we’d be rehearsing - they’d be much more like, serious.
(Norah Alexic, Individual interview, June 21, 2011)

In this exchange, she said much about the relational space that they created in the subway on their way home. As they had a good distance to go, they extended conversational time together. I suggest this subway ride was differenciated by the presence of the youth, making it more than just the means of getting from one place to another. This is significant because the youth, through participating in practices of art making not in their own communities, were provided with an opening (their travel time) through which they created for themselves a relational space that was also an alternative to the Cineplex and the mall. The combination of social pedagogies, performance creation, and the necessary travel put the suburb in relation to the city and the city in relation to the suburb, in ways not previously experienced by these youth.

In addition to identifying a lack of important infrastructure in the suburb, in coming to the city and returning to the suburb, youth put the two locations into relation. The suburb then, in this sense, is not

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24 Regarding transportation, it is important to point out that although the youth made the most of their commutes, that transportation was slow and too infrequent. I received a text from one of the youth who said that if I wanted to
separate from the city, but exists in relation to it. What is significant here is that relational space
does not just refer to the relations between people, but through these youth, place becomes relational
with other places. The youth, as they brought the suburb into relation with the city, were working against
the modernist assumption that space works in isolation or, as Massey (2005) describes it, a “billiard ball
view of place” (p. 68). The suburb could now be thought of as produced, at least partially, by the youth
and through them, the space of the suburb evolved and emerged. Massey (2005) also suggests that place
has everything to do with meeting saying, “places, rather than being locations of coherence, become the
foci of meeting and the non-meeting of the previously unrelated and thus integral to the generation of
novelty” (p. 71). According to Massey (2005) space can be:

thought of as an emergent product of relations, including those relations which establish
boundaries, and where ‘place’ in consequence is necessarily meeting place, where the
‘difference’ of a place must be conceptualized more in the ineffable sense of the constant
emergence of uniqueness out of (and within) the specific constellation of interrelations within
which that place it set. (p. 68)

The suburb is not static, but in production. These youth brought their experiences of suburban spatial
relations into the rehearsal, which was, in itself, a space of relations. Suburb is not a thing, but a
relational possibility between things, people, and processes. Alan Walks (2013) suggests that
suburbanism is not rooted to a particular place. In the case of these youth, the suburban attitudes and
suburban imaginations were mobile as the bodies and minds of these youth travelled from suburb to city
and back.

Social pedagogy and Conversational Space

The personal was not entirely absent from the space of these rehearsals, and part of the social pedagogy
of the production was a pre rehearsal check-in and a post rehearsal check-out. To protect the
confidentiality of these conversations, I will not address their content (what was said), but I will speak to

know about the suburbs that I should understand that she just had to wait 45 minutes for her bus. It is also
expensive for suburban youth to travel from the suburb to city and back because at the border of the city/suburb, a
second full fare is required. What the youth expressed matches the Mississauga Youth Plan (2009), which identified
the lack of transportation in the suburbs as a considerable problem, particularly for youth who cannot drive. In an
environment built specifically for cars, youth either have to depend on adults to drive them to other places, or they
face long waits for public transit. These conditions of the suburb show that it was designed for cars and the adults
who drive them. This space was not conceived and designed with youth, or the sociality of youth, in mind.
their structure. Everyone would sit in a circle on the floor, as we would take turns talking about whatever was most pressing at the time. This intentional encounter acted as a powerful social connector, and youth made reference to these check-ins in the interviews:

So, there was like something – I started to look forward to them, ‘cause I’m like okay, I can let things off, things like I don’t tell kids at school. ‘Cause it’s like, none of the kids go to my school, I can just be like you know, I can be myself, and have my moment to talk and then we begin.
(Norah Alexic, Individual interview, June 21, 2012)

The check-ins were not entirely spontaneous. Norah Alexic remarked that her friend, as they travelled to rehearsal on the subway together, would say that she had so much to tell her, but she was saving it for check-in. I had a similar experience driving Kiara to a rehearsal. While she was talking to me about her day, she said that I would learn about the other things during check-in. Significantly, the youth would think about check-in through their day and plan what they would say to the rest of the group. This could be considered a performance of place in the sense that the youth prepared and performed their days and their travel to the theatre for the rest of us. hooks, (1990) writes of a space of “radical openness,” but she says it has to be the space one chooses, and that it is not chosen for us as a place of domination. These check-ins were a space that was open for the youth, and I was clear that the content of what was said would not be quoted in the research.

This practice extended conventional rehearsals by making them more intentionally social, assuming that it was not enough for the youth to come together to create the play, but that they should also know each other differently. It was impossible to gauge the impact of such a practice, but it was important to the youth actors and they missed it, if it was skipped. Brubacher contended that when the check-in was full and not rushed, the youth performed better. (Brubacher interview, Concord Floral, November 21, 2012).

To understand how the youth experienced the social relations of the rehearsal, in a focus group at Videofag with Gertrude, Kiara, and Sofia, I asked what the space would have learned about them. Following the question, there was a long silence. They suggested the space might have learnt something about the director, as they understood he did most of the talking. They thought the space would know how they were a cohesive group. One girl said that the space would know their feet. Although they thought the space would know about how they worked, it would know little about their personal lives. Then Gertrude said, “what about check-in?,” and they reconsidered. Kiara said that it was such a small moment of who they are, and Sofia replied that it “might be enough” (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Videofag, October 27, 2012). The check-ins, then, served as a place for personal exchange and as
a place of making oneself known or intelligible to others, and that differed from what was possible in rehearsal.

**A Pedagogy of Collaboration**

How then can this relational spatial pedagogy be brought into the discussion of the hybrid work without resorting to terms that reduce it to either the instrumental or the artistic? The youth were directly involved in the check-ins, and although their personal stories were not included in the play (or the research), the youth actors were encouraged to participate in the aesthetic decisions that comprised the rehearsing and development of the play. Tannahill said it would have been a weak process had the youth collaborators not been included, because “if, there's an unrigourous process or if collaborators are disenfranchised or – they're treated as subjects I think that really does come through and more often than not – I think you just have to be rigourous throughout” (Tannahill interview, November 16, 2012). In an interview, Spooner said she suggested to the team instead of whispering in their discussions of certain moments in the play, that the artistic team should make audible the discussion between them so the youth actors could hear. She remembered saying, “I think it's really important that the kids hear this, so we would just pipe up and if we have these questions, just put them out into the room” (Spoonier interview, *Concord Floral*, November 13, 2012).

In terms of pedagogy, the artistic team held open a space, this milieu of enfranchised collaboration in which the youth could learn without being formally instructed. Ellsworth (2005) advocated such pedagogies that offer a learning opportunity, but did not prescribe how such learning will be taken up or experienced. In her interview, Norah Alexic said how, in the early rehearsals at Canadian Stage, she felt she was out of her depth and hesitated to participate:

> I’m gonna admit, like at the first few weeks, I didn’t have a lot to say ‘cause I was like, so new to it, I couldn’t come up, I wasn’t – you know – totally comfortable, ah, not comfortable, but just like totally in it, as I wanted to be. (Norah Alexic, Individual interview, *Concord Floral*, June 21, 2012)

Norah Alexic suggested, although she was always deeply attentive, she found that it took time for her to contribute, while Miranda (English; straight; middle class; Caucasian; female) said that youth contributions to the artistic process were sometimes curtailed due to time constraints. She referred to the notes given by the artists after the run of the play when time was often running short before the theatre was locked up for the night:
it seems like we’re in the middle of notes or something or planning something out – that’s when you want to talk the most and they’re like, “no, you can’t talk” – so you’re like – shit - but that’s when you have the most to say. So those usually stick out in my head. You want to say something – we’re rehearsing but you can’t. (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, November 7, 2012)

Her strong impulse to contribute was tempered by the recognition that she could not slow down the process of notes.

In rehearsal, the youth entered into the discussions of the artistic team often, and their comments were respectfully heard in the increasingly collaborative and dialogic space. Sofia remarked that youth opinions and inputs were part of the learning that she took away from the process. She recognized that in other productions, they might have been taken less seriously because of their age saying, “if we were to work somewhere professionally, somewhere else, we wouldn’t have as much input. So we’re learning how to give input. Whereas if we were somewhere else, they’d be like, ‘oh, you’re just a, you know, teenager” (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Tarragon Theatre, October 13, 2012). Here, she referred to what cultural geographers Valentine, Skelton, and Chambers (1998) suggest is the separation between youth and adult cultures. They consider adolescence as a time of separation from adults or “quarantine” (Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998, p. 4). Sibley (1995) discusses this “in between” time of adolescence that has no clear demarcation between childhood, youth and adulthood:

the boundary separating child and adult is decidedly a fuzzy one. Adolescence is an ambiguous zone within which the child/adult boundary can be variously located according to who is doing the categorizing. Thus, adolescents are denied access to the adult world but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child. At the same time they retain some links with childhood. (p. 35)

The rehearsals of Concord Floral contrasted the artistic spaces that Sofia imagined in which she would be taken less seriously because of her youth. Kiara recognized the expertise that she could contribute, and that it acted as a kind of pedagogy for the artistic team saying, “I relate to a lot of like what Jordan was talking about, so I’m like, ‘well maybe I – he probably appreciates it if I would tell him…if his ideas are accurate or not’” (Kiara, Focus group interview, Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, October 13, 2012).

In practice, what did this input look like? I will now describe a particular instance during the lunch break when Kiara asked Bonnie (English; Somali; straight; female; East African; Black; middle class) how she felt about saying a certain line. Bonnie said she was aware of the bad grammar. Kiara responded by
saying it created a kind of racial stereotype that sounded unintelligent. When Tannahill walked by, they approached him about their concern and he changed the word immediately. This intervention, initiated by these youth actors, challenged particular phrasing in the script they thought could contribute to stereotypical portrayals of African-Canadian youth. This negotiation of the language used in the play was ethically enfranchised, and this created a socially engaged, politically sensitized milieu. Razack has says (1998) that, “if we can name the organizing frames, the conceptual formulas, the rhetorical devices that disguise and sustain elites, we can begin to develop responses that bring us closer to social justice” (p. 16). Neely and Samura (2009) connect race and space and ask a question that is relevant to this small, but significant, exchange, “who does and who does not have the power to define and control space?” (p. 1939). The questions asked by Kiara and Bonnie were about “what social relations and social identities are being re/produced in and through social and physical spaces?” (Neely & Samura, 2009, p. 1947). These girls did not want to reproduce a misrepresentative social identity or a racial stereotype that cast Black girls as grammatically incorrect.

**Retreat, Refuge, Watershed Youth, and the Absence of Space**

In Tannahill’s play, the open space of Concord Floral acted as a place that was separate from the pressures associated with school and home. There were data to suggest that for some of the youth actors, the rehearsals acted as a kind of retreat, in a parallel space, apart from the pressures of school and their relationships with parents. For some youth, the play *Concord Floral* acted as a kind of “Concord Floral” or retreat.

One of the youth, Hugh (English; straight; Caucasian; male; middle class), in a post-performance discussion said that he considered his involvement in the play as a personal kind of Concord Floral:

> Audience member: Do you have a place, any of you, like Concord Floral in your real lives?

> Hugh: This theatre.


Perhaps this is a space that resembles Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) “representational space” (p. 33). Soja (1996) states about these spaces, “they are linked to the ‘clandestine and underground side of social life’ and also to art” (p. 67). Soja continues to describe this space that is populated by the highly creative noting, “those who seek to describe rather than decipher and actively transform the worlds we live in” (p. 67). This space might also be like Foucault’s heterotopia which he describes as “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found
in the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault, 1986, p. 24 as cited in Soja, 1996, p. 157). Soja (1996) states “these are privileged or sacred or forbidden places and sites that have been persistently disappearing in ‘our society’” (p. 159).  

When I asked Tannahill what he thought about Hugh’s remark, he replied, “I think some do have strained relations with their parents, or peers, or just feeling in a general dark space and I think that the theatre process was, ‘a real Concord Floral’ for them – a refuge space” (Tannahill interview, November 16, 2012). For Tannahill, however, the place of Concord Floral he imagined as the setting of the play was more complex than a simple space of refuge. He stated:

Concord Floral was a site of coming of age - both negative and positive locations of that. It was a kind of watershed site, in which brutal things happened, but also it was a place of ecstatic release and shelter and I think that that actually is much truer to the nature of these spaces, the nature of these communities, than more simplistic renderings. (Tannahill interview, Concord Floral, November 16, 2012)

Tannahill was not saying that the youth “retreat” into suspended social relations in his imagined place of Concord Floral, but that it was a place of encounter embroiled in social relations. Although some of the youth actors may have found in the rehearsals of the production a kind of refuge from their outside lives, the space of the rehearsals, backstage, break time, and the talk-back sessions were also embroiled in complex social relations.

**Lateral Relational Spatial Pedagogies: The Gender Politics of Taking Up Space**

John Horton and Peter Kraftl (2006) suggest that in children’s geographies looking for the small is important and that “banality matters” (p. 271). Gill Valentine, Tracey Skelton, and Deborah Chambers (1998) in their edited work on the geographies of youth cultures, note their focus was both the spectacular and “mundane” (p. 1). For these reasons, I turn now to a small exchange that shows how one youth taught another about the degree to which she was comfortable with another youth’s proximity. This may be considered a kind of minor pedagogy, but I argue that these are the politics of gendered places that are being taught and learned in exchange. This example took place in the green room when Hero (Selangor and English; bisexual; Chinese; middle class; male) tried to squeeze himself into a tiny space between Kiara and the edge of the couch. In the field note account of this encounter, Kiara said, “do you see a space here?” (Video notes, Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 7, 2012). Hero understood that Kiara did not want to be crowded when he pressed

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25 Michael described his walking late at night as a kind of youth counter space after the adults had gone to bed.
up against her. When I asked Kiara about the incident in an interview later, she said her comment was intended as a joke. Either way, they negotiated the spatial arrangement of their bodies. Kiara made specific the kinds of relational proximity she could tolerate, and she defined the boundaries of touch and bodily contact, all within the context of a joke.

A second instance of spatial learning about gender relations occurred when the adult facilitators pointed out that space could be dominated by those who insisted on airtime, or controlling conversations without realizing it. This incident happened in the post performance talk-back sessions run by the youth. The adult facilitators noticed that the boys were talking more frequently than the girls, and later in the green room, Brubacher addressed this imbalance with the group. She offered social pedagogy regarding gender relations that asked the boys to share the airtime or conversational space and invited the girls to come forward and speak.26

This reflexive stance that considered the balance or imbalance of power in the social relations was part of the pedagogical social dramaturgy that was enacted by all of the facilitators at one time or another. Tannahill spoke about the careful awareness that rehearsals demanded of him and he expressed his consciousness of the differences in age and artistic experience between the actors and himself:

I remind myself even though I am treating the cast as professional actors, that they're not adults and that there is a difference in experience in maturity and, you know, in vocabulary, and – just being kind of always present and aware of what my actions were saying and what my words were saying beyond their meaning, and beyond their surface meaning. And just be - just be very cautious I think of what role I embody every time I step into the room as, as a director. (Tannahill interview, Concord Floral, November 16, 2012)

26 Post performance discussions are difficult. Caroline Heim (2012) has suggested, “actors are often hesitant to interact with audience and prefer to preserve the relationship of character-audience rather than create the new relationship of actor-audience” (p. 190). David Rush (2000) has contended they work better when they are facilitator-driven rather than audience-driven, “the best discussion were those in which the facilitator was in control and not the audience” (p. 54). In the case of this talk-back’s structure, the youth responded to the questions asked of them by the audience. Rush also underlined the importance of planning these audience/artist interactions although he is aware that they often happen “on the fly” (p. 63). There was something refreshing about the conversation that had not been rehearsed. While the hesitation to speak on the part of the youth actors may have been gendered, it could also be informed by other power dynamics and uncertainty associated with audience talk-back sessions.
Relational Space and Rehearsal Halls

Massey (2005) suggests that space is relational in much the same way that Lefebvre (1974) suggests that space is designed, but then is lived in many different ways. Connecting to this discussion is Massumi’s (2011) notion of “reconstructive architecture,” which suggests that although the architectural design does not change, the experience of inhabiting it does (p. 102). Ellsworth (2005) observes that, “because architectural space unfolds and actualizes only as we move, live through, and thereby embody it, architecture has the capacity to generate encounters and events” (p. 124). When asked specifically about the space of Videofag where they rehearsed before moving into Theatre Passe Muraille, the youth discussed the importance of knowing each other and how sharing the space had been pleasurably relational:

Kiara: Cozy,

Sofia: Yeah –

Kiara: ‘cause you know we’re with people we love, right.

Sofia: Yeah it was cozy.

Kiara: (Sound – cat like – like she is fully aware that what she said is embarrassing. This is light hearted – commenting on her own expression of attachment but not discrediting or undermining it either – and then she continues).

Kiara: Yeah, It doesn’t really matter where we are, it’s always cozy as long we are together-

Sofia: Yeah, Yeah exactly.

Kiara: As cheesy as that sounds.

Sofia: Yeah, yeah. That makes sense.

Gertrude: I don’t know I kinda feel more cozy here [at Videofag] than at Tarragon - because. -

Kiara: More colour actually as well.

Gertrude: Yeah, because the Tarragon is [painted] all white -

Kiara: It’s all yeah, white and blank.
Sofia: Yeah all white and like kind of blank, yeah,

Kiara: Mmh hmm. I know what you mean.

Gertrude: And also here if you look outside, there’s people -

Sofia: Yeah -

Gertrude: and there’s life. Where at Tarragon, there’s just like a road and there’s two places to eat-

Kiara; And you have to be quiet because other people are working, generally -

Sofia: And even if you do look outside the window at Tarragon like when we were in t’other space, or whatever, then -

Gertrude: There was just a parking.

Sofia: Yeah exactly.

Gertrude: And here here’s life and people. Also -

Kiara: And it’s a home, right.

Sofia: Yeah.

Gertrude: Also the fact that there are many places to eat is a plus.

Kiara: Plus it’s Kensington – that has another feel as well as well -

Sofia: Yeah. Mmmhmmm.

Kiara: So it’s - it’s artsy -

Sofia: (She speaks at the same time as Kiara) Yeah, like here even people like stop and look in.

Kiara: Basically his living room - it’s sort of an explosion of Kensington.

Gertrude: Pardon.

Kiara: It’s sort of an explosion of the vibe of Kensington.

Gertrude: Pardon?
Kiara: It’s sort of an explosion of vibe of Kensington - it’s like concentrated in this space.

(Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Videofag, October 27, 2012).

Although they acknowledged that the space at Videofag was also Tannahill’s home, they stressed the importance of the relational space they created together rather than the space as it was designed. They quickly recognized that their relations were not place dependent – they created the relational space here at Videofag because of their attachment and affection for each other. The space did not create the relations, but the relations created the affective space.

Shaughnessy (2012) outlines seven elements in current performance practice that serve pedagogical and social ends; one of them is “pleasure” (p. 43). She builds her argument by drawing on Thompson, who suggests that “commitment to pleasure, passion and enjoyment is a starting point for a political – aesthetic practice that acknowledges the importance of our affection for others as a stimulus to social change” (Thompson, 2009, as cited in Shaughnessy, 2012, p. 43). According to Thompson, not only is this joyful and open affection socially important, it is an important beginning for the political.

**Open Interpretation**

In spite of compositional relations in the cast, there were conflicts and sub-groups that formed within the larger one. Kiara identified the group as one comprised of subgroups: “bus buddies,” those who had done a previous youth program at Tarragon, and between girls and boys. Sofia said, “we’re all still close,” and Kiara said, “there are different groups but not divided, if that makes sense” (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 7, 2012). Significantly, these comments suggest relations of unassimilated difference in that there was an integrity to the parts that were different and not the same. Kiara, in the focus group, differentiated between difference and division.

An example of a decompositional encounter occurred during the rehearsals for the spring staged reading and marked one of the gender-related tensions. Deleuze (1970/1988) says you cannot know beforehand which way the social relations or the encounter of ideas will go, “when a body ‘encounters another body,’ or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other destroying the composition of its parts” (p. 19). One of the male actors made an offensive remark about the violation in the play and called it, quite suggestively, a “hit and run” (Field notes, Concord Floral, Canadian Stage, May 10, 2012). This comment provoked Spooner to come forward. She diffused any traction he might have won with the others, and in front of the whole group, according to my field notes, said that, “she chooses to ignore what he said” (Field notes, Concord Floral, Canadian Stage, May 10, 2012). Choosing a public silence,
Spooner acted in solidarity with Gertrude who was paired with this boy, who seemed to be making light of the violence suggested in the scene. Spooner steered the group to more compositional relations by demonstrating what Gallagher (2007) describes as the “creative exploration of conflict” (p. 140).

Jason Lim (2007) writes about the “politics of affect” and drawing on the work of Eve Sedgwick, suggests that there is a paranoid response that assumes this kind of behaviour is inevitable, and conversely, a reparative stance that “seeks to attend to aggressive or oppressive bodies in an attempt to assemble or repair their relations into something coherent, although not necessarily like a pre-existing body or assemblage” (p. 66). Far from being a resolution to a problem, this exchange was an example of a pedagogy that held open the space for discomfort rather than smoothing it over, making it into some kind of false conclusion. Ahmed (2004) says, “feminist teaching (rather than teaching feminism) begins with this opening, this pause or hesitation, which refuses to allow the taken-for-granted to be granted” (p. 182). This example showed that the gender relations of the space, or the social relations that produced this gendered space, had to be negotiated with an older artist setting the parameters firmly and gently without humiliation, but issuing a reproof without having to say a word.

In the second version of the play, it is useful to consider Sibley’s (1995) notions of purifying space and his work on spatial rituals. He writes about ritual in terms of spatial organization and what he calls “boundary rituals” (p. 73). Could the play Concord Floral be considered a play of ritual purification at the field party followed by the ritual of revenge? By attacking Christina, would the youth be purifying their space? In the following scene, Isabella, the friend of the violated girl, looked for her friend as the narrator told the story.

7. The Field

*Isabella stands still as, in the video, the camera moves through the tall grasses. Beer bottles, a campfire pit, and other remnants of the field party are seen in the footage.*

NARRRATOR

Isabella searched for answers in the field.

Remains of a campfire, beer bottles, tire treads, a bra.

And a moldy couch.

*A couch appears behind the scrim, illuminated. It appears as if it is sitting in the field.*

NARRRATOR
The one Christina and her dragged there in the first year to smoke cigarettes and watch Kurosawa films on. The used to sit on that couch and imagine how their everyday lives might suddenly be transformed into a movie. Imagining how something spectacular might happen in their sleepy corner of Vaughan, even though they knew it never would. Only they knew about that spot. It was their secret.

*(Concord Floral* script by Jordan Tannahill, 2012)*

Shane Blackman (1998) writes about New Wave Girls in a school in the south of England. He documents the assertive group of girls, whom he suggests create “rituals of integrity: close and intense groups relations created a powerful social base for opposing and challenging the patriarchal stance of the school hierarchy, male pupils and boyfriends” (p. 224). Blackman says this reputation for lesbianism “gave them protection from heterosexual aggression and sexist harassment” (p. 225). But in a second play by Tannahill (2013), *Get Yourself Home Skyler James*, a lesbian woman in the military was not saved from heterosexual threats of sexual violence, and in response, she fled. The offstage scene of violation in *Concord Floral* is open to interpretation, but perhaps the violation that happened is in response to this strong female friendship. This close girl friendship challenges, or is perceived to transgress, heteronormativity and the boys intend to redress Christina through sexual assault.

According to Turner (1984), a ritual can end in one of two ways; the reintegration into the society of the transgressed person, or the recognition that reintegration is impossible. There is text in the play to suggest that one of the perpetrators thinks that she should just get over it, but for Christina, she cannot resume life as it was before. Tannahill used the magic realist image of the couch to suggest Christina’s burden, and at that moment, it was impossible for her to reintegrate into society. She was exiled or quarantined due to her defilement. For Sibley (1995), “the anatomy of the purified environment is an expression of the values associated with strong feelings of abjection, a heightened consciousness of difference and, thus, a fear of missing or the disintegrations of boundaries” (p. 78). The social codes of the space of the field party are then ones that exert dominance in their effort to erase difference.

**CHRISTINA**

This boy with a mouth. It must have been three feet wide.

Like he was screaming in my face and I could feel myself just burning up.

Burning into the couch.

And when I awoke in the morning, everyone was gone.
Even me.

All that was left was the couch.

And I was the couch.

(Concord Floral script by Jordan Tannahill, 2012)

This short speech situates Christina on the margins. While they are not the margins of her choosing, they are forced upon her through the violent acts perpetrated by the “boy with a mouth.” Sibley’s (1998) account of the Roma, the homeless, and the new age travelers suggest there is a desire on the part of some groups to remain not integrated, thus preferring a place on the margins. The important point is the extent to which the group and individual are in charge of their positioning. bell hooks (1990) has said the margins are a powerful place, if being situated there is a choice, rather than an oppressive act that has forced the marginalization.

Possible Limits

CHRISTINA

Being out here’s not so bad really.

Except when it rains. I get bloated.

STEPHANIE

No, we gotta get you out.

CHRISTINA

I think that my soul bled right out – and left a stain on this couch.

And now we need to wash it out.

STEPHANIE

How’re we supposed to wash out a soul?

CHRISTINA

With blood.
The joyous working atmosphere, at times, appeared to be at odds with the dark subject matter of the play. Could there be limits to this kind of joyous, compositional work and might it work against a rehearsal process in certain circumstances? I thought that I had found the answer to this question when, in the focus group interview with the youth actors between the shows on the last day of the run at Theatre Passe Muraille, the focus changed from the social relations outside the frame of the play to the violent social relations within the frame of the play. As I quoted the line about Christina’s soul bleeding out, one of the youth said that she felt it was the first time that she had heard it:

And like Miranda was saying, like, it just helps us understand the play more, which in turn, helps the audience to understand the play more. ‘Cause like, if we’re like “in Concord Floral” like even just now, when you said, um, I think “that night that soul, my soul bled out,” like I heard it again for the first time. (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, November 10, 2012)

Although Tannahill had discussed the subject of the play and current relevant news stories with the youth, the questions in the focus group interview provoked them to consider the events of the play again. After the interview, Gertrude, who was playing the role of the violated girl, prepared differently for the performance that night – taking quiet time to think about the particular events that transpired at Concord Floral. I observed the performance from back stage, and between her scenes, she did not break from her role. Instead, she quietly waited in character until she went back out onto stage into her next scene. This interested me as a point of connection between ethnography, pedagogy, and performance. I thought that perhaps what I was witnessing was the limits of an affectively positive and joyous atmosphere. In other words, I found myself asking if the very connected and happily-bonded social relations actually worked against the demands of the dark subject matter of the play?27

It was not until later, during the interviews with the artists, that I came to see that what I thought were my findings were premature. As I came to learn more about the approaches of the adult artistic team, I had to reconsider my early conclusions. Tannahill talked about his desire to leave the piece open so that the artists were not prescribing what the youth actors would find in the text, their interpretations or subsequent acting choices. In a sense then, Tannahill was suspending a tight definition of the meaning of

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27 Not all the youth responded to the interview in the same way. For some of them, it was useful to consider the violence, and for others, they thought that it might be more of an issue for me than for them. Brushing off the violence, Kiara explained that youth “just deal” and Nomad PhD (English; straight; Caucasian; male; middle class) explained they are inundated with violence on the media, and Tannahill’s play did not seem so dark in comparison (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 10, 2012).
the play and the social relations contained within it out of respect for the youth. In his interview, Tannahill discussed the importance of the openness of interpretation. This suspended interpretation was different from other rehearsal practices that I had experienced, and I came to recognize that it unsettled me. Over time, I had to learn this was a different approach, and there was much I had to wait to understand about this way of working.

I see the ethics of leaving the negotiation of meaning open, but there were times when I wondered if the youth were taking part in a play they did not fully understand, or were so happy in their social relations, they were not willing to relinquish that happiness in the face of the demands of the story being told. But this prompts a further question: do actors fully understand what they are doing? Meaning can often be elusive, developing slowly over time. I think that all members of the artistic team recognized that the short rehearsal period created a rush in which some choices had to be made quickly, and in future productions, discussion time would be featured more prominently.

Ellsworth (2005) writes about the importance of openness in pedagogy, “when we construct and inhabit pedagogies that hold our knowledge as teachers in ways that are responsive to the fact that a learner is an open system – we engage the fact that, as a human practice, education itself is an open system” (p. 166). As I was now more appreciative of the ethical implications of the openness of the approach by the facilitators, I suggest that interpretative openness can be combined with frequent discussion of the social events and circumstances within the play. I want to emphasize the strong commitment on the part of the artistic team to find pedagogy that differed from what is offered in some, and I underline some, playmaking practices in schools in which a socially relevant theme is explored with deadening moralistic results.  

They chose to keep the pedagogical milieu open and vital, avoiding didacticism and the aesthetic sterility of moral lessons.

Cara Spooner, who was aware of the ethical issues associated with this work, described during an interview the ways that youth actors might explore this violent subject matter. She said if the actor were to choose to explore the violence in more depth, then Spooner would enter into a discussion with the actor beforehand while acknowledging how crucial it would be to talk about this acting choice in advance. This was important ethically on two fronts. First, she specified that this would be a choice made by the youth actor and not something imposed upon him/her by the artistic team. Secondly, should the actor make the choice to explore more deeply the aftermath of violation, Spooner outlined the kinds of questions she would pose as a guide and buttressing support. To support a youth moving into this deeper

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level of acting that involved more personal identification and subsequent risk, Spooner would ask what strategies would need to be in place to get out of such a dark, violent place so that the acting itself would not become a traumatization. What Spooner emphasized was the importance of equipping youth to take risks and simultaneously providing an exit plan:

If this is where you want to go, great. But. What, what’s your plan of attack in terms of bringing yourself back? And how, you know, how do you come back from that emotion in a safe way?” 
And really talk, you know, about doing that, exploring that, but in a way that is healthy, I guess. (Spooner interview, November 13, 2012)

According to Spooner, ethics affected the aesthetic choices available to a youth actor. At this juncture, I would like to repeat there was no reenactment of the violation on stage. The choice to embody the violated girl as a couch made use of a magic realist distancing technique. Julie Salverson (1999) claims that stylization rather than literal depictions can work effectively to avoid re-traumatization when performing violent subject matter. Spooner’s approach seemed to responsibly anticipate possible consequences of a youth’s desire to connect more fully with the situations embedded in the text. Significantly, these questions may be ethical to ask of any actor, but become all the more pressing with youth actors. Here again is an example of the social pedagogy that brought care and attention to the aesthetic and social work of the play.

A Pedagogy of the Unpolished

Youth entering the adult space of the theatre could be considered a political act in the sense that, as this research has shown, youth have not always been welcome in adult-governed space. Concord Floral was a hybrid production that provoked the need for vocabularies with which to discuss it fairly. Lehmann’s (2006) work on postdramatic theatre addresses the challenges of speaking about the new:

but even spectators who are convinced of the artistic integrity and the quality of such a theatre often lack the conceptual tools to articulate their perception. This is demonstrated by the predominance of purely negative criteria. The new theatre, one hears and reads, is not this and not that and not the other, but there is a lack of categories and words to define or even describe what it is in any positive terms. (p. 19)

Traditional text-based and mimetic theatre has been replaced by multi media performance texts, but, as Lehmann (2006) describes, the visual dramaturgy is not intended to serve the text but has an independent life and logic of its own. He stresses the visual component to postdramatic theatre and this has been a strong element in the work of Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner. Deleuze (1997) dismantles the notion
of dramatic conflict as he comments on the work of Carmelo Bene. About Lehmann’s postdramatic theatre, Marvin Carlson (2006) writes it is “moving beyond the dramatic text into a more open event-based experience in which the physical body, the image and sound replace the text as the centre of attention” (p. 315). This seems like a fitting description of Concord Floral.

Placing Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner’s work in the larger landscape of the postdramatic, I now turn to two of Tannahill’s identified influences: Germany’s Rimini Protokoll and New York director Richard Maxwell who have developed approaches to rehearsal, acting and performance that are relevant to the work of Concord Floral. In Harvie and Lavender’s (2010) edited book on Contemporary Theatre Rehearsal Practices, Sarah Gorman analyzes the rehearsals of Maxwell’s work and there is much that is directly relevant to the social and aesthetic experiments of Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner in both the spring workshop and the fall production of Concord Floral.

Gorman (2010) states that Maxwell is disrupting the dominant practices of method acting by reassessing, troubling, and opening up the seamlessness of the actor’s performance. By making his work less excellent and relieving the actor of the “burden of emoting,” he both takes the pressure off his actors and creates an aesthetic of deadpan delivery (p. 181). Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner made a virtue of this aesthetic of unpolishedness and asked that the youth actors try not to act. Brubacher stated that the task of the actor was to “listen not showing you’re listening” (Field notes, Concord Floral, October 4, 2012). This alters the discussion of aesthetics and what the spectator has come to expect of acting. Instead of the smooth technique of some Method acting, Gorman says Maxwell asks his audience to accept an aesthetic that lacks polish, noting, “what is original and intriguing about Maxwell’s work is its focus on a deliberate roughness or lack of finesse” (Gorman, 2010, p. 181). Markus Wessendorf (2001) suggests that Maxwell’s work is a “deliberate rejection of theatrical mastery” (p. 438). As well as roughness, Gorman suggests that Maxwell is intentionally looking for an inconsistent acting style saying, “Maxwell is at pains to point out that the incongruity of his performance style (if it can be termed as such) is that it disrupts established acting conventions employed in more traditional theatre contexts” (p. 188).

**Democratic Impulse: Open Casting and Leadership**

There are democratic implications to Maxwell’s work. Engaging, as Concord Floral did, youth non-professionals, it opened up who can participate in performance beyond those who have had the privilege to train as actors. Maxwell’s work broadens the discussion of democratizing theatre by moving beyond the conventional questions asked about power relations that focus on the actor–director relations and the actor–spectator relations. Instead, a more central question is asked regarding who can participate in the
first place and how participation might be opened up to those not trained. In not engaging a fully professional cast, a more diverse group of people are set on stage and these hybrid practices bring differently-experienced people together to perform.

The second influence on Tannahill’s work is Rimini Protokoll. Their 2006 production of Schiller’s Wallenstein, at the Berliner Festspeile, used the play as a base and then brought people onto the stage whose lives were, in some way, relevant to the original play. John Rouse’s (2006) review identifies the presence of non-professionals on the stage saying:

Rimini Protokol [sic] eschews the word “amateur,” and this production demonstrated why. We weren’t being asked to judge these performers by the standards of professional theatre, but to listen to the life stories that they were gracious enough to tell us. (p. 698)

Significantly, this production was not performed in a theatre, but in the rehearsal hall. These themes of non-professional acting and the relation of the rehearsal hall to performance were both elements that were featured and explored in the production of Concord Floral.

**Unfinished Rehearsals**

Maxwell asks his actors to engage in a continuing process of experiment rather than settling on an interpretation and then polishing those choices. During the run of Concord Floral at Theatre Passe Muraille, the midweek Wednesday night performance was structured as an open rehearsal. The continuing growth of the piece was what was valued in this process as suggested by the blurring of the division between rehearsal and publicly performing the play. Anticipating the open rehearsal that night, youth actor, Nomad PhD said:

I think just judging from what I’ve heard about this I think it’s going to be a – you know, a relaxed atmosphere. So, it’s literally going to be as if they’re [the audience] stepping into our rehearsals. And our rehearsals are really like – you know we talk a lot about it and it’s really sort of – although you know it can be tense at points especially when we were just beginning to get into the beginning of the play, you know there’s always that sense – because we know each other and because we’re really used to – and we really can think a lot and clearly and we’re in a really good atmosphere and we can think clearly about our idea and about our roles. And I think that’s what – he’s [Jordan] basically trying to get the audience to step into the world of us and of the characters in the play. (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 7, 2012)
Constantly asking different things of the actors avoids suggesting a piece is finished. Gorman (2010) states about Maxwell’s work, “there is no final point of closure in his rehearsal process and that change and constant revision feature as a crucial part of his methodology” (p. 185). Sofia, in response to my question in a focus group asking her what she had learned about theatre-making, said, “it’s constantly changing specially like this piece and everything. Every single day there’s something new or whatever – but like it makes it better at the same time – so we just need to like adapt to it” (Focus group interview, Concord Floral, Theatre Passe Muraille, November 7, 2012).

Harvie (2010), in the introduction to her co-edited work with Andy Lavender on international rehearsal processes, states that rehearsal is about the “creation of performance” rather than the repetition and polishing of learned patterns (p. 1). She emphasizes the importance of not fixing meaning “or leaving it open; in other words to authorship, its democratic dispersal and autocratic control” (p. 13). Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner’s approach was to never let the piece settle, and as a result, the transition from rehearsal into performance was less pronounced. The youth actors mentioned that it felt like just another rehearsal, but under new circumstances that included the presence of the audience. This continuous change put the actors at ease with the audience. Interestingly, Gorman suggests that the constant change in Maxwell’s work, enabled the actors to “retain a sense of apprehension about performance and to ensure that the signs of their labour remain visible” (p. 199).

**Leadership**

In terms of the question of leadership, there is a clear leader in Maxwell’s work. Harvie and Lavender (2010) suggest in contemporary performance practice that is “innovative” and “emergent,” there has been a movement, in some cases, away from collective work that shares leadership. *Concord Floral* distributed its leadership to the three artists on the team creating what Harvie might describe as dispersed leadership (p. 4). As I outline in these findings, when the enfranchised youth actively and regularly made their opinions and artistic choices known, they were respected and incorporated into the piece.

At the end of his interview, Tannahill expressed his thoughts about choosing the artistic and pedagogical as equally weighted intentions of the piece. He considered it important that the piece was aesthetically strong so that the youth could have a sense of pride in its artistic integrity. Committed to their artistic growth, Tannahill wanted the youth to understand the importance of the aesthetic as well as difficult situations framed in the play. As he explained, he did not shy away from the challenging subject matter just because the actors were young. As well, he was not going to lessen the artistic expectations just because they were less experienced actors:
What does it mean to place the artistic success of a project, first and foremost, I mean, or equally weighted as a pedagogical process, rather than the latter being placed above the artistic rigour or success of the piece – and what does that, how does that inform, one's real-one’s relationship to the, teenage cast members of the show? And I think that's – I mean, I think we've talked about that -but that was always just something that I'm just generally interested in. You know, I sort of fused a compromise what, what I think was ultimately, my vision for the - for the project simply because the cast member or collaborators were of a certain age, and I think not being afraid to go into sort of difficult situations, creatively or socio-politically because of their age. And I think ultimately that they understood that they were really part of a piece of art-making and that what they made, was a piece of art that can stand on a main stage next to work by other adults or other professionals, or artists. Yeah, I guess that, any questions around that, I'm interested in. (Tannahill interview, Concord Floral, November 16, 2012)

In his interview, Tannahill suggested a good production aesthetically was as important as a pedagogically sound one. I would argue a production that highly prizes the aesthetic is also pedagogical for the youth, but it is a different pedagogy than a piece of relational art that is primarily concerned with the social exchange. His commitment to having youth engage aesthetic challenges was central to the intentions of this work.

Brubacher, in her interview conducted after the closing of Concord Floral, drew my attention to the issue of spectatorial judgment when she questioned how the work would be seen, hoping that the audience would not be “seeing this work through the lens of a ‘youth project’” (Brubacher interview, Concord Floral, November 21, 2012). Many prominent theatre and applied theatre artists have joined her in asking these questions regarding the ways that this kind of work is discussed, either talking in solely aesthetic terms, or in solely social terms. What Maxwell’s work adds to the discussion is that the very terms of aesthetics are being reconceptualized. The implications of such work are that it is more inclusive, has a less polished aesthetic, and offers to audiences a different experience if they can suspend their judgment and their quest for the familiar. Maxwell and Tannahill’s processes are ones that ask questions of themselves and of theatre/performance as it is practiced. I suggest the democratic imperative in Maxwell’s work offers a means to understand Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner’s work differently. The question as to whether it is social or aesthetic becomes less relevant than the question that asks how an aesthetic changes in response to a more democratically focused social commitment? Also worth asking is why spectator performer relations have to be premised on the act of judging. Are there not other possible relations that avoid casting audience members in the role of judge? What other forms of dialogue might be possible that alter the power relations of the artist offering up work for judgment by a public?
Spectator Pedagogy, Community Engagement and Finding New Vocabulary

I realize that I was so tipsy with the love that the youth showed to each other – as this became their haven, their Concord Floral away from their communities, away from their parents and schools. Their pleasure in being together was so palpable and Erin, Jordan and Cara were such nurturing artistic facilitators that we all seemed entranced in the “feel good” atmosphere of the rehearsal space – that it was hard to leave that place and to consider the darkness and the violation of the story being told. (Reflective notes, Wessels, Concord Floral, November 12, 2012)

How can these relational spatial pedagogies be brought into the discussion of this kind of work without resorting to either its instrumental or its artistic purpose? This kind of hybrid performance cannot be judged aesthetically, according to Brubacher, by merely reducing it to moments that did or did not work, or to a discussion of great performances. At the same time, Tannahill did not want the pedagogical within the process to overshadow the aesthetics. I would like to join Brubacher in her questions: how might we suspend the usual criteria to respectfully discuss the merits of this kind of work? How is it that we, as audiences, can learn to speak about this “in between” work differently? How can new vocabulary be developed that moves beyond the dismissive binary that equates youth theatre with boringly pedagogical, and professional theatre with the dynamic and aesthetically fully realized?

One way to talk about this work would be to consider it as making theatre more positively heterogeneous. Another way would be to consider these challenges to conventional theatre as practices that shift and make theatre different, in a Deleuzian sense, while a third would be to engage in a discussion of Deleuzian ethics. What follows is a discussion of the work in the context of a Deleuzian ethical framework.

Helguera (2011) suggests that for socially engaged art, it is not necessary to create what he calls constructive personal relationships, and he sees the merit of work that intentionally upsets social relations. I would suggest that the social practice of Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner, would dispute such an approach, but the question remains, is this good feeling among the cast enough to make it ethical? Brubacher suggested that the work cannot be good unless “the people involved are better off for having done it” (Brubacher interview, Concord Floral, November 21, 2012). This regard for the well being of the youth on the part of the artistic team is congruent with Gilson (2011), who states about Deleuzian ethics:

such an ethics is oriented towards experimentation, towards inventing more fulfilling, enlivening, and intense ways of thinking, feeling, relating. Yet it is not solipsistic – the sovereignty of the self
Gilson (2011) also credits feminist ethics with the notion of care. She differentiates this from Deleuze who she considers more concerned with transformation and becoming. I would like to suggest that the artistic facilitators embodied both these ethical aspirations: that the youth would flourish artistically and that this would be accomplished through a milieu of care. As Tannahill and Spooner raised the artistic bar, this acted as a kind of care that was shown to both the production and the youth. Brubacher’s work, with its attention paid to the well-being and care for the youth, was also a gesture of care for the aesthetics of the production, as she believed that such care between the participants would positively affect the quality of the artistic work. Gilson (2011) suggests that Deleuzian ethics are “a pairing of creativity and responsiveness” (p. 83) and certainly both creativity and responsiveness were present throughout the process because, as Brubacher explained, it was not fully decided upon in advance explaining, “I don’t think this process was pre-planned – at all – and part of it – it’s just like the result of putting these people in a room together” (Brubacher interview, Concord Floral, November 21, 2012).

Spoon in her interview was also highly engaged with the subject of ethics and performance, and she did not separate how a piece was done with what was done; the ethics of the process, then were integral to the artistic product and to her, they were indistinguishable. Brubacher also suggested that art and life could not be separated, and in a recent piece of writing about social dramaturgy, she says that it “serves both whatever object or performance is being made and the imprints of experience left on participants – which they carry with them to whatever comes next, and is, simultaneously, another thing being made, in and of itself” (Brubacher, Personal website, September 21, 2013).

Uhlmann (2011) suggests Deleuze is able to bridge ethics and aesthetics and show us “how art is necessarily concerned with the same fundamental question which concerns ethics and ethology: living” (p. 154). Surin (2011) suggests:

- a way of life has to be scrutinized, and scrutinized rigourously, as a condition of shaping one’s life as a work of art, which means that ethics (a set of practices and precepts which makes the scrutiny or evaluation possible) is indispensible for this process of aesthetic life shaping. (p. 148)

The ethical and the aesthetic may come together, as I argue they did in Concord Floral, when all involved connected with their respective powers and capacities to act and to make the line between an ethically-lived life inseparable from their artistic work.
Spectator and Community Pedagogies-To-Come

To understand the imperatives of such theatre, might there be the need for spectator pedagogy? How might audiences become educated in different processes of theatre creation with an emphasis on new intentions and a focus on the democratization of process rather than just the finishedness of the final product? About the postdramatic theatre, Harvie (2010) suggests that the audience is not considered a homogeneous whole. What are the implications for audience pedagogy and development when an audience is composed of different people?

How might there be a more pedagogical and relational approach to audience building and are conventional talk-backs really enough? How might different kinds of dialogue be cultivated and different kinds of relations be built so that audiences can look differently at productions that intend to be different? Raising these questions is important as a means to educate spectators in the ways they might suspend judgment and replace it with other forms of engagement. Opening pedagogical space is necessary to facilitate discussion and to identify the ways that artistic work might be seen differently.

“Imprints”

I suggest in doing this project, the artists were stretching codes of rehearsal by intentionally focusing on the social aspects of creating collective art. To develop this idea further, I turn now to the ways in which they were experimenting with the power relations of theatre creation and how they invited youth into an adult space. In so doing, they opened some of the bordered assumptions about theatre-making in quite substantial ways. To think about these practices spatially, the adult artists held open a space in which there was pedagogical possibility. They brought youth into relation with the realm of adult theatre, the suburb into relation with the urban, and the artists-in-the-making into relation with practicing artists. I also argue these experiments were pedagogical for all involved, youth participant, artists, and researcher. Could these theatre practices be seen as a political act that does not absorb the values of neoliberalism, that attends to one another generously, and that in valuing process as much as the final product is not concerned with consumerism? Work of this kind is not aiming to achieve a certain standard, but it is creating its own standards as it proceeds.

The spatial and relational pedagogies and the search for ethical language to write about these artistic processes and practices is where I end this section of the findings regarding the time spent with the youth and more senior artists in the rehearsals and performances of Concord Floral. There are imprints from this work on the youth in terms of their participation in art-making. This analysis documents the imprint that the suburb has on their lives as they travelled back and forth from it to the city. The youth described the lack of space in an adult-governed suburb where they could feel out of place and suspect. Expressing
the ways they feel without a noncommercial place to gather, the youth implicitly suggested the suburb was not designed for them. As these findings feed back into the larger whole of this thesis, what has been learned about the suburb as it is performed by youth and about notions regarding difference, diversity, and differenciation? This rehearsal and performance of suburb by youth who are themselves living in suburban spaces, present multiple pedagogies, artistic strategies, and dramaturgies. The commitment to the youth collective, with daily check-ins and check-outs, organized events to see plays in other theatres and shared meals, comprised a full commitment on the part of the adult artistic team to the well-being and artistic growth of the youth in their temporary care. This commitment to cultivating collective practice was taken seriously, fostering a sense of youth interdependence without expecting cohesion and sameness.

These youth invited a reconsideration of identifiers that were tied to place. The suburb was a place where people did things, rather than a static identifier. What does the spatial identifier of suburban mean for someone, as Kiara pointed out, who has lived in the centre of the city her whole life and then moved with her family to a suburb as she neared the end of her schooling? According to Alan Walks (2013), “suburbanism” is a force with certain identifiable characteristics (p. 1471). He explains that it is not tied to place. In this sense, Kiara took urbanism to the suburb. The movement of the youth put suburbanism in relation to urbanism as they travelled from suburb to city. As will be evident in the school site of this research, notions of suburb have to include mobility and the temporary and fragmented associations with place that the comings and goings of contemporary globalized/postmetropolitan life produce.

The suburb is made relational through the practices of the youth as they brought their experience of the suburb to a rehearsal taking place in the city of Toronto. The youth brought the suburb into relation with the city, and the performance of Concord Floral put the suburban in relation to a largely urban audience. Very instructive data came from the talk-backs following the performances. Conversations focused on the absence of space, and the importance of the city and the downtown theatres to their lives. This empirical material suggested that the relation to the city was important for these youth who discovered its multiple pedagogies, enabling some of them to claim a sense of independence from family and schools and to identify interdependence with other emerging theatre artists.

Asking the youth to travel resulted in the expression of their frustrations with the limitations of public transit but also it also allowed them to reconstruct the architecture of the subway and streetcars into important relational space. Evidence from this research showed that open public space available to these suburban youth was in short supply. They expressed their need for spaces that were not designed for consumption, but for gathering without any purpose other than just being together.
The kind of work done by Suburban Beast broadens what theatre can offer to youth and becoming-artists. “Artist-in-the-making” is not a disparaging term that suggests that the youth’s “real” art making will occur when they are older, but instead recognizes art making as an ongoing and mobile process. For the youth and their older co-creators, Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner, ‘becoming-artist’ is less an identity than a process or practice that promises no place of arrival.

But what kind of artist is in-the-making? In the practices of rehearsal and social dramaturgy, an artistic pedagogy was at work that was highly relational, stressing the collective aspects of art-making. The work was infused with both tenderness and the liberty of frank expression of difference, difference of opinion, of perception, challenging singular notions of place and adolescent development. Although the space produced by these youth was at times riddled with gendered and racial tensions, in finding the people with whom they could create, the youth found the collective in which their socially-engaged work could evolve interdependently. This art-in-collective-making featured a high degree of care for the “imprint” that Concord Floral made on the youth and was central to the social milieu of the work produced. Concord Floral was not separate from the conditions under which it was produced and as Jackson (2011) suggests of these participatory practices, the “aesthetic and the social provocations coincide” (p. 5).

In conclusion, this work considered the ethics of choices made at every turn. The ethics have implications regarding how this work can be talked and written about to avoid the binary of either aesthetic or pedagogical. Gilson (2011) suggests that there is an element of experimentation in Deleuzian and feminist ethics, noting “ethics is necessarily creative, moving beyond the limits of those present practices to venture into new ones that expand the contours of our experience” (p. 83). In witnessing and participating in the practices, processes, and social relations that comprised Concord Floral, I observed a “fly by the seat of your pants” quality that was both highly responsive and improvisational. The adult team were not following a model, but were inventing multiple ways to embolden the social in rehearsals and in the other activities they organized for the youth. This social pedagogy was one of the strengths of Concord Floral, and I expect will continue to flourish in the future work of Suburban Beast and in the artistic and social practices of these youth artists in the suburbs.

Performance Two: Performed Youth Rituals in a Suburban School

Diverse But Polarized Suburbs: Some Contextualization

The suburb is so diverse in terms of the specifics of place, geography, age, size, and demographics that it no longer acts as a useful category, mired as it is in myth and false assumptions that might have been relevant historically, but are not at the present time. Terms like inner and outer suburbs are not accurate identifiers, as the area under consideration in Mississauga has many attributes that make it similar to the
inner suburbs with its mixed housing including rental towers and single-family homes. Even the nature of single-family homes, however, may need to be redefined as multi-family homes. In need of language to discuss this location, I found I had to draw upon provisional terms. I recognized that my focus was a specific pocket of Mississauga and what was found there was not generalizable as suburban cities are not uniform. Addressing just this point was this youth, Lena, who had lived in two suburban cities and compared Brampton to Mississauga:

Lena (English speaker; white; middle class; straight; female; plays sports): Yeah, there’s so many more like, um, drug dealers, there’s so many more like druggies and it’s just like… I don’t know it’s just like crazy down there and you always see people – it’s kinda like Toronto, only like a lot smaller and like, worse. Like there’s not that many like ghettoes. It’s certain areas of Brampton that are really bad and others are like really good. Just like Mississauga and Toronto’s like everywhere else, some areas are good and some areas are bad. (Lena, Branch Secondary School, Individual interview, December 20, 2012)

Although she initially compared one suburban community to another, she ended by saying that both the suburban cities and the urban centre of Toronto contained bad areas. What started as a differentiation between suburbs became a statement of how all the regions, the suburban cities and urban centres, were comprised of good and bad parts. Dippo and James (2011) suggest that in most suburbs, “in Canada, as in Europe and the United States, there are “no-go areas” or “lawless zones” (p. 116). Filion, Osolen, and Bunting (2011) suggest that the inner suburb is polarized with, “pockets of poverty and crime” (p. 192). There is further evidence from the focus groups in which youth differentiated the streets of the suburban city: those where they felt safe and those they avoided. Lena acknowledged the income polarity in the suburb and significantly, this trend of income polarization has been documented city-wide in Toronto (Hulchanski, 2010) and in cities across Canada.

The Peel District School Board has many policies in place to promote the value of diversity of race, culture, religion, language, ability, and sex and sexual orientation (Peel District School Board policy 54 Equity and Inclusive Education, 2010). Diversity policies such as this one state that people at all levels of the income spectrum deserve respect. Urban scholars are concerned with the growing disparity in socio-economic status and the eradication of the middle class (Hulchanski, 2010). The hardship of lives lived at low levels of socio-economic status (SES) are obvious. With regard to this research, I would suggest that youth with low SES can be disadvantaged further by policies that serve those who have more stable housing options offered by either stable incomes or a social infrastructure that includes the availability of subsidized and supportive housing. The data collected at Branch suggests that poverty and income polarity in the context of this mixed neighbourhood can be hidden. The findings of my research suggest
that issues of socio-economic status become evident in the school site through discussions of consumerism, fashion and the search for affordable housing that could necessitate frequent household moves with the potential to disrupt a student’s schooling. Also identified is a form of poverty beyond socio-economic inequities, a poverty of community in which youth find few places or activities within the school to which they feel they belong. Complicating the popular understanding of the urban/suburban divide and the outdated mythical representations of uniform suburban privilege, the findings of this research support the scholarly conversation regarding the polarity of socio-economics found in the suburb (Lassiter & Neidt 2013).

Returning to Lena’s comments, like Lassiter and Neidt (2013), she expressed a kind of postmetropolitanism that was broad in its geographical sweep and highly diverse within itself (Soja, 2011, p. 455). I suggest that postmetropolitan is a useful term to use here because we do not yet know how to reduce it to our shorthanded understandings that reinforce what we already know, or think we know, about both city and suburb. What we *think* we know about suburbs is important and has relevance to the underserving of suburban communities. Lucia Lo (2011) suggests that it is the persisting misunderstanding of the suburb that perpetuates the underserviced population. The combination of hidden poverty and the perception that the area is affluent can work against those in need of services. She states:

> Although population growth in the suburbs, especially the growth of immigrant populations has been faster than in the city, there has been a widespread misconception among both the general population and policy makers that suburban regions are more affluent and do not have homelessness or other festering problems that exist in the city, and this misconception has been reflected in provincial and federal funding allocations. (Lo, 2011, p. 145)

Lo also gives evidence to support this statement with statistics showing there are fewer social service funding options in the regions of Durham, Peel (Mississauga) and York. For example, in the Region of Peel, which houses 8.7% of the population of the province of Ontario, it receives only 4.4% of the social service funding. She states that a misconception regarding the suburbs is responsible for these policies. Conceptualizing the suburban as the opposite of the urban perpetuates a binary that erases the variation and significant differences within this particular geographic location. It is against these myths that this dissertation is written, offering a more nuanced analysis of difference and diversity within this particular geography of suburb. This analysis refers to data generated from both drama and the individual and focus group interviews.
Performances of Suburban Ritual

Inspired by Gallagher’s (2007) use of drama to explore the social relations of youth and schooling, I proposed using drama as a means of generating data regarding the social relations and specifics of the place of this suburban school. The youth were asked to enact their choice of a place-based ritual of schooling in the place in the school where it would normally occur. This practice that placed the dramatized rituals throughout the school was intended as a way to inquire into the variety of social relations within the school that might not be visible in day-to-day activities of the classroom. This drama activity enabled the research to move out beyond the classroom into the spaces of the school where these various encounters took place.

The student-created ritual performances were wide-ranging in terms of subject matter. In semester one, there were short rituals placed in the front hallway where the fire alarm was pulled, the stairwell in which an older and younger student argued over turf and who was and was not allowed to occupy that space at lunch time. Another drama in the basement hallway showed a grade nine student pushing a penny along the floor with his nose as part of an initiation ritual. In the girls’ bathroom, another ritual was performed that depicted a lockdown drill in which the older youth blamed the younger ones for making noise, thus getting them in trouble with supervising teachers. Other hallway rituals were school fights that followed a particular pattern ending with the posting of the fight online. As well, social media rituals were enacted as girls (played by boys) posted their pictures on Facebook. In the cafeteria, a ritual depicted youth taking the “cinnamon challenge” and in the upstairs hallway and stairwell, another student enacted the ritual of being new to the school, getting lost, and arriving late to class.29

In the longer rituals that used mask and video as the culminating project for the unit, one depicted a family dinner in which a young woman revealed she was pregnant. Others focused on the loneliness of eating disorders and a group of boys initiated girls into gender equality through the test of capturing a wolf. In the second semester, the rituals included: prom, going to a theme park, exclusions in boys’ informal sport, the rituals of the life cycle, and a ritualized story about the sun and moon.

Significantly, the early analysis of the data suggested that in spite of tremendous diversity within the school, there was a pull to sameness and a fear of difference. At first glance, it might appear that the school contrasted the space of the theatre where difference and differenciation were valued and discussed. The youth expressed frustration in the Concord Floral focus groups that drama classes had

29 The cinnamon challenge was a risky game the youth played at the tables in the cafetorium. They would eat powdered cinnamon without drinking any liquid and try not to sneeze while doing so.
people in them who did not want to be there. Clearly, like the youth at Branch, there were youth who did not think that other youth were matching up to their standards for a drama class. For the youth speaking to me at the theatre and in the space of the drama class, they both suggested that peers were making the class fall short of their expectations. What could be inferred was that the others in the class should conform to the kind of class that they wanted and were used to.  

The data from the Branch site also expressed a pull to sameness and discomfort towards people who were new and linguistically diverse. There were also peer-to-peer judgments regarding consumer items and the victimization of younger youth which produced a social landscape of relational tensions and division. Given the diversity of the school population at Branch, these divisions and social tensions were doubly surprising and discomfiting. To qualify this representation, it needs to be said that social tensions were more evident in the second semester than in the first semester, when the class proceeded quite smoothly. Concentrating this discussion on the second semester offers more to the analysis, but I need to be clear that there was much in the first semester data that suggested more supportive social relations, which produced a more functional and affectively positive pedagogical space.

**The Ritual Of Prom: Consumerism, Heteronormativity, and Catalytic Alliances**

This section focuses on data collected in the second semester, and will refer to related data collected in the first semester. I choose to concentrate on the second semester class because there was an uneasiness in the classroom that unnerved both the teacher and me. Eventually, the youth started to express their feelings about a class that was not functioning well. These social tensions contrasted with the class in the first semester, and for this reason, made me curious to analyze the social relations in this class more intentionally. The teacher and I gradually noticed that there were two dominant classroom groups. Although the boundaries of these groups were not completely rigid, for the purposes of description, one

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30 *Concord Floral* accommodated many different youth, but there was one youth who did not return for the second mounting of the play. Unlike the other youth, he did not have parents who lived close by (his mother lived in Egypt), he was living independently, and earning his own income. His work in a club demanded that he work very late and this often caused him to be late for rehearsals. At times, as these findings will show, his comments about women and gender relations made people in the room uncomfortable and he was not asked to join the cast for the performances at Theatre Passe Muraille. *Concord Floral* was operating under time constraints and they had to be able to move forward with the play without delays and with the full cast in attendance consistently. Differences in the level and quality of commitment to the project were problematic and did not benefit the play. A commitment to heterogeneity (difference of opinion, difference of living conditions, and different attitudes to women) had to be weighed against the demands of the rehearsal schedule and the aesthetic and social vision for the play.
was made up of racially and ethnically diverse girls who were very academically-committed, three of whom were enrolled in the French Immersion program. The other group appeared to be more mixed in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity and was composed of youth who were both engaged in their academic work and highly socially engaged with the other members of the group. Describing these groups presents challenges because within the so-called academic group, there were strong social bonds, and among the so-called social group, there was a focus on academic success. As a result of this difficulty in categorizing the groups, I labelled them according to the theme of their performed rituals: the Prom Group and the Amusement Park Group.

This analysis focuses on one particular performance in the second semester that portrayed the ritual of prom. To show how the school ritual had changed over time, the group created a video that acted as a kind of home movie that was supposed to have been taken thirty years ago to show the prom ritual at that time. In the scene, the girls find the video and play it. The second scene was the trip to shop for dresses. The third scene was about the friend who did not want to go because she wanted to invite another girl; this ends with the friends encouraging her to come with them. This performance is analyzed for what it says about the ritual and also for the discussion that it prompted in the focus groups. This is less a discussion about aesthetics and more about the themes that it offered to the class to discuss.

These themes include the shopping and consumerism associated with the event as well as the changing attitudes towards heteronormativity. This ritual also showed the solidarity between differently positioned friends. Given that much of what is taught in school depends on narratives with happy, moralistic endings, I cannot say how much their dramatized story was disciplined by such structures of storytelling, but they did address an issue of equity by including their friend who was not going to attend because she felt that she had no place in the relational space produced by a heteronormative ritual.

To analyze this ritual, I will start by discussing its heteronormative rules, I will then focus on the economic issues associated with the ritual of prom, and finally I will discuss the relational encounters that brought some of these issues into more open discussion. Brown, Browne, and Lim (2007) bring a spatial lens to their consideration of how “sexualities are geographical or, the question of how spaces and places are sexualized” (p. 2). By intentionally focusing on the discourses and material practices of the ritual of prom that changed over time, this group used video to create the home movie of the prom that their parents would have attended. By bringing in the sexual geographies of a previous time, they were able to address how rituals can change. Their ritual worked to critically examine what Brown et al. suggest are the sexual codes that govern school space and school rituals. They state, “the norms regulating acceptable sexual behaviour in public or shared spaces are an example of how everyday spaces are sexualized” (Brown et al., 2007, p. 2). They suggest, “taking seriously the body, sentiment,
emotion and desire as co-equal sources of knowledge, and ones that are not only equal in value to reason, rationality and the mind, but *integral parts of them*” (Brown et al., 2007, p. 27). This dramatized ritual took seriously the emotions of friendship and sexual orientation and demonstrated both the restrictive norms of sexualized space, and the open possibility that such norms could be repaired to become more inclusive of diverse sexual orientations.

This ritual prompted a question about the nature of inclusion. Is it that differences of sexual orientation are assimilated into the existing ritual? Or does this ritual of prom have to change its codes or sexual geography in response to diversity? Marvasti and McKinney (2011) differentiate between diversities that can and cannot be assimilated into existing structures. In the case of the ritual of the prom, as portrayed in this performance, the ritual itself was not questioned, but who could participate in the ritual was. Looking at this ritual spatially, might Massey contend that once the social relations change, then the space has changed as well? Perhaps, it is too simplistic to conclude that altering one of the heteronormative rules of the prom does nothing to alter the ritual.

The performance of the prom can also be analyzed as a ritualized consumer event in which the girls engaged in shopping for prom dresses. In a focus group interview later, the youth reflected on this ritual and said that the dresses were not the only expense youth have when they attend prom:

Kari (English language; brown; straight; female; Hindu; upper middle class): I think so, yeah, because my brother, right now, he's going to prom and I know of a lot of people at this school, who say that they can't go to prom cause they can't afford it, cause they're saving up for university, and they, they don't feel the need to spend it on this. And prom, it's not only buying the ticket, but it's buying corsage, paying for limo, buying a suit. (Christy, Julianna, & Kari; Focus group interview; Semester 2; Branch Secondary School; May 22, 2012)

This quotation refers to the costliness and exclusivity of the prom and it points to the pressures to consume material goods as part of this graduation ritual. Significantly, *The City of Mississauga Youth Plan* (2009) rated shopping as the number one activity for youth saying, “shopping outranks all other activities and public space that young people participate in and are most proud of in the city” (p. 18). Rupa Huq (2013) in her analysis of British suburbs devotes a whole chapter to suburban consumerism and describes the suburban riots in August 2011 as “more of a shopping spree than a riot and a large number of shopping malls were involved. The buildings attacked were not symbols of authority, they seemed to have been selected for what they sold” (p. 123).

There is a danger here of also misinterpreting what spending time at the mall means. In their study looking at the gender differences regarding mobility, Brown, Mackett, Gong, Kitazawa, and Perkins
(2008) found that being at the mall was considered a safe, but independent, activity for girls because there was surveillance “shopping centres offer a partially monitored, semi-privatized arena within the public domain, where girls have found a space through which they can meet up and interact” (p. 392). The authors suggest that the mall may work as a transitional space for girls to experience independence from their parents while remaining safe. Going to the mall, then, may represent more than simply the drive to consume. It is unfortunate that there are not other spaces in which girls might feel both safe and independent, and this is a telling example of the commercialization of youth spaces.

The individual interviews in the first semester also presented further evidence of tensions regarding the pressures of consumerism. Although most youth did not think that class divisions in the school were significant, with analysis, I began to suspect that income disparity might not be overtly apparent. Youth, in general, were reluctant to talk about difference (including socio-economic disparity), yet they seemed more comfortable talking about sameness. In response to this preference, I asked if there were pressures to be the same as other youth. The interview with Sara (first language: English; White; female; middle class; bisexual; limited hearing in one ear; has attended eight different schools) was especially telling:

Sara: You can’t really like notice – But like some – like I know like some like girls spend like a hundred dollars on a pair of pants.

Anne: Yeah.

Sara: Like some people would just be like - like I wouldn’t do that – ‘cause I would rather spend my money on other things – like -

Anne: Yeah.

Sara: than pants.

Anne: Yeah.

Sara: I’m going to outgrow them – I don’t have to like wear them all the time.

Anne: So it gets played out in people’s clothing choices.

Sara: Yeah.

Anne: Yeah, yeah.
Sara: And people judge you too. Like some people – they’re like, “Oh, you’re like wearing pants from like from Zellers.” It’s like, “yeah, your point is?”

Anne: People say that to you?

Sara: Yeah, I had someone come up to me once and I just bought - like a cheap pair of jeans, because my other ones got paint on them. And like I’m not going to pay 50 bucks for a pair of jeans. Like I’m not into that. I would rather spend my money like on being with my friends or seeing my family.

(Sara, Individual interview, Branch Secondary School, November 1, 2011)

Sara felt judged for the clothing she wore, and although she said that income disparity was not easy to see, she described the way that it manifested through dress. Although class differences were hidden and hard to detect, the consumption and display of material goods became the visible markers of socio-economic disparity and class divisions. It could also be that Sara was eschewing fashion intentionally but either way, this exchange asked that she conform to a clothing standard; whether she did this from choice or from lack of money was immaterial; what mattered was that she was angry at the pressure to conform or be judged.

Also of interest is the data collected in the second semester that addressed consumerism and the pressure that Julianna (English language; Jamaican/Irish; middle class; female; heterosexual; Christian) felt about her looks:

Julianna: Like in high school, like looks are like a lot or whatever. That's how people like judge your act by, so like, say you don't have enough money to get like, like, designer labels and everything, that you’re gonna like, people don't think you're as pretty or whatever. Like say somebody’s in like an outfit or whatever, and someone's in Walmart clothes, the more expensive, the better.

Anne: Okay.

Julianna: Like, I dunno, labels, I think labels do mean something to some people. Like I like certain things or whatever, I do like labels and stuff like that, but I know mostly in high school,

31 Zellers Inc. was a retail store owned by the Hudson’s Bay Company and had 350 outlets throughout Canada. These stores were closed when Target Canada acquired Zellers in 2011. The store sold reasonably priced goods including clothing, but was perceived as a lower end brand compared to other chain stores.
looks are a lot. So, if you have expensive things that make you look better or whatever, but I guess like everyone's different. Like some people care about appearance -

Anne: Okay.

Julianna; So yeah.

(Christy, Julianna, & Kari; Focus group interview; Semester 2; Branch Secondary School; May 22, 2012)

The comment quoted below expressed a qualified agreement with the previous student that the materiality of dress and the consumption that it represented commanded respect and sexual attention. Leslie Heywood and Justin R. Garcia (2012) write about fashion from a cultural studies perspective and suggest that fashion studies have tended to look at issues of conformity and what they call “mate value” which is what Kari talked about in the next quotation (p.69). Kari, though, also distinguished between the respect that was won through dress, and the respect that came from ability that she considered independent from socio-economic status:

Kari: Yeah, I kind of agree with Julianna, I see that a lot. Like people who dress more expensively are people who are physically pretty or good looking. Um, they get more attention from other sexes, and they get more like, I just think that they're respected from their friends, and stuff like that. But I also think that, um, this school, I don't think that it happens too much in this school. I think that this school is very like, respects everybody. Like, if I'm picky about like specific clubs and stuff that I've been in, no matter how rich or poor you are - you're well respected and I think you're more judged on your abilities, rather than the way you look.

(Christy, Julianna, & Kari; Focus group interview; Semester 2; Branch Secondary School; May 22, 2012)

In these interviews, the youth discussed the connection of appearances, class, and judgment. One student referred to this judgment as a kind of “bullying,” while another student described how she had to “come to terms” with her looks and her body. Sara, Julianna, and Kari (to a lesser extent) described a peer-to-peer surveillance at work in the school. Significantly, this topic did not surface in the conversations with the boys and marks the intersection of gender with class and consumerism.

All of this discussion of fashion, bodies and bullying is directly relevant to the discussion of sameness and difference. Juliana, in the quotation below, looked at the complexity of fashion and its relation to conformity. She asserted that although people refused to admit it, they followed others to avoid being alone:
Julianna: I think everyone's different, but yet, everyone's the same. Everybody says how they're like this person. They don't copy anyone, but like, we all kind of do, like design-wise. Say like back then, like skinny jeans were the style, now everyone's wearing skinny jeans. Like everybody's influenced but like, people may think that they're not, that they don't follow anyone, but everybody kind of follows everybody. Say you're with a group of friends and they're all - you want to go to a different place, they all want to go to a different place, you gotta follow them, so that you're not alone. (Christy, Julianna, & Kari; Focus group interview; Semester 2; Branch Secondary School; May 22, 2012)

The comment that followed next is particularly interesting as fashion and the pull to sameness were put in their place. Kari acknowledged that it happens but understood that when everyone looks the same, a person has to stand out in other ways. In other words, the uniformity of dress and consumption patterns were just the backdrop for standing out. Heywood and Garcia (2012) suggest that fashion is not just about conformity, but about innovation as well. They say, “crucially, we need to imitate in order to innovate” (Heywood & Garcia, 2012, p. 72). Instead of fashion making one person just like the next, they suggest that “fashion is simultaneously about belonging to the group and innovating – distinguishing oneself” (p. 70). Kari’s statement about standing out or taking a stand on things, suggested that the quality of her character and her values in the world were more important than dress. This individualized vision of making a mark and winning recognition was not a statement about collectivity and solidarity, but one that rested on the importance of individual worth.

Kari: Yeah, I agree. I think everybody's different, and everybody wants to make their mark, but at the same time, there are trends that a lot of people follow, and um, I see it in this school, like I can walk down the hall, and there will be like a cluster of girls who look exactly the same. Same hair, same - I sometimes wonder, how do you stand out or how do you like make your mark and stuff like that? But then, at the same time, it's kind of a good thing maybe to be less noticed so you can maybe excel in a different way. So maybe not being different, with the way you dress, but being different with the way you are. (Christy, Julianna, & Kari; Focus group interview; Semester 2; Branch Secondary School; May 22, 2012)

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And it's like um, the person who doesn't have the, like the better, the nicer quality clothing, I think that's what it was mostly, like a lot of people back in middle school were wearing like brand named clothing and stuff like that. And like Hollister and everything, they were all in, right. It didn't really affect me, cause I was in the French immersion program, and, like, not many people
were into that stuff, we were more into like, succeeding in school and stuff like that. But, um, I saw it around me, with like the young normal – I guess in the English program, and stuff like that. (Kari, Individual interview, Semester 2, Branch Secondary School, June 8, 2012)

This second quote complicated the conversation regarding clothes, differentiating those who cared about them from those who did not. Kari identified her inclusion in the specialized French Immersion program and that within the social world of her program, clothing was less important. This division of academic status and specialized program identification will be significant to the discussion to come, but before addressing notions of academic division within the school, I will discuss another aspect of socio-spatial inequality that was quite hidden from view.

**Mobility and Its Association With Affordable Housing Infrastructure**

Kneebone and Berube (2013) suggest that the urban poor have not disappeared, but that the rates of growth of American suburban poverty are twice the rate of cities. They do not suggest that poverty in the suburb is worse than in urban centres, they suggest that it is different. They nuance their analysis further by suggesting that the near poor, 63% of those who live in the bracket just above the poverty line, are housed in the suburbs. What is important to recognize is that according to Kneebone and Berube (2013) “poverty didn’t trade one location for another but instead affected both cities and suburbs as it grew” (p. 20). Bunting, Walks, and Filion (2004) also suggest that poverty is increasingly suburban, “detailed analysis of the Toronto urban region (Bourne, 1993; Walks, 2001) suggests a suburbanisation of deprivation, particularly associated with new immigrant reception areas and the location of low-rent and state-subsidised housing complexes in the inner suburbs” (p. 367). Likewise, Ley and Smith (2000) chart a variety of indicators of economic deprivation in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, and suggest, “suburbanisation of deprivation is carried much further in Toronto” (p. 47). This statement is relevant because in an older suburb such as this area of Mississauga, with both highrise buildings and single-family homes, poverty may not be readily visible. The combination of invisibility and the persistent perception of the suburbs as uniformly middle class can contribute to misunderstandings about the living conditions of local youth. As Kneebone and Berube (2013) suggest, “common perceptions that the suburbs have little or no poverty can have real consequences for how regional poverty is or is not addressed” (p. 69).

As mentioned previously, youth did not always see or express these differences in the school community. To try to address issues of diversity less directly, I set up a camera in the drama classroom as a Speaker’s Corner with a daily question for the youth to answer when they had a free moment in the class. Anna’s
(English language; Canadian/Jamaican; middle class; female; heterosexual) comments are relevant to the discussion of socio-economic disparity:

Anna: ‘Kay - if I could change my life, I would get singing lessons, get famous, get rich, buy my Mum a house, oh - give money to charity and if that doesn’t work, rob a bank.

*And then before leaving the frame of the camera she gives the double thumbs up and smiles.*

(Speaker’s corner video transcription, Anna, Branch Secondary School, December 2, 2011).

There were two issues Anna discussed in this light-hearted commentary: access to enrichment programs like music lessons and access to affordable housing. In a recent study published by Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2014), in the context of England, it was clear that class was the most important factor in a child’s participation in enrichment activities. Nonparticipation in enrichment activities was due to lack of financial resources, the need for a car to transport children to the activity, and a parent who could afford the time away from work. They conclude, “the landscape of children’s play is changing in class-differentiated ways, and we need to give due attention to the ways in which informal learning environments are reshaping children’s playscapes and educational geographies in the Global North” (p. 624). Housing, and with it, mobility are the other socio-economic issues that surfaced in the empirical materials collected in the course of the research. Participants commented on a wide range of reasons for moving to Mississauga from downtown Toronto: to be closer to family, to gain more living space, or to live with one parent or the other as families were reconstituted. Movement happened in the other direction as well as youth and their families moved out of Mississauga, and this could have posed

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32 This discussion of enrichment activities is also relevant to the youth who participated in *Concord Floral* because that activity could be considered as a kind of enrichment. As was described in the introduction to this study, there was a high level of parental engagement in terms of attending the performances and driving the youth either all the way home or at least to the subway. In Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson’s (2014) study, the participation gap narrowed if the enrichment activity was offered at the site of the school. This finding gestures to the importance of subsidized activities offered through schools so that all children can participate and not just children in the privileged middle class.

With respect to future work like *Concord Floral*, Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2014) infer that enrichment programs are more equitable when they happen at the site of the school. If *Concord Floral* had been school–based with the artists travelling to the suburb rather than the youth travelling to the city, more youth might have been able to participate. However, the youth would not have had the experience of working and learning in the adult space of the theatre. Perhaps part of the learning that the youth identified was the freedom from their school cultures and the real pleasures of meeting other youth from across the postmetropolis.
difficulties for youth. When a family moves out of the catchment area, the student may be forced to attend a new school.

Two youth had to move out of the school board’s catchment area. One student moved with her family to live with extended family and another student spoke about living under precarious economic circumstances that forced a move back into the city of Toronto in search of publicly funded, subsidized housing. At first, I was surprised that the family would move back to the city because it had been my understanding that families were moving to the suburbs to find affordable housing. When I learned of the backlog for social housing, however, the move began to make sense. *The Toronto Star* reported that in Mississauga there were then 13,500 families on the waiting list for social housing and that the 21-year wait list was the longest in the province of Ontario (Baluja, 2011, April 20 *The Toronto Globe and Mail*).

Clearly, the local suburban infrastructure could not and cannot accommodate this level of socio-economic need. This news report was substantiated by research conducted by Preston et al., (2009) who analyze the challenges of insufficient affordable housing. Bunting et al., (2004) assess the stresses associated with the affordability of housing in the Canadian context, say:

> the suburbs, particularly the inner suburbs developed between the end of the Second World War and the early 1970s, reveal a high incidence of such households, and contain a much larger share of the total number of tenant households with severe affordability problems than has been previously assumed. (p. 388)

Young, Burke Wood, and Keil (2011) in the introduction to their book, *In-Between Infrastructure: Urban Connectivity in an Age of Vulnerability*, suggest that in the suburb, there is a new level of need, but that “there are no traditional accumulations of infrastructure services” (p. 7). As affordable housing in the contemporary inner suburb is no longer constructed and rates of poverty grow, the need for public housing increases and a considerable backlog is created. According to Filion, Osolen, and Bunting (2011), “waiting lists for public housing became increasingly long as the poverty rate rose and the construction of new units stalled” (p. 187). This lack of infrastructure is problematic for youth whose families are forced to move into a new school board district that necessitates that the student change schools. These two youth were willing to commute to Branch, travelling a considerable distance just to avoid changing schools. Now officially out of district, these youth knew that their ability to continue to attend Branch could be uncertain.
These place-based boundary rules between suburban and urban boards of education do not serve these youth well. For the youth living in economically stable conditions, the border between boards and catchment areas means nothing, because they will, in all likelihood, stay in the local school. For youth living in precarious economic conditions, moves would likely be more frequent. The two Branch youth wanted to stay at a school they liked, but they were at risk of being transferred to a new school where they would have no established relationships with teachers or friends. In conversation with their teacher, Mr. A, he predicted that if one of these youth were forced to attend a new school, the youth would likely have stopped attending all together. This example emphasizes the importance of flexible school boundary policies that take into consideration the circumstances of the most economically challenged so that economically stable youth are not, even if unintentionally, favoured.

The data showed that some youth had to move when rents or mortgages could not be paid, but also when families reorganized due to spousal separations and the reconstituting of families:

Lena: Well like, I moved so much. I moved from Newfoundland to Brampton, Brampton to Newfoundland, Newfoundland to Mississauga, Toronto to Mississauga, Brampton to Mississauga.

Anne: So you’ve had a lot of going around to different places. But what about coming, the move from Toronto?

Lena: Oh my god, it was a huge switch. Because like, I was in Toronto from grade six to the middle of grade seven. And like, I was always like, - I wasn’t always out late because it wasn’t even that late ‘cause you know in the winter it gets dark really easily – yeah. I’d go home at like 8 or 9 and just, like, there’s a bunch of like hobos and drunk people walking around in Toronto, like, it’s crazy. And then my dad was like “this is why I put you in kickboxing, so that like, when you’re down there you can like protect yourself.” ‘Cause like my parents are split up and I was

33 The Peel District School Board policy states that a principal can grant a student access to the school, if they are outside the boundaries of the board, but this is not guaranteed. Accommodating student requests for flexible boundaries and accepting students outside the Peel Region is the sixth of six priorities. Accommodating students who have had to move into the city is the lowest priority for a Mississauga principal and superintendent to consider in their decision-making. Flexible School Boundaries Policy 19 (2013) states, “The Peel District School Board understands that school boundaries may not always meet the needs of students and so an alternative option is provided under the Flexible Boundary Policy. Under the policy, students may apply to attend a school other than their home school. The Board will provide this alternative to the extent its financial resources, accommodations and other obligations allow.”
with my mom at the time but then I went back to my dad in Mississauga because I was like, “I can’t handle it here”. It’s like ca-razee.

(Lena, Individual interview, Branch Secondary School, December 20, 2011)

As much of the data have indicated, many of the youth interviewed had lived for a time in Toronto or other communities, and the prevalence of mobility in these youth’s lives was considerable. As I analyzed individual interview data, I began to wonder if attachment to place is a class-dependent notion that comes with the privilege afforded by financial stability and the ability to stay in a single location for an extended period of time. In looking specifically at suburban schools, Kneebone and Berube (2013) recognize an increased need for school meal programs and mobility rates among families. Although the meal programs were not relevant to the Canadian context, the mobility issue and its impact on youth was evident in the interview data. It was not just a particular youth who was affected by a move but the long distances created by this move to get to school could create absences that would disrupt the group work in the drama class.

Perhaps a reconsideration of this place-based policy is in order. A metropolitan-wide policy could be designed to keep youth from being penalized when they have to move from regional board to regional board. School boards, though, can only address part of the problem. The larger issue here is the availability of affordable social housing and the lack of infrastructure available to the income-polarized population who live in Mississauga. Although this discussion is beyond the parameters of this research, this lack of infrastructure is directly relevant to some of the youth in this study and may reflect the dismantling of the welfare state and growth of the neoliberal state. In marking the change from interventionist social policies to the neoliberal noninterventionist government, Filion et al. (2011) state: “In Canada and Ontario, social programmes have, for the most part, remained in place. Their efficacy was lessened, however, by limits placed on their resources in a climate of public sector austerity and growing demand for assistance” (p. 183). They proceed to describe the sizable cuts to social programs instituted in the late 1990s. Of particular relevance to this study is the move away from universalized social programs to targeted ones (Cowen & Parlette, 2005). I argue that this kind of policy may work for homogeneous neighbourhoods, but for mixed neighbourhoods, they can miss or overlook people who are in need of services.

In his analysis of neoliberal policies in Chicago schools, Means (2013) suggests that neoliberalism transfers the responsibility of poverty and associated social programs from the community to the individual, and “this means that risk and responsibility are increasingly transferred from the state and the public sphere onto individuals and communities as social provisions are cut and public infrastructures are deregulated and commodified” (p. 19). As Filion et al. (2011) suggest, the Canadian context may not be
so desperate, but they also give firm evidence of similar trends in Canada. For example, they discuss how in 1997, the province of Ontario cut social welfare payments by 21.6%. Current neoliberal policy offloads state responsibility for social infrastructure just at the time when statistics show that levels of poverty in the suburb are increasing.

Relational Groupings

Returning to the analysis of the social groupings in the class, I suggest that within the groups there was connection and the enjoyment of being together, but the relations toward the other groups were strained. Iris Marion Young (2000) has been unwilling to equate a consideration of social difference with identity politics and she suggests talking about groups relationally rather than substantively, “by conceiving social group differentiation in relational rather than substantial terms, we can retain a description of social group differentiation but without fixing or reifying groups” (p. 89). To avoid identifiers that essentialize, she advocates for looking at how group members relate to one another within the group, and also to others operating outside the boundary of the group, “in a relational conceptualization, what makes a group a group is less some set of attributes its members share than the relations in which they stand to others” (Young, 2000, p. 90). This differentiation was particularly relevant to the groups in this class that were not exclusive in terms of race, class, or gender, but had social boundaries that were perceived to be rigidly in place. What I observed were relational bonds that were formed around desire, humour, common understandings, shared knowledge, and shared attitudes to academic work. Much of the attention of the following analysis focuses on the tensions between these two groups (the Prom Group and the Amusement Park Group). Both groups in the class treated their members differently than they treated those who were outside the group.

In the Amusement Park Group, amongst themselves, they were often involved in side conversations that seemed completely engaging to them. Often the teacher would have to wait for them to finish before he could continue with what he was saying. There was a disconcerting pattern that started to happen just as the lights would go down preceding a drama presentation when we would hear their laughter. It was unclear if they were still joking amongst themselves or unsettling the space, making an unstable start for the presenters.

The Prom Group was very keen to be in drama and had high expectations of themselves and the work that they wanted to accomplish. They were usually upbeat and friendly and enjoyed a back and forth banter with the teacher, Mr. A, about such things as the competition between the Montreal and Toronto hockey teams: the Habs and the Leafs.

It should be mentioned that the class composition was broader than these two groups. Not everyone
belonged to groups; one boy came into class with his earphones on until the class began, making
correction with no one. Then there was one student from China (completing her high school here in
Canada) who was frequently isolated and seated on the margins. In the data collected from the first
semester, two linguistically diverse youth (also from China) expressed the pain of their social isolation.
Lung (Cantonese speaker; other languages Mandarin and English; 3.5 years in Canada; Asian, female;
little rich) said that although she was not excluded in the drama activities in the classroom, she felt that
people were fearful of her and avoided developing a friendship with her.

Adding to this picture was a boy who was away most days; when he came to class, he was present, but
absent at the same time. He did the work expected for that particular day and then would be gone for
another stretch of time. There were youth who had to serve suspensions. For them, their ability to
connect with the class was interrupted considerably. Their absence also affected the other youth in the
working group because drama depends so heavily on group work. It appeared to me that these
suspensions were more disruptive to the continuity of their schooling than to their social relations. When
the youth returned, their group was happy to see them back, but for their drama work, it was hard, if not
impossible, to make up what they had missed. A suspension for a drama student had costly consequences
in terms of assessment and evaluation.

This description makes the class sound neat and tidy. I find myself bound by the strictures of language
and the linearity of text that can only tell one story at a time. In this classroom were, as Massey (2005)
has suggested, simultaneous stories happening at all times, ones that I was able to observe and others that
I was not. I was able to observe some fluidity in the groupings, but even when the teacher grouped the
youth for drama work differently, the dispersed youth from the Amusement Park Group would drift back
to each other, such was its social pull. In response to this group, there were mounting tensions to which
they seemed oblivious. The following accounts of these social tensions have been culled from the
interviews:

Stella (English language; Lebanese/French Canadian; straight; female; middle class, no religion):
I think the atmosphere in our class is mostly positive and supportive

Anne: Yeah.

Stella: I think there are definitely lots of people in our class that are, you know, super, um,
supportive and encouraging, and, you know, they don't judge people.

Anne: Right.
Stella: But there is a specific group in our class that I think is a little bit toxic in the atmosphere.

Anne: Yeah.

Stella: Because, they do judge. And they do make fun of people behind their backs. And so, I think that has affected the atmosphere a little bit.

Anne: Mmhmm.

Stella: But I think mostly, it's good. And also, you know, we all have like, we all have confidence in ourselves, so, it doesn't really matter what they say –


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Tammy (English language; West Indian; straight; middle class; Hindu): But like, in the middle of the year, like, people are starting to be rude. And like when we're presenting something, a scene up there, like, they would like, laugh at which is not supposed to be funny.

Anne: Yeah.

Tammy: And I think that's kind of humiliating for some of us because like, it also lowers your self-confidence if you're laughing at us - like, laughing at you on the stage. But like, you know, like, some people are like, they just don't get it, like they can't like respect you, in a way you wanted them too.

Anne: And, and why do you think that is? Why do you think people would choose to behave in a disrespectful way, when, Mr. A is a very respectful teacher, and most of the youth in the class are highly respectful?

Tammy: Uh, maybe it's because like they want to get attention, attention from others, and -

Anne: Yeah.

Tammy: They wanna be the top, like they wanna be – like no one – like they can make a joke everybody will start laughing, laugh about it –

Anne: Yeah.
Tammy: Yeah. But if somebody else makes a joke, they won't laugh at it, just laughing at the person –

Anne: Yeah.

Tammy: Yeah. Yeah, I find that happens a lot.


Adding to this growing dissatisfaction was the teacher, Mr. A, who expressed his frustration with the difficulties within the second semester class:

I was really frustrated with that second semester group and there were some times where I wasn’t sure we were going to get, not just the ritual unit or the one that we were focusing on, but the other units as well. You know, you have those nights when you go home and you’re like, “okay I’ve been doing this for a while. How come I still can’t figure out how to plan or get through to these kids? (Mr. A, Teacher interview, August 29, 2012)

I too, was unsettled by the laughter Tammy references. One particular day, as I was explaining the use of the Speaker’s Corner camera, I experienced the laughter while I was talking. I decided that in the individual interview, I would ask one of the youth what he thought this was about.

Anne: Um, so, let me ask you a question, this is something that has really interested me, from almost the beginning of the semester, is that sometimes when people get up to present, I hear laughter. And I find the laughter really hard to read. Like I don't know whether it's whether you guys have passed a joke back and forth, and it's funny, or whether you've passed a joke about the person on stage? And, so you're actually laughing at the person on stage, like what, what goes on when you guys are audience?

Shane (English language; Jamaican/Scottish; ‘straight as a ruler wooden/metal (I like girls)’; middle class; male; Christian): Oh, um -

Anne: ‘Cause often, I hear you laughing.

Shane: Yeah, no it's – we're just, having like little side conversations, and then an odd joke might come up, and it'll be really funny, and then we'll all just laugh. We're not laughing at a person on stage.

Anne: Okay. Do you think it might be read that way –
Shane: um -

Anne: That the person on stage feels laughed at?

Shane: M-m-maybe, it could.

Anne: Yeah. ‘Cause sometimes when I'm talking about say, even just the open mike, the open camera thing today, like, because it was really hard to get your attention, I felt like you were laughing, at me. Now I don't know whether that's the case, but that's what it felt like to me. And I felt, it made me feel bad, like I thought, “oh, I don't, I don't want them laughing at me,” I wanted to get them to have something that they'd enjoy.” What do you think was going on in that moment?

Shane: Well like, like I, like I felt like we were having a little side conversation - it was funny, and I'm sorry to make it seem like we were laughing at you.

Anne: Okay, okay. That's fine, I mean sometimes I can read things wrong, right? But it was just, in that moment, I wasn't sure. And I thought – it was part of the reason I wanted to talk to you today, ‘cause I thought, I'd really like to just talk about what, what was going on in that moment.

(Shane, Individual interview, Branch Secondary School, June 5, 2012)

This Amusement Park Group student, Shane, was quick to apologize and suggested that this laughter was really about the “side conversation” rather than trying to be disrespectful or to throw me off. Several youth in this group made mention of these side conversations. I cannot know whether or not they sensed the kind of power they were generating in doing so, but youth outside their group articulated how they felt judged and how this laughter unsettled them. I started to suspect that this was not quite so innocent, that they were more than just a group who enjoyed being together, but that they also benefitted in some way by these disruptions.

Henri Bergson’s (1911) *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of the comic*, suggests that the purpose of laughter is to humiliate, “its function is to intimidate by humiliating” (p. 198). Laughter has the intention of correcting a transgression, “laughter is above all a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must be made a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed” (Bergson, 1911, p. 136). Perhaps this resembles Turner’s ritual that starts with a transgressive act and the ritual is then enacted to redress that transgression. Bergson states, “by laughter, society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it” (p.197). What is a sideways joke in the Amusement Park Group is also an attempt to humiliate their peer
(outsider to the group) – on stage. This laughter then serves several purposes, to humiliate and to unite the group. Bergson says, “our laughter is always the laughter of a group” (p. 6).

While I tried, for the most part, to comply with the principal’s request that I conduct my interviews outside class time, there was one occasion in which the events of the class prompted me to ask if some of the youth would agree to a spontaneous focus group interview right there and then. When I asked directly about how open their group is to others, Julianna responded:

It’s kind of hard to invite new people in because, it would be – like I don’t know – it’s different. We’re more comfortable with people – we talk with people about certain things – we know certain things that they don’t know – they then come in randomly – they just don’t know anything” (Julianna, Ludicious, Shane, & Emily; Spontaneous focus group interview; Semester 2; Branch Secondary School; May 28, 2012).

This comment referred to knowledge as a kind of possession or consumer item that some had and others did not, and it indicated the presence of different knowledges, or kinds of knowing, in the class.

Even in the course of this short six-minute, spur-of-the-moment interview with the Amusement Park Group, one of the youth, Ludicious (English language; African-Canadian; middle class; straight; male; Christian) suggested that the parties they share were important. Life outside school had real affective importance to him and this was communicated with an exuberant sense of humour. He expanded what Julianna listed as “inside” knowledge to include parties and a style of shared humour. There was the official knowledge of the class and classwork and this exclusive social knowledge (including the humour that both Shane and Ludicious identified). They were united through affection, affinity, and a shared knowledge base they could refer to without having to explain themselves to outsiders. This verbal shorthand was something they both enjoyed.

Social geographer David Sibley (1995) analyzes spaces of exclusion and writes:

people’s relationships with others are too often conditioned by fear and that fear, anxiety, nervousness also affects attitudes to knowledge. New ideas or subversive ideas can be as threatening as images of alien others. This reaction to certain kinds of difference is bound up with questions of power. A fear of mixing of unlike things often signifies a reluctance to give ground and relinquish power. (p. 183)

Sibley makes a fascinating connection between spatial fears and fearful knowledge-making. The social groupings in this class, with their “boundary policing” of various kinds, created social tensions that compromised the quality of their learning (Sibley 1995, p. 183). Sibley’s (1995) final point in this
quotation addresses the fear of giving ground and relinquishing power. Here I return to Deleuze’s (1968/1994) notion of being/becoming minor. Deleuze addresses the dominant and those with the most power and asks that they relinquish it or at least give ground. In the analysis that follows I discuss the practices of the focus group and argue that, for the youth, this was a step towards becoming minor in that they were able to talk to each other about who held power and the strategies used to maintain it.

Minority, or the condition of being minor, was relevant to this encounter as the various groups in the class confronted each other about exclusions and exclusivity, and by doing so, they edged toward discussing what it might mean to relinquish power and give ground. What you are about to read is a process that was started, but not finished, and as such, it is incomplete. Nevertheless, the account shows the intersection of space, power and knowledge at the heart of this encounter and points toward the possibility of youth becoming minor by confronting power relations in classrooms.

**Focus Groups**

As a result of these growing social tensions, I decided that I would not repeat the dramas that I had used in the focus group interviews in the first semester; instead, I would try to address these social relations quite directly. Urgently curious to learn more about what the teacher and I sensed was taking place, I planned that in the focus groups, the two groups would talk without adults present. I asked youth to answer certain questions hoping that the conversations would ignite and they would be able to talk about what was on their minds. The first stage of the focus group was to talk together with those whom they were comfortable and then they could take what they had discussed in their groups to the others, with whom they were not comfortable, as the social tensions had become quite acute, even though they were cleverly disguised. What followed was a surprising pedagogy that hinged on what Ruddick (2010) calls a “destabilizing moment of the encounter” (p. 24).

**The Prom Group Talking Among Themselves**

To make sense of the content of these interviews, it is important to know that they took place at lunchtime and as a result, the whole class did not attend. Each group sat with both an audio recorder and Flip camera to record/film the interview. The groups on this lunch break were mixed up. One of the groups was the Prom Group but the other group had only two girls from the Amusement Park Group.

In the Prom Group, in spite of initial worry about the video being shown, they spoke frankly about the other group. They also discussed Gay-Straight Alliances, and in which school boards they were
allowed. The conversation moved quickly from topic to topic, and to clarify, they were asked to talk about the social relations within the class generally, but they found themselves talking about the performances of ritual and in particular, the topic of that performance, sexuality.

In looking at data from both groups in these interviews, they both talked about same-sex relationships. The Prom Group reflected on their own ritual and decided that it had been well-received in the class. The interview data from the Amusement Park Group showed Ludicious suddenly realizing that Elizabeth had been able to talk about her own sexual orientation through taking on her role in the Prom ritual. For Elizabeth, the line that separated the self from the role-played was very fine, and for Ludicious, it provoked an affectively-charged reaction as he encountered a sexual orientation that differed from his own. When he learned of Elizabeth’s real sexual orientation, he was surprised and could not quite believe what he was hearing saying, “when did this happen?” (Focus group interview, Branch Secondary School, June 1, 2012). He explained that he thought the performance had been a joke. Following this exchange, this group continued to talk about acceptance of same-sex relationships and speculated that their parents’ generation would not be so accepting. They talked about how hard it would be to not to be accepted by your own parents.

What I analyze here is the ritual performance of prom and the sexual orientation of Elizabeth, both in role and out of role. The performed ritual of prom became the centre of this focus group discussion in the Amusement Park Group. The Prom Group in their initial discussions in the focus group were very vocal about the tensions they experienced with the other group, but instead of quoting verbatim from this group, I will choose some key phrases to give a sense of the affective intensity of their comments that included both blame and fear:

I personally think it’s a big issue in this class

They’re ruining our class

I heard snickering

They don’t like anyone who’s different

I was so nervous to present today

Exasperating

34 Currently in the school there had not been a GSA in three years. It was not that it was not allowed, but that the supervising teacher had moved to another school and no one had taken over its leadership.
A youth, who was not usually part of the Prom Group, but had joined them on the day of the focus groups, also expressed her negative attitude towards the Amusement Park Group as she spoke about her experience of having had her cell phone stolen in class. The cell phone’s owner, Christy (Arabic first language; English; straight; female; upper middle class; Islam) had explained to her classmates that because there was some very important footage of her sister’s university work on the phone, she offered a reward. The phone had not been returned. In the focus group, it became clear she suspected the thieves were in the other group.

Further evidence of the inter group tensions was a comment made by Kari who reported that while putting away chairs at the end of class one day, someone from the Amusement Park Group said to her, “you’re such a suck-up.” This comment suggested different approaches to academic work and different styles of communicating with teachers. Kari was perceived to be trying to please those with power in the room (the teacher and researcher as adults) and was accused of being disingenuous in the process. Kari judged these comments as rude and went so far as to say that the other group was ruining the drama class. At play were spatial, affective, and power relations within the social relations described by these youth.

Kari and her group had a clear idea of how the drama class should work. Based on their previous experiences, there was a gap between the drama class they experienced this year and the drama classes they had experienced previously. They expressed the gap between the drama class they longed to have and the reality of this one. Knowing how the class should go, they were unwilling to accept the way the class was. A more productive strategy might have been to take a Deleuzian approach to release everyone from the notion of a standard, and instead, think of the class as a composition-in-the-making. They would be better positioned to enter into negotiation with the rest of the class to determine how the class might function best, not just for the one group, but for everyone. As I analyzed the video, I saw myself trying to talk about this in the debriefing session, but talking about it on the fly was really inadequate.

Another of the ways that this Prom Group judged the other group was by assuming that the others did not want to be in drama class. From my observations, the Amusement Park Group seemed quite happy to be in class with their friends. For the most part, they did not skip class. It appeared to me that they found enjoyment with each other and, within their own group, worked together well. Problematic were the relations to the other group. The Amusement Park Group was not oblivious or innocently mean because they made comments that were overtly cruel. I do suggest, however, there would be more room for change to occur if the class were not held to a standard defined by only one group, the Prom Group.
If the Prom Group could let go of their idea of the perfect or even good class, then the two groups together may have been able to discuss and negotiate a class that would work for all of them. For youth, teachers, and researchers, dispensing with the standard could make judgment impossible because there was no longer a set of criteria on which to judge. If they had been able to leave their preconceived notions of how a class should go, perhaps they could have entered into other ways of making the class work.

For Deleuze (1968/1994), difference has everything to do with learning. He differentiates learning from recognition; because in recognizing something, you associate it with the familiar and that which you already know. He says, “an object is recognized, however, when one faculty locates it as identical to that of another, or rather when all the faculties together relate their given and relate themselves to a form of identity in the object” (p. 133). This is relevant to this particular encounter because if the Prom Group youth looked only for the recognizable, in the form of the perfect drama class, then there would be no choice but to conform to the already known and shut down what might have been possible this time with these particular peers. Deleuze (1968/1994) states, “the form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognizable and the recognized; form will never inspire anything but conformities” (p. 134).

This analysis risks placing blame on the Prom Group for school practices that stream students into academic levels and specialized programming. In a climate of standardized testing and the neoliberal use of benchmarks and prescribed outcomes, perhaps it is no surprise that youth have been disciplined to judge what deviates from a standard. Disciplined as they were to be good students, they learned what it took to function and thrive in the larger school environment that prized standards and uniformity. This evidence points to the need for working creatively to address academic differences in which the strengths of differing attitudes to schooling can work to create classrooms that fit the particulars of the youth who populate them rather than producing or constructing one group as problem.

The Amusement Park Group Talking With Others in the Focus Group

Discourses of neoliberalism permeated Ludicious’s comments about what he described as the criteria for membership in his group. When Ludicious talked about his group in workplace terminology, he likened membership in his group to a job for which a resume is needed:

And you come in with that resume, and, pretty much you don’t have to be cool, you don’t have to meet the standards all the way, it’s just that if, if you come off as an easy person, you know, a lot of fun, willing, especially outgoing, willing to do whatever, willing to go out, party, whatever, you know. Chances are, we’ll accept you, because it’s a lot of – you know, you like are a lot of fun,
you know, and you’re not, behind, you’re not shy or not talking. (Focus group interview, Semester 2, Branch Secondary School, June 1, 2012)

He defined the kind of person that would be accepted in the group and his standards included being fun and outgoing. In talking about his group, he seemed to accept that this was the way the group functioned with little regard for how they might be perceived as exclusive.

Although the Prom ritual was catalytic to this part of the focus group discussions, these conversations would have been useless had the Amusement Park Group not been so willing to engage with diversity issues within the school community. What follows is a description of the most pivotal moment in the discussion.

**Intergroup Relations and the Expression of Difference**

In the focus group, an Amusement Park Group member, Julianna contrasted the way that she behaved towards new people with those familiar to her in her group. Responding to the question about exclusivities in the school, Melanie (English language; Hakka second language; Chinese; straight; female; middle class; agnostic) said that there had been an improvement over elementary school while Ellie (Azerbaijani first language; English; Russian; Turkish second languages; straight; female; not religious; middle class) said the opposite. Then the student interviewer who had not expressed any opinion up until this point, confronted Juliana and Emily (Vietnamese language; English second language; Vietnamese; middle class; straight; female) on their exclusivity. Ellie thought the interviewer had gone too far and tried to regulate him, aware of the delicacy of this conversation, and that it would be ruined if they insulted one another.

Julianna, when accused of this exclusivity, said, “give us a reason why you think we’re not accepting.” On the verge of getting defensive, Julianna was reminded that she and Emily had already described their group as exclusive. It was then they calmed down and re-entered the conversation. Julianna talked about how she behaved with new people. What fascinated me in this exchange was the degree to which people were confronting each other, and yet, were also willing to reveal the discomfort with new people. Following this sequence, Julianna switched tactics and shifted the focus away from their group by suggesting that others did not approach them wanting to become part of their group. They thought about this some more and stated that new people had come into the group.

This conversation was lurching and difficult. Not only was there talk about difference and diversity, but the focus group in these exceptional moments *differenciated* and became something more than questions
and answers. This was an out-of-the-ordinary exchange and for a few moments, the class was working with difference.

**Debriefing the Focus Groups**

Debriefing afterwards with the whole class, neither Mr. A nor I knew what they had talked about, although through observation, we could sense that important conversations were taking place. The discussion that followed stood out, in the sense that people in the class were talking to each other about challenging social relations. Julianna and Emily identified what they had been told through the course of the discussion. Instead of resisting, they could see it from the outside point of view and understood how their group could be perceived as exclusive:

Julianna: Like, like...People I hang out with aren't, like, open to knew people, like

Emily: And we're not really that approach -

Julianna: Yeah. Like we already said how like me and my friends aren't easy to approach and everything -

Emily: Yeah.

Mr. A: How do you feel about that?

Emily: I can't even lie - if I was, a person trying to approach them, I wouldn't.

Julianna: No, I think we're approachable, but nobody -

Mr. A: Say that again –Emily can you just clar-say that one more time?

Emily: If I was a new person, I seen a group like, my friends -

Mr. A: Yes.

Emily: I don't think I would approach them, 'cause they don't look approachable, you know, our group is like loud and outspoken, so we're trying to like - oh we have it like, “oh no. They're, they're, they're doing their own thing so I should just like, walk away, or whatever”.

Julianna: I think it's 'cause like – I don't think we're not acceptable [accepting], I think like, our bond is so strong that nobody really approaches us, or whatever, but like people who do are like, are accepted.
In classrooms, there is much that is ritualized and habitual, but there are encounters that break out of the expected and demonstrate political and social potential in the form of shifts in student capacities to speak to one another across difference. At issue is not the reduction of difference, but the ability, as Ruddick (2010) suggests, to engage it. Iris Marion Young (2000) considers the political implications of engaging with difference and argues that this communication of difference is what is important to a functioning democracy. She states, “communication of the experiences and knowledge derived from different social positions helps correct biases derived from the dominance of partial perspective over the definition of problems or their possible solutions” (Young, 2000, p. 83).

When the Prom Group were invited to report on the content of their discussion and state whether or not the class felt safe or not, Elizabeth said that she would not let anything hold her back in expressing what she wanted to express:

Stella: I don't think we were surprised about what we were saying. Like we talked about stuff that like happens in class and even outside, like the advantages between different schools or what's going on [in] the news right now, like the whole GSA thing.

Kari: Yeah, just acceptance, and like -

Elizabeth: Yeah, I think that was like the main theme of everything we were talking about, with like acceptance, and how different, and like how it's an issue – it's a really big issue and, but sometimes, like your culture or like your religion or the way you've been raised - sort of prevents you in ways from being accepted.

Anne: Mmhmm.

Kari: Yeah. We talked about the whole thing about respect within the classroom and stuff like that, and how like it's really important and it really makes a class a strong class, or like a class that you don't want to come to.

Stella: Yeah, a class that – yeah it completely affects whether or not you want to enjoy class -

Kari: And have a -

Elizabeth: Even the subject can [only] get you so far.
Kari: Yeah, and how much effort you want to put in, how much you want to sell yourself

Elizabeth: Yeah, and how much of yourself you want to expose if you feel people-

Stella: Yeah, that's true.

Elizabeth: if you feel like someone's not accepting -

Anne: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Like if they're gonna make fun of it –

Mr. A: Has that changed throughout the course of the semester?

Elizabeth: I think it's changed – for me personally, I think it's changed because I'm, I'm just sort of at the point where I'm, I'm done holding back because it's only hurt-hurting me.

Anne: Mmhmm.

Elizabeth: And I know that if someone's not accepting, it might hurt, but, in the long run, I'll still be like, myself and like I'll still be happy with who I am, so.

(Post focus group interview discussion, Semester 2, Branch Secondary School, June 1, 2012)

I suggest that the negative differences that existed between the relational groupings, in its own surprising way, provoked an encounter of positive difference or differenciating. The level to which they addressed the situation frankly and their ability to listen to one another impressed Mr. A. He mentioned this several times as he led the reflective discussion. In the focus groups, the youth defined their differences and spoke frankly to each other about the problems associated with perceived exclusivity. There was a talking across difference that I suggest differenciated the focus group interview, moving it from a stratified and quite passive question and answer session to an encounter with difference.

Susan Ruddick (2010) asks, “how do we fashion a new political imaginary from fragmentary, diffuse, and often antagonistic subjects?” (p. 22). She warns, however, that avoiding the painful and looking to find those who will reinforce your viewpoint, or who feel familiar, is dangerous, since “the desire to avoid painful encounters might well lead us to steer clear of associations whose discomfort arises, in fact, from a social field that reinforces racism, sexism, class bias to other forms of oppression” (p. 26). She suggests that there is much to be learned in the discomfort of paideia as an “alliance that is unforeseen, that might surprise us” (Ruddick, 2010, p. 23). Rather than avoiding those who incite discomfort, she
recognizes the potential of engaging it. Gallagher (2007) suggests that drama classrooms are well suited for this “pedagogy of conflict” and that instead of seeking early resolution of tensions that they can be fruitfully explored for what they offer pedagogically (p. 140).

These interviews metamorphosed into a kind of *paideia* that forced thought into being and subsequent learning. This was not an encounter with the recognizable, but with the unfamiliar. Through these encounters with each other, the teacher, and with me as researcher, they made known their differences articulating the tensions and exclusivities that mired their learning environment in the fear of judgment. This is one of the offerings of the drama classroom – that it can put difference into relation with difference as this space is constantly in production.

That said, the encounter really only asked one group to consider their actions and attitudes. In hindsight, there was no discussion about the relationality of the Prom Group and how they might be perceived as exclusive. How might being in French Immersion have created an elite group within the school? As drama is open to all students in the school, might divisions created by the school between the French Immersion, academic, and applied youth be carried into the classroom? To try to answer this question, I turned to the data I collected about French Immersion. There was evidence from the interviews that this group within the school was considered separate and had, at times, had been considered exclusive. So, as much as the particular French Immersion youth in this class did not consider themselves to be exclusive people, or the kind of people who would exclude others, they were part of a program that could be perceived to be exclusive from the outside. The following are statements made in individual interviews about the presence of French Immersion as a program within the school and how such a program and its youth are perceived:

Kari: Yeah, I think that there is – we were all, we've all grown up together

Anne: Yeah.

Kari: All of the French immersion youth, so we know each other like family, like we're all – we know each others’ ups and downs, and we know how much to say to a person without hurting their feeling or – ‘cause we all, we do a lot of group activities where we have to give each other constructive criticism on our work, right?

Anne: Yeah?

Kari: And we know how far to go until it gets to the point where it gets – ‘Cause we know each others' strengths and weaknesses, and we can apply that. And I think that's different with the, the
um, the normal program, because, um, people don't click as much ‘cause they haven't known each other that long or, they haven't had the same people in their class for that long.

(Kari, Individual interview, Branch Secondary School, June 12, 2012).

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Anne: So, when you came to Branch, did you feel that there was any kind of difference or separation of the French immersion kids, or were they integrated into the school?

Melanie: Well, I, not so much now, but there was some back in grade nine where the “Frenchies” used to just hang out with their, their own group, while the other people that weren't French Immersion, just hung out with everybody else.


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Kari suggested that the French Immersion students had been together for a long time. Josée Makropoulos (2007), in her study on student engagement in French Immersion, suggests that Early French Immersion students are less diverse in terms of socio-economic status than the late French Immersion students. What this suggests is that class and academic exclusivity intersect to double the structural inequality. Perhaps the drama class tried to overcome these divisions, but it was not possible given that they had been so entrenched by a school system that divided students according to academic performance or specialized programming. Working to create an inclusive drama classroom may have challenged the more dominant school culture of a stratified student body. School policies that group students according to specialized programs may work to contradict policies of inclusion.

I suggest that French Immersion had been so normalized that it was hardly recognizable as an exclusive group. In hindsight, I wish that we had been able to look more fully at aspects of exclusivities within the classroom. How would the youth analyze what had become accepted in the social landscape of this particular school? What began as a radical program to foster bilingualism and linguistic diversity may have become so institutionalized that its radical beginnings as a curricular departure embracing diversity and multiculturalism had become, or was perceived to have become, a place of exclusivity within the school.

Of great relevance to my research is the doctoral research of Makropoulos (2007) on French Immersion, noting the program was first introduced in the suburbs of Montreal by the South Shore Protestant School
Board in 1965. Makropoulos also traces school choice to Milton Freidman who advocated for parental choice in the schooling of children. According to Makropoulos (2007), “the idea of giving students the freedom to move in educational markets is also believed to make schools more competitive and efficient in the era of globalization” (p. 16). In a subsequent publication (2009), she suggests, “according to a growing body of research, school choice tends to reinforce class inequalities when the process is initiated by parents” (Makropoulos, 2009, p. 318). This intersection of the suburb, French Immersion, class, and discourses of neoliberalism is quite telling.

Makropoulos also shows that there is some variation in terms of class, depending on the region in Canada that the school is placed. She also differentiates voluntary from involuntary minority status. Voluntary minorities believe that in Canada the situation is better than where they have come from and they also believe that the school system will give them purchase on a new and better life. For the involuntary minorities that became part of the Canadian social fabric, they “have learnt from history and the experience of community members that education does not lead to significant economic rewards, since the ‘job ceiling’ systematically discriminates against non-Whites” (Makropolous, 2009, p. 25). I suspect that this division between voluntary and involuntary minority status may be significant in the Branch site, and although this would be a fascinating study to conduct, it was beyond the purview of this research.

This research does have implications for teachers as they attend to diversity in their classes. It has implications for school boards who work for equity across metropolitan areas whether urban, inner suburban or outer suburban. Furthermore, it has relevance, not just for schools who have been identified as priority schools in priority neighbourhoods, but for others as there are hidden aspects to poverty and social divisions that are not always readily visible in schools that are not classified as priority.

A long-time teaching assistant at the school remarked that youth had told her about a kind of poverty in the school that referred to the absence of events and activities that would bring together the school as a whole. Identifying this lack of opportunity for the school to come together for school-wide events, she recognized that the school was missing the opportunity to foster the affective atmosphere of belonging and good feeling toward the school. A question for future research arose: in what ways could not having a place to go outside the school and having a few places of belonging available in the school, create or reinforce already existing borders of social groups? In other words, without youth-governed space and without a sense of belonging to the larger school, might these absences accentuate the expressed need for belonging to tight groups? Although this is somewhat inconclusive, it speaks to the need for further research, given there may be a relation between the lack of open space to which the youth can feel a sense of belonging and the strict bordering of their social groupings.
Conclusion: “Another Train of Thought”

Looking at the particular dramatized ritual of the prom, both themes that Lassiter and Neidt (2013) consider important are addressed: suburban diversity and metropolitan inequality. As well, this particular drama presented issues of consumerism associated with socio-economic inequality and foregrounded resistance to heteronormative pressures. These drama data are important to the focus group discussion of diversity because they acted as a catalyst for the divided class to confront one another regarding their differences, perceived exclusivities, and mutual judgments. Acting as a kind of pivot point, the performed ritual of prom made possible a fuller discussion of diversity, socio-economic inequality, and the affective intensity of a learning encounter. It was not that the youth transcended differences to find a new coherent whole, but they entered into conversation about difference as unassimilated difference.

This exchange was affectively charged and, as Deleuze (1968/1994) suggests, the affective qualities of the learning encounter, “may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering” (p. 139). In fact, what forced thought were discomfort, judgment, and the violence of ridicule. There is a link here between the violent geographies of exclusion at the Branch site and the violation at the core of Concord Floral. In both sites, the intensity of conflicted and gendered social relations may be what Deleuze (1968/1994) would consider as necessary for thought, since “it is always by means of intensity that thought comes to us” (p. 144). He suggests when the new is created, it is something different and not recognizable, “for the new – in other words, difference – calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable terra incognita” (p. 136).

According to Deleuze (1968/1994), this is not a friendly experience, because “the dark precursor is sufficient to enable communication between difference as such to make the different communicate with difference: the dark precursor is not a friend” (p. 145). I would like to suggest that the events in the classroom acted as either a kind of dark precursor or catalyst to learning that was not friendly. In such a challenging discussion, it was possible, however, to retain difference as difference without demanding a kind of papered over semblance of false coherence. Deleuze (1968/1994) writes “there is no more a method for learning than there is a method for finding treasures, but a violent training, a culture or paideia which affects the entire individual” (p. 165).

As much as I would like to report a happy ending and that the class was entirely different from that point on, nothing of the sort happened. In spite of the discussion about working to include the Chinese linguistically-diverse student, when I watched her spatial positioning in the next class, she was just as marginalized as before. However, I contend the conversation was not worthless. The youth were careful
with each other knowing that addressing this tension was potentially explosive. In spite of not feeling safe, they spoke up. Importantly, no one was laughing anymore at anyone else.

In Young’s (2000) relational groupings, she stresses that social relatiornality may be associated with structural forces within the institution or society, “considered relationally, a social group is a collective of persons differentiated from others by cultural forms, practices, special needs or capacities, structures of power or privilege” (p. 90). This is relevant because, when considered in this light, a different analysis of the French Immersion group becomes possible when they are seen in the larger context of school policies and practices. Young states:

structural inequality consists in the relative constraints some people encounter in their freedom and material well-being as the cumulative effect of the possibilities of their social positions, as compared with others who in their social positions have more options or easier access to benefits. (p. 98)

Such a framework shifts the blame from the individuals to the larger structures in schools. The exclusions observed are not solely the fault of the individuals involved.

I would like to close this section with the words of Stella; when asked in an interview about what she would like to research had she been the researcher, she responded:

Stella: I think acceptance, and encouraging others to try new things, or to, to try out another point of view I guess, I dunno -

Anne: Yeah.

Stella: like another train of thought.

Anne: Okay.

Stella: It's all about preventing judgment in the end.

Anne: Yes.

Stella: Yeah.

(Stella, Individual interview, Branch Secondary School, May 16, 2012)

Stella makes an important observation about pedagogy: how might schools that are based on judgment and classifying youth into academic streams expect less judgment of youth one to another? How might
the collective pedagogies or pedagogies of interdependence of drama be used more overtly to challenge the judgments that seem to shut down learning? How might such pedagogies of interdependence challenge the neoliberal emphasis on the individual?

These rituals performed in the spaces of the school in which they occurred offered an encounter with a place-based pedagogy that turned itself to the community in which it was based. Dippo and James (2011) advocate what they call place-based pedagogies that seek to understand more fully the conditions of the lives of youth through fuller and more active community engagement, where “a more inclusive approach to curriculum and pedagogy, we argue, depends on developing a kind of knowledge and understanding of community life that is only possible through community engagement” (p. 116). Drama has a key role to play here as a pivot point between the school and the community, creating – as it has in this inquiry – a provocation for difference to be talked about differently. As Stella and Deleuze contend, it is in the learning encounter that offers the as yet unconsidered train of thought, without the closure of judgment, that could be at the centre of classroom practice. These conversations across and with difference hold open pedagogy and possibility even in spite of fear and discomfort.

Returning to Ruddick’s (2010) question concerning the differences not already named at the Concord Floral site, the difference I had not considered previously was the becoming-artist. From the Branch site, youth presented differences that included those caught in growing poverty and neoliberal disinvestment. There was the programmatically/academically-labeled student who was attached either to French Immersion, or Academic, or Applied programming. Also identified were varied styles of humour that could be used to humiliate or bond a group while excluding those outside. There were what Foucault (2001) might label as the parrhesiastes students who dared to speak up and listen.35 There were hedgers who subverted the class but denied it, or who did not have the vocabulary to express what it was they would have liked to see happen in the shared space of the drama class because they had never been asked. There were the drama lovers who so loved the subject that they could not open the class to include those who were different. There were the prom attenders and the amusement park goers. There were the ones that dreamt of singing lessons as enrichment. There were “dressers,” (those who were concerned with their appearances and fashion), the absent, and the quarantined (English Language learners). This represents only a partial description of the multiple trajectories that produced the fascinating, troubling, puzzling, and at times, even tender, spaces of these particular drama classrooms.

35 “The parrhesiastes, is someone who says everything he has in his mind: he does not hide anything,” (Foucault 2001, p. 12. Fearless Speech. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)). He states that this kind of speech is direct and takes a risk.
In this analysis, we must nest the specifics of one particular drama classroom in the suburb within larger historical and economic forces. In trying to work for equity and artistry in schools, how can we effectively challenge the forces that diminish the student, the teacher and the varied arts of pedagogy? This analysis in the site of the school connects the minute details of a drama class with the larger realities of suburban infrastructure, socio-economic disparity, and neoliberal standardized school policies. In so doing, this research considers the relationality of youth to the local and to the larger historical/socio-economic forces that inform the milieu of this suburban school.

**Performance Three: Suburban Mushrooms, Bird, and Butterfly**

A recent article about the return of wildlife to suburbia described snow-covered yards in which the footprints of animals are abundant and those of children are entirely absent. (Solnit, 2005, p. 7)

In looking at the way the suburb was performed and at student experiences of diversity, a very unexpected provocation occurred. When I began this research project, my focus was on the human social relations that comprised space. I was also looking at how youth performed the suburb in both the context of the classroom and in the production of the play *Concord Floral*. What I had never considered was that the suburb might perform itself. Secondly, I had never considered the agentic materiality of the school grounds and how that might play such an active role in the ethnographic process. Through the processes and practices of this research, I was summoned to consider a diversity that went beyond the human. In the circumstances of the encounters that I will describe and analyze, I came to realize that there were dimensions of diversity beyond the categories to which I had previously confined my thinking. This section will consider the performance of suburb by the suburb and consider the diversity of expression that includes the nonhuman. Emplacement is a living and agentic process rather than the passive backdrop or setting in which the events and encounters described took place.

The other unanticipated aspect to this part of the research is that it called for a reconsideration of the terms with which we engage others, including nonhumans in social science research. If science no longer entails revealing the world, as Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006) suggest, then the “focus on the ‘doing’ urban ecologies, on their co-fabrication, implies a shift in the terms on which scientists (including social scientists) engage with the world” (p. 124). They assert that the nonhuman in a particular area is affected by urban conditions and conversely, the urban is affected by the nonhuman, in that “it involves ecologies becoming urban, and cities becoming ecological” (p. 128). Just as the *Concord Floral* youth affected and co-created the suburb, so too did the presence and activity of the nonhuman construct what was, and what was known as, the suburb. Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006) link this approach with the political project of creating a “politics of conviviality” that they describe as “a more broadly conceived
accommodation of difference, better attuned to the comings and goings of the multiplicity of the more-than-human inhabitants that make themselves at home in the city” (p. 125). In changing the terms of engagement, the nonhumans are considered “colleagues” (Hinchliffe, Kearns, Degen, & Whatmore, 2005, p. 653).

The following analysis creates what Heddon and Turner (2010) call a “toponarrative” or “collaborative, partial story of place constructed by at least two walkers” (p. 15). Although my account is more prominent, the voices of my walking participants are also present in this analysis of three particular encounters during the walking interviews. Had the interviews never involved movement, there is so much that would not have happened. Rotas and Springgay (2013) contend that “becoming–artistic, or pedagogy for that matter, then involves disrupting habit and the striated spaces that tether bodies to routine and representation” (p. 284). This section of the findings will analyze three encounters with three different student participants as we walked the interviews and encountered a patch of mushrooms, a bird in the tree, and the passing by of a butterfly. These events are of interest because the participant and researcher were momentarily released from the agenda of questions. I contend that these were encounters, as Deleuze describes, with that which was not known before. In these encounters, the researcher and participant lost their bearings, in response to the nonhuman. Ellsworth (2005) suggests that the teacher has to be learning as well as the student, and this was an encounter with the “learning self” for both the researcher and the student (p. 29).

**Before Understanding**

Before presenting the empirical material associated with these three encounters, I would like to first address my positionality and preparation as researcher for the ethnographic learning I was to find ahead. What dispositions were useful to this aspect of the research, and how might they be cultivated through a kind of preparation through theory?

Bennett (2004) states, “if we think we already know what is out there, we will almost certainly miss much of it” (p. xv). Solnit, in *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2005), refers to a question that Meno asks in one of Plato’s dialogues, “how will you go about finding that thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you?” (p. 15). According to Solnit (2005), Socrates replies:

> you cannot enquire either about that which he knows, or about that which he does not know; for if he knows, he has no need to enquire and if not; he cannot; for he does not know the very subject about which he is to enquire. (p. 24)
I suggest that there might be a small space in between these two poles. I found I was heading off in the direction of my research questions, because they were the only questions I could think to ask, knowing what I did. At that time, I could not formulate other questions. In the course of the research, however, I encountered things I did not understand, and still, I could not think of ways to formulate questions about them. This bumping or stumbling into or onto something was a place of puzzle, where I felt an affective and intellectual draw. I did not yet have the precise words to articulate this draw. Nor did I have questions, here in this place of puzzle, just hunches that I should stay with it and see where it might take me. This inarticulateness of pre-knowing is described well by Ellsworth (2005):

we come to a knowing only as we emerge from a realm of sensation/movement that is ontologically prior to cognition. We come to the time and space of speaking about a learning only after it has already taken place in a time and space that language cannot name. Language follows that which it would name. (p.167)

Helene Cixous (2005) refers to the affective aspects of a knowing that you-cannot-yet-place that creates a predicament of intellectual pleasure and fear, “when we feel and there is not yet a name for it, the heart catches fire” (Cixous, 2005 p. 188 as cited in Shaughnessy, 2012, p. 43). This staying with a hunch was also a risk. What if this went nowhere and proved to be a complete and utter dead end? What if I came up with nothing? Was I so coded with the known, and how I thought ethnography should go, that I was prepared for neither surprise nor for the considerable tensions associated with not understanding? Or worse still, had I fully anticipated what I thought I would find, and I was just deceiving myself into thinking it was a surprise or puzzle?

Bringing these thoughts into stark relief were Tim Ingold’s (2011) ideas of walking as a means of “wayfaring” (p. 12). According to him, practice is neither a route of straight lines nor predetermined pathways, but one that responds to what is found along the way. He describes a vital capacity or potential for the unknown as it presents itself. This analysis tells the story of wayfaring and forms an account of the ways that the mundane came to matter. Social geographers Horton and Kraftl (2006) suggest the banal is important to learning and creating knowledge, “we are interested in this process of mattering of everything that comes to matter (not just the spectacular, the a priori ‘useful’, or the big political issue of the day), through ongoing engagement with banality, materiality, spatiality and affectivity” (p. 272). They describe the challenges of writing about “these issues, events, practices and affects [that] do not come to order, they will not stand for ordering” (p. 273).
Ingold (2011) differentiates between surprise and astonishment by stating that the person who is surprised is used to a world that is predictable and controllable while the person who is unsurprised, but capable of astonishment, expects the unexpected:

by contrast, those who are truly open to the world, though perpetually astonished are never surprised. If this attitude of unsurprised astonishment leaves them vulnerable, it is also a source of strength, resilience and wisdom. For rather than waiting for the unexpected to occur, and being caught out in consequence, it allows them at every moment to respond to the flux of the world with care, judgement and sensitivity. (p. 75)

Although drawn to this notion of unsurprised astonishment, my surprise was of the lowest order. I had become accustomed to the routines and rituals of schools and research practice so that when the unexpected hit – I was genuinely surprised. This might signal a kind of collusion with what is in terms of routines and accepted ways of doing pedagogy and research without really committing to the truly vital improvisational nature of conversations and interactions with youth and the suburban environments in which they live and are schooled. What happened was a surprise that asked me to question my assumptions about the day-to-day in schools and my own assumptions as ethnographic researcher. With analysis and reconsideration, I started to sense the greater importance of committing to the unknown and the unexpected, in being prepared for unsurprised astonishment.

This attitude on the part of the researcher connects with what Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggest is the concept of the not yet:

A positive difference is affirmative of learning and transformation as a state of continuous becoming. The consequence of this way of thinking is that we are no longer interested in defining an organism or body by its limitations, separateness or form. Instead, we must extend and expand ourselves to that which is not yet. (p. 540)

It also suggests that this potential is not just latent and waiting, but that it can happen and will. We just do not know when. Ingold (2011) describes this as challenging so much of western thinking that is based on closure. When there is an open expectation, however, something can break through established thought patterns and ways of doing things. Ingold (2011) states, “in modern western societies, the environment has been engineered, or ‘built’ to expectations of closure, but [how] life always, and inevitably, breaks through the bounds of the objective forms in which we have sought to contain it” (p. 115).
Inspiring the cultivation of vital skills for learning, and I mean vital as both essential and brightly full of life, Ingold suggests (2011), “practitioners, I contend are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world’s becoming and to follow its course while bending to its evolving purpose” (p. 211). This passage seems to point to finding something in-process, or differentiating, and to follow it. He invites a responsive practice that focuses on something very small but full of potential, finding in it a purpose that may not be clearly defined initially.

This might be the “nothing” Fulton (1989) writes about, as in “nothing will unfold for us unless we move toward what looks to us like nothing” (Fulton, as cited in Barad, 2007, p. 398). Perhaps what is offered here is a way out of the paradox that Solnit and Plato present. It is possible to inquire into what we do not yet know by following the attraction and delight of our not-yet-knowing. What makes this concept relevant to these research findings is that I almost dismissed these encounters as nothing, and although I sensed something more, I did not have either language or theory to make any sense whatsoever. This research, thankfully, is filled with examples of what initially looked like nothing, but with theoretical tools, I came to recognize them as micropolitical acts of sociality that deterritorialized the seemingly closed designs of the material world. Just as the student work in the ritual drama unit opened the hallways and arteries of the school, and the *Concord Floral* actor/performers claimed the subway as their social space, here in the grounds of the school, the material encounters with the nonhuman opened the closed design of the interview for something else to present itself, if only momentarily. As it was, I did not recognize this immediately and had to wait a considerable period of time for it to emerge.

In French, the verb to wait is *attendre*. Nicholson (2011b) considers dimensions of attentiveness by suggesting that “theatre, performance, the relational aesthetic of the arts can insist on this kind of attentiveness, and I think it is the effect of attentiveness that has the potential to re-order thought and change environments” (p. 2). I suggest attentiveness, or quiet attention in research practice, can also take the form of waiting and being patient. As I have explained previously, I had to wait for theory to come to me, at which point I found myself surprised yet again.

A particular article on walking-as-performance changed the course of this research and my ability to understand what I had collected as empirical materials. Lawrence Bradby and Carl Lavery (2007) embarked on what they called “a mobile site-specific performance” through the streets of Norwich, UK. They considered what they did to be “both a performance and a way of thinking by walking” (p. 41). The relevance of their exchange to this research is the question they asked regarding who is the performer in this walk and could the humans take on the role of audience to a performance given by the nonhuman? In a letter to his walking partner, Bradby later asked Lavery, “Were we not in fact performers but audience?” (p. 48). Building on Lefebvre’s (2004) notion that the “city articulates itself through
rhythms” they had to ask what it was that the city was trying to tell them as they were walking through it (p. 49).

This idea marked an arresting moment in thought that opened my mind to the agential nature of the city. Like Bradby and Lavery (2004), I was curious to answer the question they asked, “Was it the city which was performing to us because we put ourselves in the right place?” (p. 48). I sensed that I might now have words to make comprehensible what had been previously incomprehensible. I had just never considered that the suburb – through a patch of mushrooms, a cardinal in the tree, and a butterfly crossing our path – was trying to make itself known to us. I was eager to explore more fully the ways in which the suburb was also making itself known, not as the inanimate and passive setting to our research, but actively and engagingly getting our attention. In our research context, as the suburb was vital in its articulation of itself, this dynamic and affective relation added an important dimension to the participant/researcher relationship and invigorated the notion of emplacement in ethnography in ways I had not previously considered (Pink, 2009, p. 25). Broadsided intellectually, with Bradby and Lavery’s article in hand, I went looking for theory that would usefully and generatively open the analysis of that-which-I-could-not-know-yet.

The theory that I was waiting for was new materialism (Barad, 2007, Lenz Taguchi, 2012), immersive performance theory (Machon, 2013) and theatre ecology (Kershaw, 2007). Although familiar with Deleuze’s (1988) concept of composition, I began to see its applications in new ways (p. 22). Using these theories as a kind of diffractive analysis of the empirical materials comprised of videotaped walking interviews, I set out to find unanticipated diversities, different ways to consider the place of youth in the suburb, and other means for drama to contribute to ethnography practiced differently.

Diffraction can be understood as the waves that result from hitting an obstacle in its way. According to Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) who draw on Barad, diffractive analysis “is best illustrated with the rolling, pushing and transformation of waves in, for example, the sea” (p. 535). They liken this notion of waves transforming around an obstacle to Deleuze’s notion of assemblages “that will differentiate with each new encounter” (p. 535). Encounters and diffraction can be thought of as interferences. In this sense, the events of the research addressed in this analytical account interfered with the interview and differenciated it in response to these material provocations. Similarly, theory can be used with data to interfere with them acting as the obstacle in their way. As Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggest, “when reading diffractively, seeing with data, we look for events of activities and encounters, evoking transformation and change in the performative agents involved” (p. 535). In this relational material approach, thinking “happens to us – it ‘hits us’ or ‘invades us’” (p. 536). What I propose is to use these three theories to diffract the empirical materials under consideration.
Three Encounters with the Nonhuman

A theory of distributive agency, in contrast does not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect. There are instead always a swarm of vitalities at play. The task becomes to identify the contours of the swarm and the kind of relations that obtain between its bits. (Bennett, 2010, p. 32)

Drawing on Bennett (2004), I considered the first of the encounter interviews carefully, looking at how the agency was distributed between the participant, the environment, and me as researcher as we walked through the school grounds and surrounding neighbourhood streets.

Encounter One: Mushrooms and New Materialism

Turning now to the data, in reviewing the video, even before Anna (English language; Canadian/Jamaican; middle class; female; heterosexual) got to the patch of mushrooms, she tripped on the uneven asphalt and we laughed, remarking on how the asphalt has entered the encounter of the interview. Bennett (2004) invites a consideration of “thing – power” and suggests a decentring of the human subject that is relevant to the encounters to be described (p. 13):

Materiality is a rubric that tends to horizontalize the relations between humans, biota, and abiotia. It draws human attention sideways, away from an ontologically ranked Great Chain of Being and toward a greater appreciation of the complex entanglements of humans and non humans. Here the implicit moral imperative of Western thought – “Thou shall identify and defend what is special about Man” – loses some of its salience. (Bennett, 2004, p. 112)

The student participant led me through a stand of pine trees by the back parking lot. She stopped and pointed out to me a huge patch of brown mushrooms growing in the lawn. We laughed together in hilarious amazement. Wiatt, Gill, and Head (2009) write about surprise in suburban walking in Australia, saying “we argue that it is the short-lived moment of bodily misalignment (surprise) that may provide potential to change the relationships between walking, feeling and understanding what and who belongs in a nature reserve” (p. 44). Clearly the contexts I describe are different and these suburban school grounds could not be described as a nature reserve, but in this unlikely place the participant and I learned about the significance of surprise encounters and their importance to understanding, belonging, and pleasure.

Anna: I picked the forest area ‘cause – well, I like how, the trees, right, you can tell different seasons and you know like, like winter all the leaves are gone and spring see – I don’t know, I just like the trees in the forest. And see, if you look down the middle here you’ll see that all these trees here don’t have any leaves at all –
Anne: Yeah?

Anna: but then you have these pine trees on the other side – so I find that really weird.

Anne: So do you like to come out here?

Anna: Sometimes, yeah, when the weather’s nice though.

Anne: Yeah I know – it’s getting a bit cold to be coming out.

Anna: Oh my gosh! There’s mushrooms here.

Anne: Are there? Where?

Anna: I think I just saw a mushroom on the floor.

Anne: I think you did too. Oh yeah – there is – there is – right there.

Anna: Oh my gosh.

Anne: That’s cool.

Anna: Wow. See this I haven’t noticed before.

Anne: Me neither. *(laughter and pause)* Huh, well you never know what you are going to find.

Anna: Yeah, they’re all over the floor.

Anne: Look at them all here.

Anna: Wow. They’re all over the floor.

*(Silence)*

Anne: Huh.

*(Anna, Individual interview, Semester 1, Branch Secondary School, November 22, 2011).*

I could think of the patch of mushrooms as our discovery, but now I realize such a notion reserves the agency for the humans. By considering Bradby and Lavery’s (2007) perspective, the encounter can be rephrased as one in which this patch of the suburban school is wanting to make itself known to us. In considering the agential nature of the mushrooms, I had to reconsider the language that I used to describe
this event. If I considered the agency of the mushrooms, then it was less our discovery and more a delightful sense of surprise in the uncanny unexpectedness of this encounter with growth on a patch of school land. The mushrooms were less something we discovered and more of an experience of a place making itself known. This suggests to me that research is less about discoveries and more about attentive response to that which is offered to the researcher. This may be a subtle distinction, and one that would not surprise postcolonial researchers, but it is one that places the human researcher in a decentred position in relation to the inanimate and nonhuman. It also suggests non-colonizing relations in research, countering notions of discovery, claim and individual knowledge-creation. Instead, knowledge-creation is relational and collaborative by actively connecting with that which is different, the human to the nonhuman.

New materialist theory, used as a kind of diffractive analytical tool, invited a reconsideration of the power relations contained in ethnographic language. In writing of response rather than discovery and finding, I was prompted to think and express thoughts differently as a result of this fundamental encounter with both the material world and the theory. Ingold (2011) also suggests that it is not finding that is important but the becoming that takes place in the encounter with the material world to perceive the environment is not to look back on the things to be found in it, or to discern their congealed shapes and layouts, but to join with them in the material flows and movements contributing to their – and our – ongoing formation. (p. 88)

It was not possible to hold onto these moments of shifted relations for very long. As I watched and listened to the 28-minute video interview again, searching for the ways that this unexpected event might have opened the interview between us, what I noticed was that following the incident, I returned to the script of my prepared questions. The participant answered them with a careful sense of balanced diplomacy, as she weighed one side of an issue and then the other. I wondered if she was trying to be safely right in all her answers. How quickly we seemed to resume a much more stratified and familiar researcher/student relationship. In this sense, the interview was deterritorialized for a short moment, and then I reterritorialized it, quickly returning it to the familiarity of pre-planned questions. Looking back, there lingers for me a question regarding how I might not have resumed the familiar structure of my questions inviting participant response so quickly? What might have happened had I been able to stay decentred for longer? Had I left the conversational space open, might the conversation have moved in directions that I could not have anticipated? In this moment of encounter, I avoided my own discomfort in the face of the unexpected, not quite knowing what to do with it. Holding that pedagogical and methodological moment open longer may have taken us to a topic of interest to the participant that was more relevant to her life than my series of generic questions. In the second encounter I will describe
shortly, when the nonhuman interruption of our interview occurred, I was able to be more patient, entering into the moment more fully without resuming my agenda quite so quickly. This first time, it just seemed like an anomaly that was a pleasant diversion, but nothing more. I was drawn to the affective intensity around it, but because I could not place it anywhere in my research schema, I rushed to move on.

After this brief moment of deterritorialization, as the interview proceeded, and we followed an asphalt path out of the school grounds and onto the neighbourhood sidewalks lining a curved residential street, we commented on wind chimes on this breezy day, the sound of the cars and the wind, and a garden planted with strange plants coming out of the wood chip ground cover. With this latter event, I lost my train of thought, and the participant had to remind me of my question to resume the interview. My train of thought was broken, as the student participant and I were drawn to something on the suburban lawn that was trying to make itself known. These brief and passing encounters suggest a “swarm of vitalities” that grabbed our attention and broke open the set agenda or pattern of the interview questions and answer (Bennett, 2010, p. 31).

In speaking about response as one of the primary modes of the researcher, I have to make clear that this does not refer to what St. Pierre describes in her 1999 article entitled: The work of response in ethnography. She focuses on response once an account has been written. This is either an actual response like a member-check or an imagined response. In the circumstances that I describe in my research, I would like to suggest that it is in the ethnographic moment that all three of the research partners responded to each other. This aligns with St. Pierre’s (1999) notion that the subject and ethnography are organized together and not before the relational encounter of the research. She writes, “ethnography and the subject are organized in relations; thus neither can be secured in advance of such relations” (St. Pierre, 1999, p. 269). Nicholson’s (2011b) phrase “being attentive” and “paying attention” are perhaps more finely tuned descriptions of the work at hand. To be attentive relieves the researcher of any associations to stimulus and response and cause and effect. To respond is qualitatively different from being attentive. The former feels blunter while the latter implies a more nuanced and affective stance towards that to which he/she attends. I would like to suggest that attention is a sensitive taking in of what is offered, before one can respond. Attention is an attitude or disposition influencing the quality of presence one brings to an encounter and the response is what follows in the form of an action, affective expression, and thought.

Perhaps an equally fitting description of attention/response that happens on the part of all involved in an ethnographic encounter is what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) describe as an improvisational moment:
One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World or meld with it. One ventures from home on the thread of a tune. Along sonorous, gestural, motor lines that mark the customary path of a child and graft themselves onto or begin to bud “lines of drift” with different loops, knots, speeds, movements, gestures and sonorities. (p. 311)

Improvising in theatre occurs when one person makes an offer to another person and that other picks up the offer and develops it. Deleuze would consider this an affirmative compositional encounter that suggests that the gesture of the offer is as important as the willingness to take that offer up in response. This process became more complex and messy in the research when all of the members of the research team, the youth, the adult researcher, and the nonhuman made offers and responses. With two partners in the improvisation – the youth and the environment – I became engaged, as the researcher, in two conversations at once. More complicated still, in engaging the nonhuman, it was less a conversation and more a composition, as each improviser responded on his/her/its own terms with different calls, utterances, dialects, and language. This refers back to Massey’s (2005) idea of the simultaneity of trajectories in space, and by extending this idea, I saw that it asked the researcher to become a juggler with multiple conversational and compositional balls being caught and thrown simultaneously.

To consider another dimension of this responsiveness, which links it to responsibility and ethics, I put to work the theory of Barad (2007):

Responsibility – the ability to respond to the other – cannot be restricted to human-human encounters when the very boundaries and constitution of the “human” are continually being refigured and “our” role in these and other reconfigurings is precisely what “we” have to face. A humanist ethics won’t suffice when the “face” of the other that is “looking” back at me is all eyes, or has no eyes, or is otherwise unrecognizable in human terms. (p. 392)

She suggests responsibility is not a conscious choice, but something which “precedes the intentionality of consciousness” (Barad, 2007, p. 392). In espousing a position that suggests that there is no outside, Barad (2007) suggests “we are of the universe – there is no inside, no outside. There is only intra-acting from within and as part of the world in its becoming” (p. 396). We then transcend the distinction between nonhuman and human. We are made of chemical elements, so the nonhuman in the universe is in us and we are inextricably linked to the nonhuman world. For her, and I agree with her, the ethical call “means taking account of the entangled phenomena that are intrinsic to the world’s vitality and being responsive to the possibilities that might help us flourish” (p. 396).

This encounter is a material one but it also can be analyzed discursively as well. Walks (2013) suggests, in the history of the conceptualization of the suburb, there is a divergence of opinion: whether
suburbanism is a subset of the urban, or whether it is a unique space that falls between the urban and the rural. He explains that urbanism-suburbanism is a force that is separate from the actual place of the suburb or city. He discusses this discursive rather than literal suburb, and in so doing, opens both the actual city and actual suburb to varying and changing degrees of suburbanism and urbanism. He suggests this is important because “this informs an understanding of metropolitanization as the synthetic product of the tension between forces of urbanism and suburbanism, one that varies in character depending on the local strength and mix of their different forms and flows” (Walks, 2013, p. 1478). In listing the properties of urbanism and suburbanism, he differentiates between the urban which includes the spontaneous and the suburban that has imposed order. According to his grid, my encounter would be an urbanized one because it was spontaneous, but because it was an encounter with an unanticipated fungus, a part of nature, this could be seen as a more rural experience.

Perhaps an addition could be made to Walks’s grid that would include relations to the nonhuman in both urbanism and suburbanism. Walks (2013) suggests, “the suburban is conceptually an extension of urbanism, even when it mixes with the remnants of rurality in formerly rural areas or small towns” (p. 1477). The lived experience of this actual suburb during that particular lunchtime walk with Anna was one that seemed distinctly nonurban as the considerable patch of mushrooms were situated under a stand of pine and deciduous trees. This schoolyard space, however, is not untouched nature. Conversely, this is a tended space groomed regularly by school staff. The question here is: does this manicured green space fit more into the realm of the urban or rural or is this something entirely unique to the suburb? Lawns and landscape architecture seem more urban and as such, these school grounds are perhaps more urban than rural. Where they differ distinctly from urban secondary school grounds are in their size and scope. The school grounds at Branch are considerably larger than urban school properties, and as such, are a valuable and unique resource.

This analysis may seem like an exercise in categorization that would be inconsistent with the aims and practices of my research, but to consider suburbanism-urbanism, as Walks suggests, as a force rather than literal places, opened the conceptualizing of both city and suburb. When city and suburb were constructed as hybrids that are in constant flux, a more nuanced understanding was possible. So, as much as this short analytical exercise looked like it was categorizing, what I wanted to do was to entertain Walks’s conceptualization as a means for opening up the categories, the either/or of urban and suburban.

**Encounter Two: Bird and Longing To Be Elsewhere**

Developing a notion of research practices as placed compositions, I suggest that a placed composition could make room for more difference and diversity of expression, instead of reducing the process to the
simple label of interview. Placed composition would allow for more than the exchange of a shared language, and include the exchange of the non-verbal and animal utterances, such as the call of a bird.

A second student, Rachel (English language; white; Turkish/Philippine descent; socio-economic status: “don’t worry” [about money]; straight; female), said she hoped we do not get lost and I assured her (naively) I knew the route. We came to the end of the path from the school grounds and met the sidewalk, where we had to choose to go right or left. As I watched the video footage, throughout the conversation, I could hear the bird calling before we noticed it. In the footage, I watched myself look, point out one of the birds, and then realize that there were two. I suggested perhaps their nest was in the tree, although we did not see it. Then, we stood in silence together and watched. It was the only time in the interview when there was nothing spoken by either one of us. Without being asked, Rachel began to speak and offered she had always liked nature. Since she was a girl, she had longed to have a farm with animals. She explained her family had five cats but they all could not find their way home. Getting lost featured in her experience with pets and this was the fear she expressed to me at the beginning of our shared walk.

(You can hear the sound of birds chirping throughout this part of the interview)

Anne: Let me ask you another question about - ah.

Rachel: Let’s hope we don’t get lost (she laughs)

Anne: Okay we won’t we won’t I know my route now. Is there some – is there a place that you’d like to go – do you want to turn left or do you want to turn right?

Look at the cardinal – look. Oh, there’s two cardinals in the tree maybe that’s their nest up there.

Rachel: Whee! (silence)

See I’ve always loved nature and like all the things.

Anne: Well, you really have a very beautiful school with a very large grounds and – it’s really very beautiful.

Rachel: Yeah.

Anne: So you like nature – you wouldn’t like to live in the middle of a big city?
Rachel: No, I’m more of like um – country. Like I’ve always wanted a farm since I was little. I wanted like animals. We had like five cats they all ran away or just couldn’t find their way back home. That was sad.

Anne: Oh, so you’re rather live in the real country not -

Rachel: Yeah. More rural than urban.

(Rachel, Individual interview, Semester 1, Branch Secondary School, November 16, 2011).

Without the birds diverting our attention from the interview, I would never have learned this about her – that she lived here in Mississauga, but longed to be somewhere else. This brought up two issues. First, it raised the question about place: what did it mean to live in one place but long to be elsewhere? As social geographers Parlette and Cowen (2011) suggest, “this is certainly not to say that geography does not matter, but rather that there are multiple geographies that define peoples’ lives” (p. 30). What is clear to me now is that place is populated with other places, especially the destinations of people’s longings.

Second, Myers (2008) describes participants that become active agents as percipients (p. 172). Taking this active role once in the interview may have made it possible for Rachel to take charge later to talk to me about an incident in the school that was puzzling and upsetting to her. I cannot say for certain they are causally connected, but once in the interview, if she became a percipient, perhaps she felt she could do it again. Offering, as she did, something unbidden and unasked for may have paved the way for Rachel to offer more details about an incident involving gender-related tensions between girls that was sexualized in uncertain and confusing ways.

Rachel explained her parents do not want her to be with boys, and with her brothers in the school, she felt watched and had to endure their reports to her parents. She had experienced conflicts in the school with another girl in the cafeteria who called Rachel “ugly” and who then proceeded to dance provocatively, as Rachel said, like a “stripper.” Rachel did not understand what was going on in this sexualized geography, and the situation escalated to the point where the other student was suspended.

Evans, Rich, Allwood, and Davies (2008) write about the pedagogies of the body that youth learn. They state that this learning about the body is pervasive and that it happens in all the spaces of the school and outside school, “these body pedagogies do not only feature in ‘formal’ classroom settings but pervade social relationships in corridors, at playtimes, during lunch breaks and interactions and iterations between peers generally in and outside schools” (Evans, Rich, Allwood & Davies, 2008, p. 395). Evans (2006) suggests that bodies and schools are “mutually constitutive” (p. 548). What Rachel experienced was a kind of judging surveillance that Evans describes here:
just as Foucault (1977) describes the prisoners’ internalization of the guards’ gaze in the panopticon resulting in ever present surveillance, it is possible that the pressure girls feel, both from other girls and from themselves, is a continuum of a ‘male’ gaze, only one which they have internalized. (p. 555)

Lenz Taguchi (2012), guided by Deleuze, asserts that interpretive reflexive analysis uses negative difference to confine what is different to a discrete unit or category, “as an act of thinking, interpretation in reflexive analysis is about reflecting sameness (as in mirroring), or identifying differences from something previously identified and acknowledged; a thing, an identity, a category, a discursive theme or subject position” (p. 269). Focusing on positive difference charts the affective interactions and the becoming of this encounter when Rachel’s affective talk following the bird incident made known her dreams for the future, rather than somewhat abstractly reflecting on the immediate conditions of her life at school. These statements involved risk and imagination, and as such, were positively different in the sense that the interview shifted into something unpatterned and unplanned. It was an encounter with difference and at the same time, the interview differenciated into something unfamiliar. The bird made itself known and the participant made herself known. These seemed like connected, but not causally-related, events of the interview as it differenciated.

Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) explain that according to Barad, there is a constant movement and exchange between the human and nonhuman “which are understood not to have clear and inherent boundaries, but are always in a state of intra-activity” (p. 530). In this reading of the encounter, the birds and the tree were active just as much as we, the researcher and participant, were. In this sense, Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) would say that the youth, the birds, the tree and I, “can be understood as a force evoking difference and transformation in its intra-actions” (p. 530). In this particular circumstance, the researcher and participant were suspended from roles in which we could be judged, or in which we could judge each other. Instead, we were intrigued and beguiled by the bird in a momentary exchange in which the interviews became something other, something minor, something compositional.

This was important because what is said in response to the material world as it improvised in our presence expressed this student’s desire and her hopes for her own life. She articulated the longing that is present in living in one place and wishing to be elsewhere. Place then is composed of social relations with the human and nonhuman and longing for an imagined future or an imagined elsewhere. This is the relationality that Massey (2005) describes in that this place is put in relation to a future place. Rachel’s desired place existed simultaneously in her imagination as she walked through the present place of the Mississauga school grounds. In this way, she described her particular trajectory as layered even though it was, as yet, unrealized. This layering of the real place with the imagined place put the suburb of
Mississauga in relation to her notion of a more rural place. This compositional quality of the exchange affectively engaged the not yet and could be considered political. Rotas and Springgay (2013) suggest, “pedagogies of movement, of a politics-to-come, engender surprise and the unexpected” (p. 280). They differentiate this kind of politics from the political agenda of the critical theorists that “rests on representing or speaking for a single group of people to a wider audience, but is grounded in bringing bodies together in and through space” (p. 286). In this particular case, we were brought together in the space of the suburban school grounds as Rachel expressed a politics-to-come that conceptualized her life lived differently.

**Encounter Three: Butterfly and Two Places at Once**

Rachel’s conversation was not the only instance of imaginative longing that surfaced in the walking interviews. Ellie, in her interview, also made known her imaginative life. Ellie (Azerbaijani first language; English, Russian, Turkish second languages; straight; female; not religious; middle class) and I were distracted by another performance of the suburb as we became spectators to the fallen petals of a flowering tree scattered over a lawn just at the moment a butterfly crossed our path. We both appreciated the beauty of the petals and the unexpected visit of the butterfly, a diversion that stopped what we were doing and caught our attention for a few moments. I had to ask Ellie to remind me where we were in the interview for it to continue.

Later in the interview, Ellie told me she did not feel like she was in Canada, “my mind is all over Russia and Korea” (Ellie, Individual interview, Semester 2, Branch Secondary School, June 12, 2012). I could understand the connection to Russia as she was Azerbaijani by birth, had lived in Canada for only five years, and spoke Russian. I was more puzzled by the connection to Korea. When I asked her about this, she described in detail her affection for Korean popular culture. I started to see that place is constituted by elsewheres and by the active presence or force of memory and forward-leaning imagining. I cannot know for sure if it was the walking and the encounters with the nonhuman that allowed for the conversation to go in this direction, but this aspect of place added conceptual and artistic dimension to any understanding of the particulars of this suburb as experienced by this youth.

In spite of her not feeling like she was fully in Canada, Ellie had local social ties that attached her to the place of Mississauga. Following the exchange about Korean popular culture, I discussed with her Massey’s (2005) idea that space is composed of social relations. To give her an example, I explained how we, in the course of the walking interview, were creating relational space between us as we went. She responded by saying, “I agree with that. I completely agree like the people you talk with, your social environment kind of affects what you think of the place” (Ellie, Individual interview, Semester 2, Branch
Secondary School, June 12, 2012). This exchange became a kind of mobile data analysis in which I tested theory with her. Relevant to this encounter and the encounter with Rachel, is what Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggest, that previous and future encounters live in the present encounter:

In the event the subject can no longer be understood as a fixed being, but rather as a ‘way of being’ – a verb rather than a noun. The subject is an effect of multiple encounters that entails the history of previous encounters, the present and the potentialities of the future encounters that might take place. (p. 532)

Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) suggest this is important because it asks the researcher to consider the roles and practices of research differently. Instead of the thinking residing in one particular person, the authors suggest that “knowing is not done in isolation but is always affected by difference forces coming together, or in Barad’s words: “knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part of the world” (Barad 2007, p. 185 cited in Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 536).

As Ellie made herself intelligible, it is worth noting that as the interview progressed, she referred to an incident in which she had been teased because of her size, “you’re so fat, you look like you’re pregnant” (Ellie, Individual interview, Semester 2, Branch Secondary School, June 12, 2011). Although she had said she had recently gained confidence and no longer cared what others thought of her, this incident was important enough to mention. Fat was a diversity that was not mentioned although looks had surfaced previously as a gender issue. Evans et al. (2008) suggest that humiliating others is one of the techniques through which youth control others through a kind of punishment, “humiliation was a powerful technique of bio-power; here, exerted informally via a process of normalization in which young people are socially rewarded for embodying the correct behaviour and following the moral duty to ‘shape the body’” (p. 396). Although Ellie said that it did not affect her now, when I asked her what she would choose as the topic of research if she were a researcher, she replied, “I think I would look at the conflicts a little more.” (Ellie, Individual interview, Semester 2, Branch Secondary School, June 12, 2012).

Emotion and memory are important to many of these interview participants. Jones (2005) suggests the complexities of imagination and memory to relational space, “these strange geographies which occupy us all, which hover between the then and the now, between our geographical imaginations and our geographical memories, to these hybrid ecologies of self and to the other element, their emotional register” (p. 210). The interviews were laden with memory and emotion and gesture to the inseparability of affect and memory in relational space. As bell hooks (1990) says, “to me the effort to speak about issues of ‘space and location’ evoked pain,” and this was also relevant to two of the three youth discussed here and their social relations in this suburban school (p. 16).
Immersive Performance and the “Becoming” Interview

These compositional encounters provoked a reconsideration of place, not as simply human social relations but as diverse relations of the human and nonhuman. In these three encounters, we were spectators for the place of the suburb as it performed itself. The ground we walked on, the birds in the trees, and the butterfly and petals, made known a suburb that was more diverse in terms of life forms and things than had been previously observed. This was a third performance of suburb but it did not depend on humans to perform their interpretations or representations of it.

Although this could be anthropomorphizing, it harkened back to Bradby and Lavery’s (2007) description of Lefebvre’s city articulating itself. We cannot know the intentions of the mushrooms, the bird, or the butterfly, but the participant and I, in those moments, became spectators to an encounter that was not our doing. To contend that they were actively getting our attention may sound like an overstatement, but there are animist materialists who are challenging the exclusivity of the human voice. In writing about Plumwood’s philosophical animism, Rose (2013) states, “[Plumwood] targeted for critique our western arrogance in imagining we are the only creatures who speak, and thus the only ones who possess the active voice” (p. 103). Plumwood (2009) herself writes about animist materialism and states, “it advises science to re-envision materiality in richer terms that escape the spirit/matter and mind/matter dualisms” (p. 124). I suggest all three examples of the nonhuman encounter in this chapter were agential. The presence and activity of the mushrooms, bird, and butterfly, altered how we had previously understood the school and the suburban space in which the school grounds stood. If we can say that the youth in Concord Floral participated in the creation of the relational space of the suburb, I argue that these nonhuman elements co-created the suburb and offered something to us in terms of our coming to know the specifics of place.

Ritual dramas, created as part of classroom pedagogy, produced one sort of drama data and one kind of performance of suburb. I would like to consider how the walking interviews could be considered as a kind of immersive performance, and as such, offer another kind of drama data. What happens when interview is taken from the overcoding of ethnography and is moved into the range of drama methods? What is gained by considering these walking interviews as a kind of immersive form of improvised performance that mobilizes and extends drama pedagogy as curricular art form and as methodological tool? Mazzei and Jackson (2013) suggest, “plugging in” theory to data (p. 261). By diffracting theories of performance and theatre (postdramatic theory, immersive performance theory, and theatre ecology), what does this do to the discussion of diverse drama methods in research and drama pedagogy? Turning to performance theory, I tried to understand what conceptualizing the interview as performance would do.
Wiles (2003) describes genres of mobile performances as “processional space” (p. 63). According to Wiles, there are four main purposes of processional theatre, “pilgrimage, parade, map and narrative” (p. 64). Perhaps these small immersive performances that I described were most like a pilgrimage in that they did not depend on an outside audience as a parade does. I would suggest there was a narrative quality to the walking, as stories were exchanged. Where the practice of my research differed was that I focused intentionally on the environment as an active participant, rather than assuming the environment acted as an inert setting through which the mobile performance passed.

In writing about postdramatic theatre, Hans-Theis Lehmann (2006) suggests that the proximity of the spectator to the artist is narrowed and that the work is a “moment of shared energies instead of transmitted signs” (p. 150). In these research encounters, the roles of audience and actor/performer are renegotiated. This reassigning of roles, or arguably, the slippage out of role all together, is important. As Lehmann (2006) explains, this is less a theatre of meaning than a shared experience of intensities. In site-specific work, it is not just that the site corresponds to the piece as an appropriate place to situate the work, but that the site becomes known through the work where, “the space presents itself. It becomes a co-player without having a definite significance” (p. 152). The walking interviews of this research could fit into this postdramatic framework as a kind of performance that minimized the distance between spectator and artist through an event of shared energies, as well as inviting or responding to the site as it presented itself.

A discussion of immersive theatre practice offered another way to slip the interview out from its ethnographic mooring and move it into the realm of performance. In so doing, what was made possible is not just a reflective conversation, but a more immediate political or artistic exchange. This is valuable for research as it opens what the walking exchanges might become. Thinking of these walking exchanges as performance, and not restricted to an agenda of questions, may loosen the exchange and keep it open to a kind of improvisational thinking out loud. Thinking that it is an open performance between two people may make the interview a more responsive vehicle for ethnographic conversation. Machon (2013) charts how Immersive Theatre practices grew from installation art and physical and visual theatre, “and owes its sensual aesthetic primarily to a mix of ingredients involving landscape, architecture, scenography, sound and direct, human contact” (p. xv). In defining this practice, she states it features audience involvement, the “sensual world,” space, and place (p. 70). These descriptions were relevant to the walking interviews in the moments when they ceased to be only question and response, and became immediate, intimate, walking performances encountering animal and plant life. Machon (2013) describes such work, “where natural landscape is the site, the climate and elemental forces come into play and are key features that inspire the sensual response of the audience” (p. 94). This was certainly true of the
delight in the responses of the participant and researcher as we experienced the unexpected in the materiality of our walks together.

Machon (2013) suggests “the audience participant’s body ‘co-authors’ the work with the artist” (p. 98). There were times within the walking encounters when the lines between who was audience and who was performer blurred, and this was particularly true when both participant and researcher became audience for the patch of mushrooms, the performing bird, and the butterfly. If it could be said that the walking interview became performance, then we could also say the modes of theatre and performance available to ethnographic practice expanded. At the same time, they opened a space for exciting, affective, and relational encounters within the space of an average school day. Pedagogically and methodologically, this walking practice seemed promising in its enlivened relationality, its attunement to the animate and inanimate world, and its teaching about youth and the places where they lived. Perhaps it could be said that any interview could be considered a performance, but it was the active participation of the nonhuman that set these ones apart. In a seated interview inside, it would be less likely that the built environment could intervene so actively. There may be a chance that people may walk through, or an alarm might go off, but the kind of interruption that we encountered while walking could only have happened outside. I suggest that the movement of our walking may have disrupted the bird and incited the incident of encounter. It should be noted these encounters could have also happened had we been moving through space in wheel chairs. The important aspect of these encounters was not that they were walked, but that participant and research moved together through space outside.36

As these mobile, intimate, and immersive performances were both alive and responsive to the contributions of the material and inanimate world, they could also be considered an ecological performance. Kershaw (2007) writes in Theatre Ecology: Environment and Performance Events that his “biocentric” approach to theatre and performance studies calls into question the distinction between the human and his/her environment (p. 15). Kershaw questions the division between culture and nature, and he draws on Guattari’s (2000) notion of an “incorporeal species” that includes the arts and music existing alongside the biological species (as cited in Kershaw, 2007, p. 25). The small intimate performances of this research, which ambled through the school grounds and surrounding neighbourhood streets, brought together biological species and the incorporeal species of drama as art form. This conceptualization of

36 The walking interviews would have been possible in wheelchairs but the route to the mushrooms would have been difficult to access as it was off a paved trail. There were, however, many paths through the school grounds that were universally-designed making them accessible to all.
the artistic as an incorporeal species became another way to expand accepted notions of diversity at play in these walks through the suburb.

Kershaw (2007) also suggests “biocentric performance events that use an ethically principled immersive participation, transforming spectators into participants – rituals for the ecological era – are most likely to lead to new performance ecologies” (p. 316). Using drama to create “rituals for the ecological era” has implications for the methodological uses of drama in research and for applied theatre pedagogy in schools with particular relevance to the becoming artist and other students and teachers concerned with environmental ethics. Perhaps these performance practices hold the potential to catalyze further experiment in relevant theatre/performance practice in this era of environmental anxiety and crisis. A performance practice can be purposed to gain an understanding of place through the creation of a place-based performance that is co-created by both the animate and the inanimate. As such, I suggest that this is a minor aesthetic in that the human is decentralised and called upon to witness an event in the nonhuman realm. Unsettling the codified relations of power in the interview, this unexpected performance became a kind of minor practice of ethnographic research and ecologically engaged performance.

Could drama outside counter what Fusco, Moola, Faulkner, Buling, and Richichi (2012) suggest is the “extinction of experience” which they describe as “the estrangement of people from nature in a fast moving urban world and the subsequent apathy toward conservation and preservation that follows this estrangement” (p. 68). Drama that focuses on the environment, according to Heddon and Mackey (2012), is crucial but they question why the field of applied drama has been slow to engage (p. 121). Heddon and Mackey (2012) edited a themed edition of Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance with a focus on the environment, which for them was an outgrowth of their fascination with site-specific and place-based work. Nicholson (2011b), as previously mentioned, stresses a kind of attentive engagement with the nonhuman, “that disrupts the orderliness of the world and invites learning to become more intimate” (p. 1). Her description of the disruption of orderliness is not far from what I experienced with the students outside on our walks. Walking outdoors as a kind of intimate performance did become one such way to be attentive to the nonhuman and human. Although beyond the parameters of this research, there is much potential for minor drama to be created exploring relations with environments, material things, research participants, and researchers. As Heddon and Mackey suggest, by positioning the human differently, there are new possibilities for environmental work, “one response to the multiple challenges of climate change is to more transparently locate the human animal within the environment, as one agent amongst many” (p. 163).

Bennett (2004) also suggests how displacing the human realigns relations in important ways, “such a newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers will not solve the problem of human exploitation or
oppression, but it can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations” (p. 13). Geographers document suburban walking practices in Australia in which the walkers become active agents in caring for the land. DeStephano, Deblinger, and Miller (2005) outline the Australian urban and suburban sprawl and the challenges it creates for resource managers. They state, “the issue of urban and suburban sprawl is widespread and ubiquitous throughout much of the world. It is arguably among the most important resource and conservation issue of the 21st century” (DeStephano, Deblinger & Miller, 2005, p. 136). Wiatt, Gill, and Head (2009) suggest that walking practices break down the barriers between the human and the nonhuman and through the experience of pleasure as the walker walks, a kind of ethical care is born. They state:

alert to how the embodied knowledge through walking can be understood to help make sense of self, nature and natural places, we become alert to possibilities of how the boundaries between such categories such as ‘society’ and ‘nature’ are simultaneously made resilient and ruptured. (Wiatt, Gill, & Head, 2009, p. 44)

The pleasure they describe comes from the agency of the nonhuman and this pleasure becomes crucial to an ethic of care that contributes to good environmental management (p. 56).

**Implications**

Significance seems like a term from molar research. In a minor research practice, there exists a distrust of grand claims, but instead, attention is paid to the tiny and fleeting moments that one suspects are important. What might these small moments offer as an experiment in thought engaging empirical material? Bennett (2004) suggests “things in the world only appear to us at all because they tantalize and hold us in suspense, alluding to a fullness that is elsewhere, to a future that, apparently, is on its way” (p. 32). There is something of Ingold’s anticipation of unsurprised astonishment in this statement. This analysis became a kind of minor experiment in making sense that included reading theory and looking again at video sequences, at that which seemed to captivate me as researcher without fully understanding why. This was a kind of fearful enchantment with learning about the empirical materials, research practices, place, the land we walked and my companions, the youth participants. These becoming encounters were laced with the pleasure of moving through the outdoors and noticing the spaces outside the construct of classrooms. The pleasure of the not-yet-codified that invented itself as it proceeded in response to the materiality of the other person – the questions and words spoken, the weather, and the unexpected meetings with the nonhuman were palpable and contributed to learning for the youth and the researcher.
Just as there is culturally relevant pedagogy, might this be a provocation to create place-relevant, ethico-eco pedagogy? This would entail walking drama practices in which the acquisition of skills includes paying attention and the capacity to notice and to listen for more than just human voices and human social relations. Drama pedagogy can entangle youth with land, air, and the nonhuman. This is an imagined interaction with diversity that is far from the original intentions of this research. In considering again Ruddick’s (2010) question about differences and diversities “not yet named or recognized,” I imagine drama and artistic practice as fully entwined with biological diversity (p. 41). How much more might be possible when we consider pedagogy in anomalous and vernacular places and when we further consider that those places may not be passive, if we listen, attend, and cultivate our own attunement to the nonhuman? Under these conditions, we could imagine the over-coded interview as a kind of drama conceived from walking practice that creates a minor, improvised performance, thus offering new places in which to experiment with drama as research method. The potential for furnishing deeper understandings of place through an enlarged awareness of the agential nature of the nonhuman is great.
CHAPTER 5 – IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION:
“WHAT IT BECOMES IN THE END”

This arts-infused geographic ethnography inquired into youth and the changing conditions and diversities present in the suburban city of Mississauga. In the first site of the research, Concord Floral, I collected drama data from the rehearsals of a scripted play and documented the social relations that were integral to its aesthetic process. In the second site, guided by Massey (2005) who suggests that space is comprised of social relations and stories-so-far, I designed the research to inquire into difference and diversity through dramatized, place-based performances of the rituals of schooling. The final performances of the suburb took place outside on the school grounds and neighbouring streets, as the nonhumans diverted the attention of participants and me so we had to stop and watch. These events disrupted the interview very productively and suggested the fine line between science and social science. Although there were some aspects of my research questions that could not be answered as fully as I would have expected, there were research encounters that were unanticipated and highly instructive. For example, documenting income disparity in the suburb was a subtle process, and what I was able to document was less robust than I had expected. However, the findings regarding the agential nature of the school grounds were completely unexpected and suggested diversities I had not previously considered.

An initial research question guiding this study was later supplemented with an interest that emerged as the study evolved. The initial question asked: what are youth attitudes to diversity and how do youth negotiate diversities in the place of a suburban school? As the research progressed, I became more and more interested in the ways that difference can be unassimilated and kept as difference rather than subsumed into sameness. This later interest helped give nuance to the initial research question and also helped articulate the larger intentions of the research. The purpose of my research was to understand diversity from a youth perspective; I also wondered if a clearer focus on unassimilated difference and diversity might contribute to more equitable and heterogeneous spaces in schools, rehearsal halls, and the suburb as well as catalyzing a different kind of analysis when working conceptually with unassimilated difference (Sibley, 2011, p.131).

The goal of this research was to broaden the discussion of urban education by considering the experiences of youth in a suburban secondary school. The goals were geographical, pedagogical, and methodological. Geographically, I sought to understand more fully how youth negotiate the changing suburb in the context of their school. Pedagogically, I sought to create drama and theatre practices that explored the social relations of the place of the suburb. Finally, methodologically, I sought to infuse drama into ethnographic interviews to create productive hybridized methods. In the analysis of the data, I chose not to code the data using computer software coding programs as I was trying to be consistent with
my theoretical framework. To justify this decision, I used both theory and examples from the empirical materials.

To be specific, considering difference as unassimilated had epistemological implications for the ways that I could approach the data in analysis. I did not want to reduce the various modes of data into textual transcriptions required for computer coding software as this would minimize the affect and agency of the empirical materials collected. Equally important was the recognition that coding was a practice that depended on finding sameness in data to categorize them into codes. Committed as I was to unassimilated difference, I could not proceed with coding that depended on looking for sameness. This application of the emergent theme of the research to the methodological practices of analysis posed a challenge to which I responded by trying to diffract the data with theory. Future research could more fully develop an analytic practice that responds to this aporia, nested within a larger epistemological quandary.

The findings of the first performance of the suburb, *Concord Floral*, suggested that equal attention was paid to the social, aesthetic, and ethical pedagogies the artistic team offered to the youth. When this site joined the research project, it offered another form of drama data to consider: the rehearsals and performance of a scripted play. The youth-facilitated talk-backs produced valuable data about the youth’s particular suburban lives that highlighted a lack of space to gather where there would be no agenda set by adults. Also evident in these data was the capacity the youth had to claim relational space wherever they were, even in transit. For example, in one of the main findings from this research site, we saw the suburban put into relation with the urban and offer, through the rehearsals of *Concord Floral*, the opportunity to see how suburbanism, as defined by Walks (2013), was carried with youth as they moved from the suburb to the city, as a kind of portable force. The findings also suggest that the actions of the youth and the theatre artists made the space of the theatre more equitable and heterogeneous (Sibley, 2011, p.131).

The second set of drama data came from the place-based performances of rituals in the school and school grounds of Branch Secondary School. One of the first semester rituals depicted an initiation ritual in which young girls were provoked to steal apples as a test to determine whether or not they deserved to belong to a particular social group governed by older boys. In subsequent interviews, the youth discussed this ritual and expressed a fear of difference and a pull to sameness. These preliminary findings informed the design of the research practices that followed.

Another diversity present in the data was the socio-economic disparity that manifested in consumer habits and the frequency of family moves due to the lack of available housing. The findings also
discussed the considerable social tensions in the second semester class and the exclusivity of social groupings. Although this may be just a preliminary finding, this research suggests that French Immersion may privilege or be perceived to privilege certain members of the school community, in spite of a diversity policy that promotes equity and inclusion.

The third performance of the suburb happened during the walking interviews on the school grounds and this was a performance of suburb by the suburb, unplanned and unorchestrated by me as researcher. In this instance, the youth participant and I had to stop and take note of the mushrooms, bird, and butterfly. This performance invited analysis, but required new theoretical tools. New materialist theory offered ways to consider the agency of the material world and of the school grounds. This recognition of the agency of the material world also had implications for the analysis. If the material world of the school grounds could interrupt and shape the walking interview in such productive ways, how might the empirical materials collected also be agentive and shape the research findings in the process of analysis? The material aspects of the research inquiry in the “field” were affecting the analysis and discursive writing.

The findings of this research broaden the literature on youth and urban schooling by offering analysis of the social relations and considerable tensions in one of Mississauga’s suburban schools. As the review of relevant literature attests, there are very few ethnographic studies of suburban secondary schools in Canada. This work challenges outdated mythical portrayals of the suburb as exclusively White and socio-economically advantaged. Although the current suburb is very diverse with respect to ethnicity, socio-economic status, linguistic, gender, and sexual orientation, this study discusses the ways that privilege is evident and operative. These findings contribute to the literature in children’s geographies that focus on the exclusivities of space and adult-dominated space that make youth unwelcome. *Concord Floral* featured youth on stage in a theatre usually reserved for adult theatre professionals. To the literature in theatre studies that focuses on site-specific work, this research offers a youth perspective and a variety of pieces that make use of the suburb and suburban school as the site of performance. In addition, this study offers to theatre studies an analysis of a hybridized theatre production that bridges youth and adult, amateur and professional, and urban and suburban. Furthermore, this study adds to the growing literature on walking practices that suggest their methodological merits as a mode of both interview and environmental performance. Finally, as the suburb is designed primarily for automobile transportation, this research expands what is known about youth practices of walking in the suburbs.

Turning from the summary of the research to the specifics of the findings, I will outline their significance, limitations, and implications for future work. But first I will discuss the changing conceptualization of the suburb and the implications for future research.
**Geographic Implications Regarding the Suburb and Suburbanization**

This research works to broaden conceptualizations of the suburb as the site of youth-created artistic production, the suburb as a site of memory and longing, and the suburb as a site of both troubled and resilient social relations. All of these aspects of suburb have implications for teaching, learning, and future research practices. Understandings of the suburb are threefold: that it is heterogeneous, that it suspends the urban/suburban binary, and that suburbanism is a force separate from the place of the suburb. These conceptualizations of suburb have implications for schools, teachers, and youth as well as drama/applied theatre practitioners. First, there are new understandings of the specifics of the suburb materially. Canadian geographer Valerie Preston (2002) suggests Mississauga has never been as uniformly homogeneous as the generally accepted myths of the suburb would have us believe. It is not that the suburb is no longer a space of uniformity and homogeneity, but that it never has been, and she suggests Mississauga has always been home to waves of immigrants from its beginning. My findings agree with her contention regarding the extensive diversity within this suburb, with the result that generalizing about suburbs should be approached very cautiously. Preston states:

> subsequent research in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain has underscored the diversity of suburban populations that differ among suburbs and often within a single suburb. Suburban populations include households with various incomes and from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The ages and compositions of suburban households also vary tremendously. (p. 209)

Secondly, as Soja (2011) suggests, the suburb is now a part of a dispersed urban regionalism that he describes as postmetropolitan. Soja (2011) states:

> These new regional approaches are not an alternative to a focus on cities, but build into our understanding of the urbanization process and the changing modern metropolis a powerful and more explicit regional dimension, to the point that we can now speak of a _regional urbanization_ process that is radically reshaping existing metropolitan structures. (p. 453)

Within this urban regionalism or postmetropolis, there is unassimilated difference in that suburban and urban pockets coexist, but this is no longer mapped out in concentric circles with the interior circle being the old city and the outer circles being the suburbs.

Walks (2013) offers a third contribution to this evolving understanding of the suburb, which he describes as suburbanism (p. 1471). From this perspective, the suburb is a particular material place while suburbanism acts as a force with certain identifiable characteristics. The implication of this conceptualization is that the notion of suburbanism loosens itself from the actual place of the suburb. The
degree to which urbanism and suburbanism combine determines the degree to which a space becomes urban or suburban or both, “such a theorization opens the potential for places known as ‘suburbs’ to manifest strong degrees or elements of urbanism” (p. 1478). Conversely, he sees the gated condominiums in downtown Toronto exhibiting “strong tendencies to certain forms of suburbanism” (p. 1478).

As the findings of this research suggest, this pocket of Mississauga is neither exclusively suburban nor moderately urban. Using Walks’s (2013) concept of suburbanism helps describe the ways that the Concord Floral youth carried various suburbanisms with them as they travelled into the city. Conversely, Kiara, (Concord Floral) who has only lived in the suburb a short time, brings urbanism with her as she goes home to the suburb every night. Walks, through his Lefebvrian analysis, provides useful tools to create complex definitions of suburb that are not reductive, in that they suggest endlessly varied and unique combinations of suburbanism and urbanism.

These conceptualizations of suburb offer a useful vocabulary for future drama and theatre work that explores the contemporary and changing suburb. The suburb can be conceptualized as a hybrid place, when the forces of both urbanism and suburbanism are evident in varying degrees.

One of the implications of the findings of this research is the importance of the school’s role in artistic production in the suburb. Massey (2005) says space is constantly under construction; one of the forces of that construction I observed was the youth-created place-based rituals. The school as site of artistic work is doubly important in this suburban space because there is little available in terms of enrichment programs like Concord Floral. Unlike the city with programming for youth in local arts organizations, the school is the central place of artistic activity. City-based artists would do well to venture out to the suburbs more often to both work alongside teachers or to create programming outside the school day. Future research could follow urban theatre artists coming to the suburb to practice with local youth in the “youth’s place.” Previously, Suburban Beast performed Post Eden in the streets of the Toronto suburb Richmond Hill, and perhaps it is time for artists such as Tannahill, Brubacher, and Spooner to bring their skills directly to the place of Mississauga and create outwardly-focused community-engaged theatre with youth, teachers, and local residents of this suburb.

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37 Jordan Tannahill, in his interview, described the proliferation of condos in downtown Toronto as a kind of suburbanism, “I think the condominium is a vertical suburb” (Jordan Tannahill, Informant interview, September 23, 2011).
Practical Implications: Site One Concord Floral

The findings from this site are pedagogical, spatial, geographic and methodological. Regarding the practices of theatre pedagogy in this project, there was a significant commitment to both the aesthetic and social aspects of the production.

In looking at the suburb as a site of artistic production and home of artists-in-the-making, the youth in *Concord Floral* suggest these artistic practices are both fostered by some parents and discouraged by others, therefore becoming a source of conflict. There is also a geographical ethics to the piece and its working practices. First, the youth were made both visible and welcome in a major Toronto theatre that is usually adult-populated and adult-governed. The youth presence on stage was both an artistic and political act that worked to make the space more heterogeneous. Second, the co-creation of relational space was an important focus of the work, and the artistic team accomplished this through daily check-ins and through enfranchised negotiations of the aesthetics of the piece.

Another geographic finding pertains to the way that this work placed the suburban in relation to the urban. The youth described the travel to the city from the suburb and as their geography expanded, so too did their sense of independence. This independence was welcomed by the youth and acted as a source of conflict for some of their parents. Some of the youth expressed the need for space where they live that was not adult-governed. Tannahill was careful not to romanticize such unsupervised space, and in his script, the place of Concord Floral was the site of gender-based violence. Finally, the youth expressed their frustrations with the lack of available public transit and the long wait times between buses servicing the suburb. The gaps in infrastructure identified by these youth in the theatre site of the research were also reinforced by the youth in the school site.

The focus groups that intersected the ethnography with both youth and with the text of the play also provided methodological findings. In the focus group, we discussed the possible tension between the profound happiness of the cast in being together and the violence depicted in the story of the play. This conversation informed the subsequent aesthetic development of one girl’s performance, and demonstrates the pedagogical and aesthetic capacities of the ethnographic focus group. Future ethnographies of rehearsals with youth could be designed to follow focus groups for the ways these conversations inform the aesthetic practices of developing and mounting plays. Future research could analyze more specifically the role of a collaborative researcher and the pedagogical capacities of ethnographic practice within rehearsal and performances with youth.

As discussed in the findings, these artistic and creative acts provoked the need for spectator pedagogy so that drama and theatre involving actors not usually seen on stage could be better understood. Also
important to discuss are the ways this artistic team took seriously both the social and artistic goals in their efforts to break down the barriers of exclusive adult theatre space by bringing youth as actors onto the stage. These findings offer some vocabulary to begin conversations with audiences about artistic work, which could appear unfinished and unpolished. When a piece intentionally adopts an unpolished aesthetic, this allows for a more inclusive practice, and when Concord Floral is contextualized with the work of Richard Maxwell, it can be seen to address some of the elitist arguments brought against theatre practices. When theatre and performance are not reserved for only the trained, participation becomes open to a broader range of people.

Future research inquiries into spectator pedagogy could make use of these dialogues between youth and audiences as empirical data. Youth could productively engage audiences so that pieces of this kind could be appreciated on their own terms, and thus avoid the easy dismissal of such work as blandly or predictably pedagogical. Youth engagement with audiences could be analyzed for the ways that plays like Concord Floral expand notions of pedagogy, as well as the expectations of theatre going. This is a matter of opening definitions of theatre and also communicating the renegotiated terms, in which diverse people, including youth, are evolving what can be expected of theatre.

As Concord Floral will be produced at The Theatre Centre in the fall of 2014, questions could be asked of the participants directly about the evolution of their aesthetic thought and their reasons for participating in a third iteration of the play. Why is this important to them, and what are they learning during this long-term encounter with the artistic team and an evolving text? And more substantively, how would they articulate the ways that involvement in this play has informed or developed their understandings of suburban life and the youth who are living there?

In terms of future talk-back sessions, instead of the audience questioning the actors, the actors could ask the audience about their reactions to the piece. The youth may need more training in terms of guiding a discussion so they are prepared to ask pertinent questions of the audience and to foster learning not only about the content of the play and the reality of the youth’s lives in the suburbs as well as offer a more sophisticated analysis of the spatial politics associated with both the social and aesthetic intentions of the work.

There are some limitations of this work, and the interviews are one. As I became increasingly interested in the pedagogical nature of this work, I was less inclined to ask about the social relations and attitudes to diversity in the suburb. Engrossed as we were in the immediate rehearsal, the suburbs where the youth lived felt far away and somehow abstract. This resulted in a limited amount of data that was directly relevant to the primary question of the research. This provokes a question about the limits of responsive
ethnography and the danger of losing focus. Or conversely, is this loss of focus productive to the research as its focus evolves? I would suggest that both are true, that there was a loss of focus, but what developed in its place was a valuable discussion of ethnography and its association with aesthetic pedagogy.

A second limitation is the scale on which this project happened. In future, how might this kind of programming reach a larger group of youth? How might there be a stipulation or expectation that the youth involved will return to the communities from which they come to initiate local work? A former Branch student, Norah Alexic, was also a youth actor in both productions of *Concord Floral*. She is an example of a youth who could act as a socially-engaged artistic resource at the school, as she is familiar with both Branch and the methods used by *Concord Floral*. I close this section on *Concord Floral* with her words because she bridges the two sites of this research, and she comments on her experiences and the quality of her learning in *Concord Floral*:

Norah Alexic: it's just so different. First of all, *Concord Floral* itself, it's so like non-traditional rehearsal process that I'm used to I guess, and the whole play kept changing every single time, and so everyday you're just like “Okay, I don't know what I'm going to expect today” or just going in with a complete blank mind so - it's like usually when I go to rehearsals, I'm like okay, memorize scripts or whatever and then I'm ready to play this character, I know I'll have this time off, whatever.

Anne: Yeah.

Norah Alexic: And then this time it was just like everything was so different and new and – so, it was like, it was kind of like watching it – like an out of body experience in a sense, ‘cause it's like, you're seeing all this happen with everyone else, and everyone had different roles and (breathes deeply) so it taught me I guess how, what a real - a collaborative effort, I guess, really is, and how a piece can change so much from, what it was originally into what it becomes, in the end.


**Practical Implications: Site Two Branch Secondary School**

To begin this consideration of the school site, I would like to first return to the research questions: how do youth experience diversity in the suburb, and in what ways might the suburb become increasingly heterogeneous? As the suburb has become home to people with differing levels of socio-economic status and diverse groups, both transplanted from the city and from decades of immigration, this research
sought to understand how youth experience these growing diversities. Of particular interest to this research were the ways that the linguistic, cultural, religious, and sexual differences could remain unassimilated (Young, 1990, p. 319). In terms of attitudes to diversity, the findings discussed the youth’s fear of difference and a pull to sameness that was articulated in the interviews. Although many youth in the interviews referred to harmonious relations in this multicultural school, there were also students who expressed the ways they were excluded and marginalized. An English Language learner articulated the fear of difference she sensed from others in the class whom she felt were afraid of her. A second student who had been in Canada for longer frankly acknowledged that he felt awkward with those outside his group of tight knit friends. In spite of an official school board-mandated diversity policy in place, there were exclusivities at work that privileged certain students and marginalized others.

Socio-economic disparities in this mid-range school were not always easy to detect. This provoked the question: was it that these disparities were not there or were they just well hidden? The findings show that although several students faced family moves because of housing issues, only one youth offered his account of looking for subsidized housing in Mississauga, which currently has the longest waitlist in the province.

The high-rise towers, condominiums, and single-family homes, as Preston (2002) has identified, do not have any socio-economic uniformity. Regarding the current neighbourhood priority strategies used by both the United Way and the Peel District School Board, I initially asked if these policies were premised on homogeneous neighbourhoods. If so, might they exclude some youth with low socio-economic status attending a middle range school like Branch? In a school that was faring well overall, might some youth be overlooked and be disadvantaged further by such policies? I have no findings here to present in answer to these questions, but they continue to remain important for devising future research, as funding bodies use models targeting neighbourhoods, instead of supporting universal programs. Future research would have to be designed to address this particular question more specifically. Using drama methodologically with youth and local communities of residents would be a useful strategy as a means to gain a fuller understanding of socio-economic disparities and the advantages and disadvantages of such targeted policies.

The housing challenges discussed in the findings are framed by the larger context of neoliberalism. Statistics document a growth in poverty and the absence of adequate public expenditure on social programs. Neoliberalism is also evident in the policies of specialized programs and parental choice offered by the school. As the findings discuss, these specialized programs are intended to equip the students with skills that will make them more competitive in their chosen fields. It also allows schools to compete for students. These discourses of choice and competition are evidence of neoliberalism in
schooling. One of the Branch students, Elizabeth, talks about her experience in one of these specialized programs, French Immersion:

People inside French Immersion - it’s like a ‘family.’ Especially um, I think for my grade because there’s only one class. Um, and there’s a lot of like real hate – sort of don’t get along exactly, but we know we’re all there for each other – no matter what – so, I like that aspect of it - it’s really sweet. I think from the point of view of the rest of the school, it’s – we are sort of our own little thing. And I think everyone sort of sees us as a little bit snooty and a little bit like, “haute” class. But also a lot of the French Immersion students are involved in so many different things like student council and sports and the drama and music programs. So, we have a lot of friends outside of French Immersion as well. So I think we’re a BIG part of the school and I think we’re a big part of what drives all the extracurriculars in this school.

(Elizabeth, Follow up individual interview, Branch Secondary School, March 14, 2014)

Elizabeth’s thinking here acknowledges the special status of the program and how other youth in the school perceive them. In my presentation of the findings, I suggest this may have contributed to social tensions and inequitable relations within the school.

These findings, then, could provoke two future research inquiries. The first could inquire into the social relations associated with these special programs within schools. Assuming these programs are part of the neoliberal approach to schooling, what might data show to indicate the benefits and disadvantages of these programs? How do we reconcile the tension between individual advantage and collective disadvantages? The second study could inquire into the kinds of possible responses that would engage these larger forces of neoliberalism and globalization. It needs to be asked, however, as drama and community engagement are local practices, do they really have the capacity to engage these larger economic forces?

Cowen and Parlette (2005) suggest that although local work is important, unless the larger economic forces are recognized and addressed, then local efforts will exhaust themselves because the problems they address are local instantiations of more pervasive problems, which are not solvable at the local level. Massey (2005) also warns of looking too locally:

While globalization is so often read as a discourse of closure and inevitability, too many of the new tales of the city are all about openness, chance and getting lost. Neither alone is an adequate story; together they are especially politically inadequate, their coexistence allowing us to play to
our hearts’ content on the urban streets, all the while inexorably caught up in the compound of global necessity. (p. 161)

Drama and theatre pedagogy cannot solve the larger physical infrastructure problems identified by the youth, but they can create a forum in which to raise awareness. What role might drama play in engaging the community and building a form of important local social infrastructure? Social geographers Cowen and Parlette (2005) suggest that this kind of awareness building and political exchange builds social infrastructure they describe as:

social infrastructure creates conditions for residents and local communities to better direct their own futures and advocate for themselves. It does not necessarily address poverty, or the processes of polarization, segregation, and racialization directly, but it can directly address the experience of marginalization that reproduces these trajectories and that accompanies the local experience of the process often described as “suburban decline.” (p. 22)

According to Cowen and Parlette, while looking locally does not solve the larger problems, it does open the opportunity to discuss the experiences of those larger problems as they manifest locally. Jan Cohen-Cruz (2010) adds examples of theatre used to revitalize communities such as Syracuse, New York, which she describes as a community in decline due to deindustrialization. Her thesis is “art’s maximum value at the community level involves the relationships it supports and develops” (p. 159). Hers is a participatory framework that holds possibility as a guide for future research that would use drama and theatre methods to engage youth and the community in issues of concern such as the availability of affordable housing. This research would study how youth-created community conversations inform the content of subsequent drama or conversely how youth-created dramas could catalyze community discussion. Either way, school-based, place-based drama offers many modes of arts-infused ethnographic practices to researchers interested in studying community engagement in suburban contexts. Cohen-Cruz (2010) states, “community-engaged scholarship is part of conversations about changing definitions about what it means to be educated” (p. 177). Although Cohen-Cruz is referring to community-engaged pedagogy at the postsecondary level, such work can also be implemented at the secondary level and studied ethnographically.

The school grounds – the site for the youth dramatized rituals and the walking interviews – are a resource with great potential for community-engaged artistic work. For the weeks that I was walking through them with youth in interviews, they appeared underused. The school grounds could participate in local anti-poverty and food security efforts that allot garden space for the growing of food, in much the way
that Mackey (2007) describes the allotments in South London where the place-based performance *Feast* took place. Means (2013) describes the commons as

both a critique of the neoliberal drive toward the enclosure and expropriation of public wealth and natural resources and also as a rallying cry for a different kind of politics suitable to the unique challenges of the contemporary moment. (p. 150)

Such future research could document and analyze how socially engaged artistic work acts as important public pedagogy, or commons, as both a response to the conditions of the local suburb but also as a means of creating an alternative to neoliberal notions of privatization and individual competition, even if on a small scale.

The creation of the commons could be studied for the ways it adopts an effective stance against the forces of neoliberalism. When this research began, I did not see clearly how the larger forces of neoliberalism and globalization would be so present in this research, and by the time I recognized this, it was too late to redesign. While this points to another limitation of this research, it also opens a challenge for future researchers. For such research to happen, however, the school grounds will have to be protected from commercialization to ensure the youth and the community both continue to benefit from green space, which remains open to the public.

**Practical Implications: The Suburb Performs Itself**

The findings describe three episodes that happened during the walking interviews on the school grounds. On these occasions, the interview was productively interrupted. This provoked an analysis of these events to understand the diversity of the suburban space, and methodologically, to consider how it realigned the research relationship. These episodes clarified the position of the researcher and participant as only two of the several active participants in the research relationship.

The implications of these findings suggest the importance of future research that seeks to understand more about the relations of youth to their suburban environment. The implications also suggest the importance of relations with the environment in all research. This would expand drama and theatre pedagogical practice, incite different questions about spectatorship, and broaden the use of drama methodologically. It also erases the clear distinction between science and social science while insisting the researcher be positioned on the inside of the world of the study, instead of outside it.

These relational pedagogies invite a local response to the environment, but from within it, and not from a distance. Barad (2007) suggests it is not just *what* we study, but *how* we study:
we are not outside observers of the world. Neither are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather, we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity. This is a point Niels Bohr tried to get at in his insistence that our epistemology must take account of the fact that we are a part of the nature we seek to understand. (p. 184)

This positioning of the researcher has relevance for practices of research inquiry and where we place ourselves within it. This consciousness of positioning assumes the researcher and participants are not outside what they study, but inside, and even integral to it.

The explorations of local rituals and walking practices in this research act as a starting point for future research focused on the ways that the nonhuman, architecture, landscape architecture, plants, trees, fungus, birds, animals, and humans interact. The participation of the setting is one of the essential features of environmental theatre that theatre scholar Andrew Houston (2007) describes as “the placement of a particular text in a given environment, wherein the environment then begins to operate as an active agent in the process of developing the text in this particular place” (p. xiv). Some examples of such innovative work are Gray and Boyko’s (1998-2002) performance project, The SongBird Oratorio, which inquired into birdsong. Rachel Gomme knits as she walks, and she incorporates bits and pieces of the found landscape into her knitting. These knitted records could be the basis from which to build a dramatized piece and to collect storied data that is tactile, emergent, and mobile (Heddon & Turner, 2010).

Heddon and Mackey (2012) suggest there are many examples of theatre and applied theatre work addressing the environment, but they urgently stress the need for a rigorously critical “ecocriticism” (p. 163). They describe work that involves placing the “complex relationships between environmental ‘grand narratives’ (“apocalypse and tipping point”) and personal experiential encounters” (p. 175). Conceptually, precariousness and uncertainty feature in their accounts, and they describe their aesthetics as “anti-awe and anti-climax” (Heddon & Mackey, 2012, p. 177). In this sense, their work is minor and local, but also engaged with the larger issue of climate change. My research was not designed for ecocriticism and I encountered the nonhuman just by chance. My analysis probably does not qualify as ecocriticism, as it does not deconstruct any of the master narratives of the environment. Perhaps my analysis could be considered a minor form of ecocriticism, or an ecocriticism-in-the-making. Future research, however, could be designed explicitly to achieve this ecocritical goal. Clearly, hybridized methods of drama and walking hold real potential for environmental learning and could productively heed the call for ecocriticism.
This is important because environmentally-focused work has implications for broadening social science research to include the nonhuman, and by doing so, the boundaries of science and social science become increasingly permeable. Future cross-disciplinary research that pairs drama/theatre with science could create a generative relational encounter between human and nonhuman. Ellsworth (2005) writes, “they must set the concept of pedagogy itself in motion into interdisciplinary spaces between the cognitive sciences, cultural studies, aesthetics, psychology, media studies, architecture, and the biological sciences” (p. 7). To this list, I would add: geology, botany, soil sciences, meteorology, and mycology.

**Geographic, Pedagogical and Methodological Implications of Walking as Performance and Walking as Interviews**

Both walking and drama act as meeting points – the place where geography, youth, drama pedagogy and methodology intersect. As such, the practical implications from these findings regarding both drama and walking are multiple and robust. Turning now to walking practices, I focus on their practical pedagogical, geographic, and methodological implications. The findings of this research regarding walking include the one-on-one conversations between adult and youth, the importance of movement, the escape from the building, and attunement, attentiveness, and responsiveness to the nonhuman world. The relational, material encounter of the teacher to student and peer-to-peer through walking hold much potential for future pedagogy and for walking pedagogies used methodologically in ethnographic research regarding place, schools, and youth.

The findings show that some youth walk at night in the suburb, suggesting that walking is important as a practice of independence for some of the suburb-placed youth. This walking done by youth outside the school day could be the focus of a future research project that inquires into this aspect of youth geographies. This could be a generative research partnership between educational researchers and the City of Mississauga, who have recently adopted a new policy on walking practices, the *Peel Active Transportation Plan: Walk and Roll Peel*, to promote human-powered transportation. From the map of the network of proposed paths, Branch Secondary School will be well-situated with trails that will travel between Lake Ontario and Highway 401. This data would help indentify the breadth of youth suburb-based walking practices not readily visible because they happen at night.

Further implications from the research findings suggest that walking practice could be important to schools beyond classroom-based pedagogy. This study demonstrates that walking offers a relational activity that provides the opportunity for differently positioned people to participate in an activity
together. Hayden Lorimer (2011) describes the physical embodied practices of walking that make possible other ways of being with others:

For the most part eyes are cast downward and forwards, scanning the immediate terrain to be traversed, in anticipation of sure-footed passage. And simultaneously, repeatedly, if only momentarily, faces turn inwards allowing brief moments of eye contact, or to observe facial expressions or physical gestures. But for the greatest part, talk happens outwards, to the world. The walk shapes the rhythm of the talk, and the talk shapes the rhythm of the walk. (Lorimer, 2011 as cited in Cresswell & Merriman, 2011, p. 29)

Hayden connects the outward focus of the walk with an outward focus to the larger world that Massey (2005) also advocates. Future research could study how walking practice is integrated into various aspects of school life to analyze the contribution of walking to the social and academic relations within the larger school community. This research could consider the following questions: Who might walk together; where and for what purpose; and how might movement through local spaces be made accessible to all? It is assumed that the school grounds are, or will be, universally-designed so that youth with varying abilities will not be excluded from these practices.

To be more specific in the context of Branch Secondary School, walking could bring programmatically separated students together. For example, developmentally delayed students could be matched with mainstreamed students for walks. Similarly, lunchtime walks could act as a form of peer mediation. English Language Learner newcomer youth could be paired with those who have lived in the community for most of their lives. Language walks could be implemented in which youth teach each other. Study walks or extra help walks would bring teachers and students together. Principals and administrators could engage youth outside “the office,” finding different ways of addressing conflicts and issues through the participatory practice of walking together. School counselors might find that their sessions with students could be more effective if they walked and talked outside. Gay Straight Alliances could make walking part of their initiatives to create safe spaces in community streets for LGBTQ youth. Another aspect of this initiative would focus on reducing the number of students who are driven to school, thereby engaging the participation of youth and their parents/caregivers. Finally, the findings of this research suggest there is potential for walking to be integrated into drama pedagogy, as it opens the possibility for multiple performances of the local. All of these activities could be documented and analyzed by researchers seeking to understand more about the contributions that walking could make to youth and schooling at the secondary level.
Future research could focus on the fine line between walking as interview and walking as improvisational performance. When interviews release themselves from the regimented structure of question and answer, there is much to learn about researcher/participant relations and human/nonhuman relations. Future research could study the capacities of walking for becoming more attentively and more responsively alert for what in the environs is being making known. Bradby and Lavery (2007) suggest that in this context *derivé* means, “to enter a river of sensation where things turn to liquid and buildings lose their moorings” (p. 46). Again and again, in the course of this research, definitions and categories ceased to function as strictly, as they started to lose their previously held meanings. In this place of suspended definitions, the desire for new language and terms surfaced. I suggest there is potential for future research that inquires into the association of walking and thinking outside previously described categories, or stretching categories open, and conceptualizing how this informs youth understandings of scientific inquiry.

Walking practices have been well documented in applied theatre and performance, but I suggest that they hold much potential as methodological tools for studies that focus on the social, spatial, aesthetic and the environment (Myers, 2008; Heddon & Turner, 2010; Nicholson, 2011b; Heddon & Mackey, 2012). Walking, as an outwardly-focused embodied and emplaced pedagogy deserves further research and methodological experimentation (Pink, 2009, p. 25).

**Further Practical Implications: Methodology**

These findings suggest that responsive, participatory ethnographic practice takes time and that significant encounters with difference can be fostered through drama, theatre, and hybridized methods. The benefits of a long presence in the classroom or rehearsal hall were the relations established between the teacher, artists, youth, and researcher. For example, ongoing discussion with the teacher, Mr. A, helped to foster a collaborative, relational practice that generated insightful discussion regarding the processes of pedagogy and social relations in the class.

Experiments in hybridized methods may prove important for the ways they might invigorate ethnographic and arts-based research practice. These findings suggest that the walking interview and the focus groups that included drama are examples of ethnography as it *differenciated* and became different from what it had been. This intentional hybridizing of methods accentuated collaboration and participation through the creation of shared experiences that could act as the basis of shared reflection. For example, bringing drama to focus groups offered the youth the opportunity to create dramatized scenes about family life that contradicted the lifestyle depicted in the historic photograph of the suburban
nuclear family. Gallagher (2008) states that in the context of her research, the drama changed social relations, as it created:

A shared context from which to draw in subsequent interviews, conversations, and interactions. Quite apart from it being a fascinating experience in itself, it provided a shared reference point that shifted the power relations or at least made manifest the complex ways in which we read and were read by others in all human interactions. (p. 75)

I join Gallagher (2008) in suggesting that the focus group conversations were enriched by the common experience that had been fostered by the shared activity of creating dramatized scenes of the suburb and being together in the rehearsals of Concord Floral.

Thirdly, the implication for future methodological practice is drama’s capacity for engagement with difference. The responsive focus group interview in the second semester became a means for the disparate groups to engage one another in difficult conversations regarding the social tensions unsettling the class. As the findings describe, this confrontation was neither easy nor without the risk associated with speaking up. In this messiness and discomfort was a kind of raw learning about difference. As the findings of this research show, non-directed focus groups allowed for frank acknowledgement of difference and the means to acknowledge, but not resolve, social tensions.

The implications regarding the video methods are their importance as a different mode of data and that they retain their affective and agentive capacities when not reduced to textual transcription. In terms of the timing of analysis, early analysis was crucial to the subsequent collection of data and the analysis that followed. Also useful were the video field notes, which were efficient and could be done while walking. As they did not require a place to sit and write, video notes could be kept on the fly. The Speaker’s Corner offered another mode of video that the youth could control. It allowed for more overt performativity and yielded some very useful, if brief, segments that informed the analysis and findings regarding income inequality, as well as the precarious nature of available jobs.

Although a variety of video methods were used in this project, video as method could be explored more fully, and particularly, its capacities for disseminating research (MacLure, Holmes, MacRae, & Jones, 2010; Gallagher & Kim, 2008; Rose, 2012). Time limitations and the specific skills required proved to be challenges for this particular project, but they represent areas to develop in future work.

Lostness and Analysis

In turning the focus from methods to analysis, the findings of this research suggest that the traditional emphasis on method is unbalanced, and that a greater concentration of effort needs to be spent on the
processes of analysis. Secondly, analysis is challenging when difference is foregrounded. In this research, the analytical approach served the theoretical framework of focusing on difference over sameness, resisting categorization. This was an experimental stance that acted as an example of analytical practice that took me from my moorings and, as such, has implications for future practice.

Lather (2008) states “we are all a little lost in finding our way into research practices that open to the irreducible heterogeneity of the other as we face the problems of doing research in this historical time” (p. 224). Questions to consider more fully in future ethnographic analysis are: what are the actual procedures in the analysis of data in the absence of coding? How does looking for Lather’s (2013) difference driven analytic interrupt conventional analysis in productive ways (p. 639)? As the methodology chapter attests, as much as I tried to diffract my analysis, it was not always possible to think, or organize data, without some categories. How might these categories become more flexible, so there is room for more unassimilated difference within? In future research, we might strive to find modes of analysis that do not seek to reduce difference, but rather work to create more spacious terms that allow for greater degrees of nuance.

Specifically, future studies could usefully inquire into researcher practices of analysis documenting researcher response to data as the empirical materials work, as an active force, on the researcher. This research could also inquire into the ways that researchers respond to the challenge offered by Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) who ask, “what happens if we look at the image thinking that not only the humans can be thought upon as active and agentic, but also non-human and matter can be granted ‘agency’?” (p. 527). This inquiry would not describe analysis after it happens, but would document the experience of researchers fully embroiled in the immediate affective struggles that such analytical work demands.

**Theoretical Implications: Methodological and Epistemological**

The findings of the research show that the theoretical and the empirical mutually informed one another. To be specific, the pull to sameness that came out of the early data motivated a search for theory to consider difference and diversity. Deleuze (1968/1994) and his concepts of positive and negative difference were crucial to the subsequent theoretical framing of the work. In the case of the surprising encounters with the nonhuman, this empirical event provoked the need to find theory that could aid in understanding the significance of these encounters. These examples suggest that an exchange occurred when the empirical materials were put into relation with theory and that theory developed in relation to the empirical materials.
Through the practice of keeping unassimilated difference at the forefront of the analysis, this highlighted the entrenched nature of thinking in categories. In questioning the practice of looking for sameness, I would argue that this theoretical framework began to differentiate analysis as I knew it. This approach has implications for future research inquiring into the particulars of analytical process as well as pedagogy.

To be more specific, the deep entrenchment of looking for sameness and thinking in categories has epistemological implications in that they discipline thought and govern how we come to know. This has pedagogical implications. If education has taught learning by categorizing, and if we are to create the spacious capacity for thought that can allow for unassimilated difference, then it follows that there is a need to be re-taught. By taking concepts of positive and negative difference explicitly into teaching and learning, we need to ask how thinking might become open to facilitate alternatives to judgment and to resist the strict categorization of social relations that are evident in this research.

I suggest these habits of thinking in categories also manifest in social relations. Youth may be looking for sameness because it is a habit of thinking that has been taught and normalized. Diversity policies may list important principles regarding more equitable and heterogeneous social relations, but perhaps we do not know how to think outside entrenched categories. This speculation implies the need for more explicit approaches to teaching about difference and creating encounters that let difference remain different, instead of trying to reroute it to something familiar and known. This would demand a high level of comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty, but I suggest that this is one of the real contributions that dramatic art can make to curriculum and pedagogy in that it unsettles and defamiliarizes. These pedagogical practices of drama and theatre-making seem crucial, if learning and research are to move beyond what is already safe and predictable while reinforcing the same and intellectually shunning the different.

These implications suggest that it is not just a matter of changing material conditions but that frameworks for thinking are equally important. Explicit curriculum and pedagogy that address what it might mean to have unassimilated difference in classrooms puts this theory into practice. Such future work could document and analyze encounters when difference is not assimilated. These research findings also show that some youth have the capacity to engage difference quite frankly without the expectation that they will win the other over to their way of thinking and being. Future research that inquires into the association of explicit pedagogies about difference might avoid what became a limitation in this research. Returning to the Branch focus group in the second semester, the dominant were given their time to speak, but the less dominant were still not fully heard. In this confrontation between the two groups, there was still the expectation that the dissenting group would need to become more like the
dominant group for the class to function well. Conversely, if unassimilated difference were to be the principle behind the discussion, the encounter could have become one of negotiation, or at least, mutual acknowledgement. The dominant group would have been asked to enter into a negotiated relation, rather than just assuming that their way was the best and only way. The dominant, therefore, would have been asked to become different. By discussing the nature of unassimilated difference, the expectation that the others (nondominant) will become like them dissipates, and it makes possible altered social relations.

To extend this notion beyond classrooms, challenging a classificatory approach has implications for the organization of students in schools particularly with respect to programming choices. Further research needs to be conducted into specialized programs, like the High Skills Major program, to determine the degree to which this creates a heterogeneous school community. What kind of exclusivities and inclusivities might these programs produce as they try to create graduates that will be more competitive? Are the discourses and practices of neoliberalism in schools contributing to more equitable schools, or do they create privilege by favouring certain students over others? Privilege in schooling has existed long before neoliberalism, but in current practices of schooling, what are the new kinds of privilege and the question to be asked is who benefits and who is harmed? Finally, might drama contribute productively as a means to inquire into the operations and practices of privilege more explicitly?

**Conclusion**

What do you call someone in Mississauga without a lawn mower?

Unemployed.

(Speaker’s Corner video, Branch Secondary School, December 2, 2012)

**Reconstructing The Suburban Garden: A Minor Practice**

The suburb and the outdoor spaces where our walking took place were constructed spaces, not nature walks. In the 1960s, as this suburb developed, this local school and the grounds were designed, parking lots and tennis courts were built, trees were removed, and grass was planted to create a garden of sorts, tended by school employees. Other gardens associated with this research were the lawns that the youth participants and I passed on our interview walks through suburban streets. While listening to the video afterwards, I could often pick out the sound of lawnmowers, fading in and fading out. Gardens, lawns, and lawnmowers feature prominently as a metaphor in the suburb portrayed in popular culture and theatre. For example, the lawn and the tending of grass in Edward Albee’s (1968) play, *Everything in the Garden*, suggests a materialist consumer culture in which neighbours compete against each other, each
seeking to own the most sophisticated lawn care equipment as a sign of status. In Albee’s play, the suburban garden is not a place of escape from consumerism, but becomes the place of competition for material goods.

The garden has also featured prominently in the history of the suburb. According to Merchant (2004) the reclamation of the Garden of Eden was a catalyst for the colonial expansion into the new world. When the new world cities did not live up to this ideal, the suburb became a second chance to reclaim that “lost” garden.38 In this conclusion, I return to the notion of garden, but an important conceptual shift has taken place. The immediate discussion is not about the garden as metaphor, representing socio-economic materialism, or Utopia that is part of the so-called iconic suburban ethos. Instead, I return to a garden that acts as an agentic force in the entanglement of the research. It has shifted position from a discursive, or metaphorical, entity to a material and relational one. Kershaw (2007) draws on Chaudhuri to explain that using nature as a metaphor perpetuates the hierarchy between nature and culture (p. 311). He argues instead, for a theatre that is in “responsive and responsible relation to the environment” (p. 312). In the drama pedagogy of this research, the garden of the school does not stand in, or represent something, other than what it is. Approaching the grounds and the nonhuman in this way is an attempt to curb a historical colonial relation between the nonhuman and the human.

This analysis does not consider the suburb as an Utopian vision of returning to the Garden of Eden, an escape from the dirty and dangerous urban, but instead acts as a rethinking of suburban space as relational – between people and the materiality of their environs that includes the grounds, the air, the trees, the mushrooms, plant growth, the animals, and birds.

The reconceptualized school garden, however, has the potential to become a community commons, and not Albee’s (1968) place of private property and individual consumption (Means, 2013). Both Soja (2011) and Massey (2005) insist on the openness of space and they recognize that it is in continual motion and redefinition. For Soja (2011), open and undetermined space has the potential for spatial justice, “and the new spatial consciousness and collective struggles over geography can provide a unifying effect for coalition-building among diverse organizations and social movements, enhancing the strategic importance of seeking spatial justice” (p. 465). As Soja and the findings of this research suggest, socio-spatial action and coalition building are necessary to attend to the students in the school and the lack of social and material infrastructure they identify. Future research could inquire into the

38 Nicholson (2011a), in her history of drama education, associates the garden with notions of both education and the suburb. She offers the example of Ebenezer Howard who was the leader of the Garden City Movement in England (p. 39).
outdoor school space configured as a commons in which local residents, youth artists, teachers, and researchers could use drama and theatre to explicitly focus on issues associated with physical infrastructure that include housing, food security, transportation, and even issues of safe walking and alternative modes of mobility made available to those with differing physical abilities.

The implications of this research outline the central role the school can play in coordinating these collective efforts. The garden might become the place where food security is addressed as part of the Region of Peel’s (2012) plan, *Poverty Reduction Strategy: Awareness, Access, Opportunity*. The school grounds could be a place to join the community, not as a place of consumerism, but as a place where shared resources are committed to the skill-building of youth through community-engaged drama and theatre, followed by reflection and theoretically-informed discussion. This garden does not recreate the Garden of Eden, or try to recuperate nostalgically a vision of lost innocence. Conversely, it recognizes the considerable challenges of local problems as seen in the larger context of global economics and neoliberalism. The garden holds the possibility of a politics-yet-to-come.

The social relations that took place in the garden and grounds of the school are not confined to just human relations but include the nonhuman. What was previously accepted as the backdrop or setting to the research is now an active participant. When we consider the inclusion of things and the nonhuman into drama, it is worth returning again to Ruddick’s (2010) invitation to find differences and diversities “not yet named or recognized” (p. 41). Drama and associated artistic practice entwine animal and plant diversity with social diversities. This interactive encounter with this breadth of diversity is far from the original intentions of this research and suggests the active involvement of place in ethnography and the methodological merits of drama and walking. Ellsworth (2005) considers the importance of place in her study on “anomalous places of learning” and Gallagher (2007) offers a spatial analysis of surveillance in urban schools. Pink (2009) in her emplaced methodologies and Mackey (2007) in her place-based performances consider place and how it informs research. This study has tried to join this conversation, but has also left questions to consider in future work: how might the particulars of space and place (including the nonhuman) be brought into the research and drama encounters more fully and in what ways might this benefit youth and the environment? In the space between science and social science, how might drama offer pedagogical and methodological strategies to produce new insights in both fields? In what ways, might a fuller consideration of unassimilated difference inform these pedagogical and methodological practices?
Post script to another garden: proposed uses of school grounds

During my post-research visit to Branch, two years after the data collection, I learned there was a proposal under consideration to build a sports dome on the school grounds. The dome would cover an Astroturf field through the winter and be taken down for the spring and fall. This partnership would be a public/private one: when the dome was not being used for school purposes, it would be rented out to the larger community with the proceeds of this rental going to the private company. The company, however, would pay rent to the school board for the use of the land.

This proposed plan to build a sports bubble on the school grounds provoked two questions regarding school land use. To what extent was this new structure considered a kind of commons and to what extent might it represent a commercialization of school space? This space was not what I had imagined would act as the interface between the school, youth, and the community who would be engaged in outwardlooking drama together. Replacing the grass with Astroturf would change the ecology of the grounds and would leave less room for community gardens and local food security initiatives. Clearly, I was not alone in my recognition of the school grounds as a valuable asset to both the school and the larger community, but my vision and the vision of the school now differed.

Due to community concern over the loss of green space, the school board decided that this project would not be moving ahead. There are, however, questions that still need to be asked: how will the school, school board, and community work to ensure that this open space avoids future commercialization? In what ways, might this green space continue to be open to socially engaged-artists-in-the-making and the heterogeneous nonhuman population?

Making Spacious: Geographies of Intelligibility

I close this research with unfinished conversations, lingering questions, and the overwhelming sense that what is contained in these pages is fraught with the limitations of what can be known and the many things, events, encounters, and stories that could not be included. But just as Tannahill and Maxwell make a virtue of the unfinished, I will too. These processes of documenting, analyzing, and writing also

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39 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy: Awareness, Access, Opportunity (2012). The four-pronged approach to poverty reduction includes Housing, Food Security, Economic Opportunities Task Force and Income Security that includes affordable transportation. The initiative also cites “promising local practice” comprised of a farmers’ market and a Community Garden with 44 allotments for families, youth, and children to learn about growing food (p. 16). Schools such as Branch Secondary with their large school grounds could take an active role in this Food Security initiative as a means of addressing issues of local but possibly hidden, poverty.
act as an invitation to future researchers to consider some of what is left unfinished regarding the power differentials and privilege in schooling. There is future work to be done on the difficulties of assessing poverty in school populations of those located in mixed socio-economic areas. Future research could address what might occur at the place where drama and walking meet the environment in the postmetropolis. Also ahead is research that analyzes data differently without resorting to ever smaller and less breathable categories. Most importantly, difference and differenciation can inform pedagogy and future research design, methods, and analysis.

Drama is spatial and premised on the event of social encounter, and it is here that future work holds possibility for recognizing difference in ecologies of schooling and schooling environments in the postmetropolis. What lies ahead are future acts of spatial attention paid to youth, the conditions of their lives, the air and life forms, and our shared uncertain geographies as we collectively try to make ourselves intelligible to each other through drama, theatre, pedagogy, and ethnography.
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