Making Good: Racial Neoliberalism and Activist Subjects in Toronto's Parkdale Neighbourhood

by

Griffin Epstein

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Social Justice Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the complex roles the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), a progressive social service agency, has played in Toronto’s gentrifying Parkdale neighbourhood. Emerging from the author’s experiences as a PARC worker, this research juxtaposes the agency’s rhetorical and material investments in opposing gentrification and neoliberalism with its ongoing momentum towards privatization, and spatial and social enclosure. It suggests that the key to understanding these contradictions lies in the construction of the enlightened bourgeois activist, a subject whose genuine desire for personal and political “goodness” both reinforces and obscures racial and gendered violence.

Relying on an existing textual archive, ethnographic observation, and extensive interview data, this dissertation tracks the racial and gendered strategies of gentrification and neoliberalism through descending scales: the Parkdale neighbourhood; the institutional and spatial environments of PARC; and the interpersonal and intrapsychical relationships between and among PARC staff. At every level, the enlightened bourgeois activist emerges as both an architect and an effect of existing power structures. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that so long as we leave race and gender uninterrogated in our external and internal lives, the social
work that we imagine to be emancipatory will reinforce those systems of domination we hope to oppose.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation is dedicated to the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC). Over the years, PARC has been many things to me: I have known it as a staff member, and a volunteer; a facilitator and a student. It has given me countless gifts, perhaps the greatest of which was allowing me to situate this study in its complex community. Doing this work at and with PARC has made the process of getting a PhD remarkably lively. Academia is often isolating. Reading, writing and research can strand people in libraries, offices and their own heads. My connection to PARC has allowed me to avoid this kind of loneliness almost completely. At every stage, I have had brilliant and opinionated people eager to weigh in. I have been asked to explain the research to so many different players affiliated with the agency that I have even developed an elevator speech. As someone prone to long-windedness, and apt to get lost in my own thoughts, this is truly a shock. I want to start my thank-yous here: thank you, PARC, for allowing me access to some of the most incredible minds and powerful hearts on this planet. I am grateful to all those whom I have worked with and/or interviewed.

There is one group of people at PARC to whom I owe unique thanks, and these are the past and present members of my Research, Development and Support Group. They are, in no particular order, Dan Callahan, Michael Bartley, John Hovhannisyan, Bernice Sampson, Peter Martin, Tyde Cambridge, Tracy Cocks, Omid Zareian, B. Timson, and Hume Cronyn. As any good steering committee should, they have given me direction and strength from the very beginning. I am particularly indebted to Tyde Cambridge, whose presence of mind and sharp wit have gotten me out of many a pickle. I cherish the friendship we have cultivated through the process, and am eager to watch it grow.

I began to consider this project in conversation with Jessica Bonney and Paul Denison. Their ongoing insight, along with that of many other PARC employees, has been crucial. I first articulated my explicit plans to undertake the research in an important dinner with Shannon Quinn, but didn’t fully commit until I spoke to Dr. Harjeet Badwall at the York School of Social Work. Our short but powerful conversation set me on this path. I want to thank her for asking me what, exactly, was so scary about investigating my workplace.
The theories I apply in this dissertation are not mine. They represent my (sometimes muddled) attempt to comprehend and synthesize the scholars that I live alongside. I consider myself perennially in the tutelage of Sheryl Nestel, who helps me find my bearings in the world. I am deeply indebted to the brilliance of Min Kaur, Percy Lezard, Chris Chapman and Jijian Voronka, whose questions and provocations shape the thinking you find herein. Min and Percy have mentored me with great patience and generosity. I am so grateful to them. Chris additionally helps me organize my thoughts – and feelings! - on the regular

The dissertation owes its structure to a brainstorming session with Maresi Starzmann and my brother, Andrew Epstein. They are, the both of them, incredible thinkers, and beautiful people. Andrew also helped me with the title for this work. More importantly, he challenges me to be the best version of myself I possibly can be. I am bafflingly lucky to be born into the same strange family as him. I also owe a debt to my mother, who gave a draft of this a good once-over for readability, and my father, who checked in with me to see how the work was going. I am further grateful to my incredible family-in-love (!) Tom and Madeline for giving me sustenance.

The language I use in this dissertation doesn’t hold a candle to the work that emerges from PARC’s Poetry Night. I hope to someday approach Christy Gordon’s level of deadpan wit, Shelley LaHay’s finely-tuned ear, or Jim Booth’s insistent humour. I am further indebted to my much-beloved writing group. Hume Cronyn, Bryan DePuy, Chris Beyers and Shannon Quinn give me inspiration. I find myself turning to Shannon’s poetry often in these last days of dissertating.

It is not hyperbolic to say that I would not have made it through this process without the incredible love and support of my friends. Everyone I know helped me in some way, but I want to give special thanks to Michelle for the food of life (both literal and figurative); Davie (and Einstein!) for affection and knowledge; Steph for fortitude; and Mel for insight on the presentation. I want to thank Ryan Newell, my fellow cry-brother, for keeping me grounded and true to myself. It is a rare honour to feel so known, and by such a brilliant person. Also Lew, just because.

I was buoyed by the incredible generosity of the Murads (with the additional Rambukkana and Adames), who have extended me familial belonging in Canada. Zuwaina Murad, in her infinite
patience (and knowledge of APA), helped me proof this beast of a dissertation. My incredible connection with Zahra Murad continues to be instrumental in making me the political, emotional and spiritual being that I am.

Researching and writing has been a surprisingly positive experience for me because of my remarkable committee. Dr. Katharine Rankin and Dr. Barbara Heron have shown by example what it means to be truly socially and politically engaged academics. Both have offered essential insight throughout, and have done me the great kindness of reading hundreds of pages of drafts (like I said, long-winded). Barbara also loaned me books and met me for coffee when I was feeling panicked. I am honoured to have Dr. Nicholas Blomley, whose work I respect immensely and cite often, as an external appraiser and Dr. Izumi Sakamoto as an internal examiner. Most essentially, though, I want to thank Dr. Sherene Razack, without whom I would never have conceptualized, let alone finished, this research. As a professor, an adviser and a supervisor, she has gone above and beyond the professional requirements of her role time and time again, lending her formidable intellect and generous nature to this large and complicated project. Working with her has grown my sense of self as a writer, community organizer and a person. I am unspeakably honoured to know her, and forever grateful for her supervision and, more broadly, her political work.

When all is said and done, my deepest thanks go to two people: Hume Cronyn and Bryan DePuy. Throughout this process, Hume has given so much more of his space, his time, and his incredible mind than I could possibly have hoped for. Our friendship makes me a more thoughtful, grounded person. Better, it fills me with wonder at the world. The arguments I present in this work were first hashed out over the dinner table, in the car, or at the back of a bar with Hume.

Bryan, I do not even have words for. I honestly cannot believe that I get to spend my life with such a brilliant creature, a veritable polymath who gives so generously of his wisdom, clear-headedness, empathy and humour. I am still pinching myself hourly. Suffice to say, my ability to think through the difficult things in this dissertation – my ability to live my life at all – is profoundly improved by his presence. I depend on his light, even as I am awed by it. I can barely stumble my way towards an adequate articulation of what he means. I’ll leave it to Ian MacKaye: “We’re blessed, not lucky.”
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Introduction

Dissidence, Dissonance

“The lines that allow us to find our way, those that are ‘in front’ of us, make certain things, and not others, available…when we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach”

- Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology (2006, p. 14)

“Rebel, rebel, your face is a mess”

- David Bowie (1974)

1.1. Dissidence

Between January 26th and February 10th, 2016, Toronto’s Parkdale neighbourhood was ravaged by fires. In the span of two weeks, three separate blazes ripped through the overcrowded and underserviced buildings off Queen Street, Parkdale’s main thoroughfare. One person was killed, four seriously injured, and 27 permanently displaced from their homes as a result (Caton, 2016; Wilson, 2016). The fire department has yet to pinpoint a cause, but local tenants have a theory – they see the fires as part of a larger plot to clear the neighbourhood for redevelopment. The timing is certainly suspect: The displacement of the poor and marginalized from Parkdale’s back alleys is occurring simultaneous to the development of the neighbourhood as a prime destination for the moneyed elite. Queen Street, once the epicentre of Toronto’s “psychiatric ghetto,” now boasts a growing cluster of high-end restaurants, hip bars and condo towers.

Such changes in Parkdale are not new. Urban renewal has been encroaching on the neighbourhood for over 20 years. In the late 1990s, a fire at a famous rooming house killed two residents and displaced 49 (Balkissoon, 2010). Locals remember the owner, a well-known “slumlord,” emerging from his building hours earlier, arms full of fire extinguishers. When the fire began later that day, the landlord was nowhere to be seen. Some say he drank at a bar as the building burned.

These are the stories of Parkdale. Theories of neighbourhood clearance via institutional neglect or outright arson have long been part of the narrative. Talk of greedy landlords looking to cash in
on insurance claims, or turn a quick profit on dilapidated buildings, is commonplace. The violence of Parkdale’s ongoing transition (eviction to influx, fires to parties) is stark, but not surprising. Such appearances and disappearances are part of a broader process of gentrification, a form of economic and social upgrade wherein discrete areas are transformed from undesirable to commercially valued. What is surprising, however, is that these changes continue in a neighbourhood that has become known as a haven for the marginalized. Since the 1980s, Parkdale has been famous in Toronto for its activism. Psychiatric survivor movements, sex worker support initiatives and, most recently, anti-gentrification campaigns have all found a home on Parkdale’s streets. What would, in other neighbourhoods, be seen as the conspiratorial rambling of the poor, in Parkdale is part of the mainstream narrative. The fact that the recent fires have received significant media coverage in Toronto is a direct reflection of the success of local advocacy (Caton, 2015b; Wilson 2016).

At the centre of neighbourhood resistance are Parkdale’s social service agencies. Legal and medical clinics, harm reduction outreach programs, and community mental health organizations have all been crucial in generating Parkdale’s activist identity. The most famous of these agencies is the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), a multi-service mental health organization on the western edge of Queen Street. PARC has a long history of community advocacy: in the 1980s, it was at the forefront of Parkdale’s fight against psychiatric discrimination; in the 1990s, it rallied the neighbourhood against the Conservative Provincial government of Mike Harris; and now, it fights local gentrification with a food security program and a community land trust effort.

PARC builds its identity around two ideas: inclusion for all Parkdale residents and broad resistance to damaging structures of power. PARC has explicitly positioned itself against the neoliberalization of social work – the process of amalgamation, privatization and bureaucratization that seeks to streamline service agencies at the expense of long-standing relationships of support. This is a risky move for a government-funded agency; yet, in many regards, PARC has been remarkably successful. Whereas other progressive social service sites have been closed down due to lack of funding or swallowed up by larger bodies, PARC has kept its doors open and maintained its activist message. The agency’s work has even changed the way that poor people are seen in Parkdale. Since the mid-1990s, Parkdale has become a place where
diversity is embraced. Now, homeless advocates promote community inclusion alongside local MPs; upscale bars and restaurants donate excess food to social agencies; and artists collaborate with psychiatric survivors to mount public events.

PARC’s efforts to bolster activism have helped Parkdale move towards its current state. Displacement and change in the neighbourhood do not go unaddressed. The sudden eviction of 27 rooming-house tenants in August 2015, for example, was met with a large cross-class protest (Sidnell-Greene, 2015). In January 2016, just before the recent fires, a long-standing coalition of local agencies and rooming house tenants won a suit against the City of Toronto for negligence (Powell, 2016). Both events were covered in national newspapers. Yet other aspects of the gentrification process continue unabated. Affordable and supportive housing is disappearing at a steady rate (Richter et al., 2010). Police continue to target and harass the poor (Demers, 2011). Homeless people still die in high numbers on the streets (City of Toronto Online, 2010), and stigmatized immigrant communities like the Hungarian Roma are deported en masse mere months after arriving (Hune-Brown, 2014). These ongoing acts of neighbourhood clearance have prompted questions amongst Parkdale’s long-time activists and agencies, many of whom believed that they were securing a future in which diverse communities could happily coexist. People who have found themselves time and time again at the front of campaigns for the poor have begun to wonder if something has changed, if tried and true tactics might no longer be relevant.

Nowhere are these questions more pressing than at PARC. The organization still understands itself as a bulwark against neoliberalism and gentrification; yet it is changing in step with the neighbourhood. PARC has begun to partner with groups it previously opposed; it has invited more commercial tenants into its Queen Street headquarters; and recent renovations seem to align more with the neighbourhood’s aesthetic shift than the needs of its service-users. Meanwhile, PARC staff, once champions of the agency’s resistant spirit, have grown tired, angry and disillusioned. I speak from experience: I spent six years there as a front-line community mental health worker.

Over the time I worked at PARC, I watched both the neighbourhood and the agency transform in unsettling ways. As the pace of gentrification in Parkdale accelerated, and changes in agency
structure seemed increasingly to contradict our activist history, I began to wonder if we had made a wrong turn somewhere. Eventually, I was forced to contend with a more frightening idea: that PARC’s dream of neighbourhood harmony was always doomed to fail in the face of deeply embedded structures of economic and social domination.

These divergent explanations for the dilemma of PARC and Parkdale – that we activists had made a mistake, or that gentrification and neoliberalism are truly inevitable – are the seeds of this research. I began this process hoping to revive the PARC I thought I knew. After examining thousands of pages of institutional history, and conducting 80 interviews with Parkdale community members, I have come to realize I misunderstood the very nature of power in the neighbourhood. I discovered that PARC neither missed a critical juncture in neighborhood change, nor faced utterly intractable forms of power. Rather, the PARC I loved had always unconsciously reproduced the domination it hoped to oppose. This occurred not in spite of its activism, but because of it: Oppression at PARC has been reproduced through very forms of resistance it enshrines. Our sense of dissidence, while genuine, has always been limited by its unacknowledged embeddedness in bourgeois power. The limits of our activism were invisible to me at first, both because PARC has so deeply shaped my own political sensibilities and, as I learned, because the agency’s whole history is grounded in a whiteness and masculinity that maintains its power through self-obfuscation.

This dissertation is an attempt to engage with the forms of domination that are often obscured within the work for social justice. I look at the whiteness, masculinity and bourgeois power that flows through PARC, its staff, and the project of neighbourhood activism. In so doing, I offer an excavation of the tactics of social and political change. Importantly, this dissertation neither chronicles missteps, nor resigns to inevitable cooptation. Rather, it explores how PARC’s sense of resistance, and my own, and have been shaped by an orientation to the world that does not take the breadth and depth of racial, gendered and colonial power into account. It shows that, at least in Parkdale, the power and privilege that white bourgeois activism leave unchallenged reproduce themselves at macro and microcosmic levels.

The goal of this project is to examine how the various scales of power interlock; it is, further, to situate the work that gets called “activism” within regimes of racial and gendered power. Most
importantly, however, it is to examine how those of us genuinely committed to change are nonetheless pulled in by racial neoliberalism and the psychic structures of bourgeois goodness. It does not excavate the past for its own sake; rather, I offer that history is lived in and through our actions, material relations and subjectivities. In looking carefully at the structures of power that made us who we are, I hope we may begin to imagine a different kind of future.

Writing this dissertation has been painful for me. It has rattled my sense of self, and raised questions in my relationships with my long-time friends and allies. I have both inflicted and experienced the discomfort and wounding that come from peeling back layers of identity and history. Ultimately, however, the pain has created a document of commitment: I consider this a sort of love letter to PARC, to Parkdale, and to my underlying belief in the potential of social activism. Love, bell hooks (2000) reminds us, is never simply a feeling, but an action: a set of investments and behaviours invested in transforming oppression. It is a lens: a way of looking clearly, unwaveringly, critically at objects of affection and acts of devotion. Whatever does not work to loosen the grip of social power, or challenge the structures of domination both in the larger world and in our very selves, is not love.

1.1.1. Researching PARC

I situate my work at PARC because it has had a significant role to play in the Parkdale neighbourhood. Parkdale, in turn, is a telling site to explore the ways in which activism emerges in Toronto and, indeed, in Canada at large. More personally, however, I focus on PARC because it has figured dramatically into my own political and emotional identity over the past nine years. I came to Toronto in 2007 looking to be a part of movements for change. I was 23, a self-identified anarchist and crazy person, fresh off my first “solidarity” action as a white settler at an Indigenous land reclamation site. Just days after arriving in the city, I joined the anti-capitalist Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and its sister group, Disability Action Movement Now (DAMN). Like many PARC staff, I later learned, I discovered the agency through activism. In late 2007, DAMN was looking for a physically and financially accessible space in Parkdale to hold a panel discussion. Someone suggested PARC, calling it “the most radical social service in Toronto.” This piqued my interest. We booked the drop-in for our event.
I was enamoured of PARC the moment I set foot inside. It was a crowded, open space without obvious barriers. There was music, laughter, and much shouting. Moreover, there appeared to be no behavioural code, no enforced normalcy; just people, in their various feeling states, hanging out. I knew immediately that I wanted to work there. A few months later, a relief position in the drop-in opened. When I came to the interview, I was thrilled to find myself in an energetic conversation with the hiring committee about social activism and community inclusion. I was told that all PARC service-users were called “members” – a testament to the agency’s non-hierarchical spirit. I was hired in May 2008 to my delight.

My first year at PARC was idyllic. I felt comfortable and happy in a way I never had experienced before. It was like I was truly among my people. As a result, I poured all of my time and energy into the agency. On my paid hours, I worked in the drop-in. Unpaid, I developed arts programming, took members on ad hoc outings, and joined in heated discussions on madness, social justice and gentrification in the offices, back hallways and the drop-in floor. I was so immersed in the feeling of the place that I never really stopped to question the precise nature of my role as a worker, or the dense interplay of relationships and power between agency staff and members.

Amidst all of these good feelings, however, I slowly became aware of underlying concerns in the PARC community. Outside the agency, the pace of neighbourhood change seemed to be quickening. Inside, the organization was quietly restructuring, expanding its management team, and beginning to implement new bureaucratic systems. Meanwhile, venerable member-led groups, a cornerstone of community engagement, were dissolving, and overworked staff finding themselves unable to provide adequate resources and support. In 2009, sadness seemed to settle over the whole community. It felt like we were losing a battle I had not even realized we were in.

As the issues within PARC became more and more apparent, I got angry. First, I directed my frustration at individuals, then at the agency itself. In hopes of finding a solution to the growing divide between members, staff and management, I joined a working group dedicated to “anti-oppressive” policy development. A few months later, I created a community arts project celebrating local history and opposing the displacement of the neighbourhood’s poorest
residents. In 2010 and 2011, I committed to multiple union processes that I hoped would open up more critical dialogue within the agency.

During this time, I had also begun work on my PhD at OISE. I came into the doctoral program with no clear idea of what I wanted to write about, but certain of what was off-limits to me. I had made a promise to myself years before that I would never write about PARC. I distrusted the tendency of academic research to exploit the experiences and perspectives of marginalized people, and I thought the best way to avoid that was to maintain a strict boundary between my life as a researcher and my investment in my front-line position. Yet as the pressure to choose a direction for my dissertation mounted, I found myself continually drawn to the relationship between changes at PARC and gentrification in Parkdale. I circled the issue for months, trying to figure out a way to study the agency without addressing it directly. In the end, it was impossible. I had to write about PARC. I simply could not imagine researching anything else.

1.1.2. Methods and Methodology

I began to conceptualize my research while I was still a PARC employee. The initial stages were, as a result, ethically complex and informal. My first step was to talk to everyone I could about the idea – my co-workers, staff in other departments, and many PARC members. I asked questions: How would you feel about someone researching PARC? What if that someone was me? Responses ranged from apathy to enthusiasm. Very few people had significant reservations, though most offered important counter-questions: How can you possibly be objective about your own workplace? What do you hope you gain from this, anyway? Isn’t it risky to go digging around for trouble when social services like ours are already so under threat?

As Howard Becker’s (1976) writes, the question in academic fieldwork is “not whether harm will result but who will be harmed” (as cited in Magolda & Weems, 2002, p. 490). This adage has haunted me. I know that research – indeed, language itself – can never contain a situation. I believe, as Josselson (1996) puts it, that “every act of writing a person’s life is inevitably a violation” (p. 62). The risk of violation pre-loaded into all writing increases exponentially in its destructive potential when we research people whom we already know. According to Carolyn Ellis (2007), research with intimate others “opens up a Pandora’s box of communication complications” (p. 17). “Seldom are we completely open with people in our lives about how we
see them or how we see ourselves relative to them,” Ellis (2007) writes, and therefore “we often fear that those in our stories will be hurt by what we’ve revealed, how we’ve interpreted events or people, or how we ourselves feel” (p. 17). Magolda and Weems (2002) remind ethnographic scholars that “the potential for harm is always greater than we can predict or control” (p. 497).

The questions my co-workers and PARC members asked helped me to recognize that the danger, inherent in all research extends beyond writing about individuals. In reifying the fluid, organic complexities of PARC’s institutional reality in static language, I could do damage to PARC’s reputation, its sense of self, perhaps even its funding. That said, I also began to recognize, the dangers in leaving institutional and interpersonal dynamics uninterrogated. Research and writing allow power relations to become apparent in new and potentially transformative ways. Ultimately, though PARC’s apprehensions and my own gave me pause, they were not enough to stop me. I decided to proceed in this risky and unpredictable terrain from what Slattery and Rapp (2003) describe as a commitment to relational ethics – that is, from a place that is “true to [my] character and responsible for [my] actions and their consequences on others” (as cited in Ellis, 2007, p. 4).

According to Carolyn Ellis (2007), relational ethics always endeavours to ask the question “what should I do now?” rather than make the statement, “this is what I should do” (p. 4). In relational ethics, we allow complexities to unfold and transform us, dealing with “the reality and practice of changing relationships with our research participants over time” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). My first attempt at relational ethics had been to ask the broad community how the might feel about my dissertation research, and to gather as many opinions as I could. The second was to make a formal proposal that took those opinions into account. In the fall of 2013, I approached PARC’s Executive Director to discuss the potential of studying PARC. I laid out my process thus far, detailing my hopes and fears, as well as the potential for such research to benefit PARC. Together, we decided that I could make the work relevant to the agency by generating reports and recommendations, and that I could ensure that it remained transparent and consensual by setting up a steering committee composed of PARC managers, staff and members. After our conversation, I wrote a short explanation of my potential research (Appendix A), which the Executive Director brought to the Board of Directors, the official governing body of the
organization. After some discussion, and a number of emails back and forth, the Board approved the proposal (Appendix B).

I knew that my position in and history with the agency would inevitably shape how people responded to me throughout the research process. Though this would have been true whether or not I remained formally employed, the ethical issues were significantly more dramatic as a PARC staff. I submitted an education leave to the agency, telling people that the research would likely prevent me from coming back, but believing, somewhere deep down, that I would eventually return as a front-line worker. If anything, the fact that I wanted to do this project confirmed to me that I was what we at PARC call “a lifer.” After the first year of data collection, and a massive reframing of my research, this had changed. I realized that if I wanted to do the research I felt would be the most beneficial, I would not be able to return to the agency as an employee. I submitted my resignation in 2014, and completed this dissertation with no formal connection to PARC.

The research methods that I used were structured to be as community-based as possible. Following Jacobson and Rugeley (2007), I define community-based research as a “democratic mode of inquiry” used to “promote inclusion, uncover new sources of leadership, and build community capacity to tackle other issues” (p. 24). Community-based research is guided by the “people who are most affected by community problems”; in this paradigm, such people are included as “partners at the earliest stage of the project, to help define the research goals, to decide how the project will be organized, and to provide their perspective in every aspect of the research process” (Jacobson & Rugeley, 2007, p. 24). Jacobson and Rugeley (2007) call this kind of work “participatory.” I, on the other hand, shy away from this term. I understand participatory research to be not only community-based, but collaborative – ideally, it includes joint ownership over both the data and analysis. I was unable to provide my research subjects with these things. Further, I knew from the beginning that I needed my analytic process – and, therefore, the authorship of the final piece – to be my own. My hope was that the committee I had proposed to the Executive Director, which I came to call the Research Development and Support Group (RDSG), would allow the agency to feel fully consulted in and communicated with in the process of my research, and, additionally, would assist me in creating as grounded and thoughtful a piece as possible. In this way, I aimed for democratic inclusion, but not full participation.
The RDSG was designed to be twofold. First, it would function as a hinge point between me, the researcher, and PARC, the research site. The group could set goals for the organization’s participation in the project, point me towards sites of inquiry that will be relevant to the organization and, eventually, help me disseminate research findings. It would be a mechanism to “process consent,” working to ensure that everyone involved in the research is consistently aware of and able to make choices about their participation (Ellis, 2007, p. 23). Second, the committee would function as a conversation group – a site to collaboratively reflect on the themes explored and exposed by the research. In this way, it could be a generative space for PARC in and of itself, regardless of what the research uncovered.

In order to keep myself accountable not only to the agency, but, specifically, to Parkdale’s poor and marginalized, I decided there should be more members than staff on the RDSG. I knew that this would not guarantee that members would feel empowered to disagree with people who have institutional power over them, but I hoped that it would at least provide a bit of safety in numbers. I decided that the RDSG would be comprised of one manager, two front-line employees, and four PARC members, with several “alternates” to be called in if people were absent.

Recruitment for the RDSG started with managers and staff. I sent out an email to all PARC staff (Appendix C), explaining the research and looking for potential participants, whom I then met with one-on-one to discuss the parameters and expectations for the group. Only one manager came forward for the role; this person was accepted. I chose front-line staff from other teams in order to ensure that we had good representation from PARC program areas and a diversity of perspectives on the agency. I initially excluded people I knew extremely well from participating, sensing that they may inadvertently prioritize my interests over those of the group. Eventually, however, I did invite one close personal friend on as an “alternate” to fill a glaring hole in identity and experience within the group.

Members were recruited through a more fulsome process. I put up posters, made requests to all the staff teams to spread the word, and came to the drop-in on various days to seek out potential participants. In order to be considered for inclusion, I asked that people fill out an application (Appendix D), with the help of a staff person, if need be. I noted that participation was
contingent on an interest in developing group process, commitment for the duration of the research, demonstrated ability to understand the intentions of the project, and some English literacy. I excluded people who self-identified or were identified by me as being in acute psychological or emotional crisis, as well as those who had received ongoing direct survival services from me in my role as a drop-in worker. Approximately 20 people applied and were vetted through a comprehensive interview process (Appendix E). Eventually, four were chosen. Decisions for participation were made on the basis of both interest and group composition. I was sure to choose people who represented a diverse range of relationships to PARC, and created space for two men and two women, and made sure there was a balance of racialized and white people. The group decided together that quorum required, at the very least, that members and staff be evenly matched in terms of numbers, and that men and white people did not outnumber women and racialized people.

Over the course of my research, I held six RDSG meetings. As per my agreement with PARC’s Board of Directors, staff and managers involved in the RDSG participated on their work hours, and received compensation at the rate of their normal employment. Member participants were paid by honoraria at the rate of $25/hour, which was provided in cash after each meeting, from my own personal funds. The member pay rate was set to match the pay of a full-time staff participant in the RDSG. This parity was intended to ensure that members knew that their contribution was equally valued.

Given that the member participants in the RDSG were all people living various forms of marginality (poverty, psychiatrization, etc.) with a pre-established relationship to me as a service provider, I had some concern that this financial incentive constituted “inducement” to participation (Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2010, p. 52). However, PARC’s long history of compensating members for their participation in surveys, interviews and meetings mitigated this risk. Payment for member participation in PARC projects is protocol, and my research followed suit. I was sure to let RDSG participants – both members and staff – know at the beginning of the process that they could withdraw at any point. They would receive compensation for any meeting they attended, even if they chose to leave early, but would not receive compensation for meetings that they did not attend.
My first meeting with the RDSG was devoted to determining what kinds of data I would look for, and how I would ensure peoples’ privacy and protection in the process. We decided that I would begin by collecting information via PARC’s internal archive of documents, which entailed looking at all the texts produced by or about PARC for the purposes of communicating the organization’s role or strategizing its development. I looked specifically at what Lindsay Prior (2003), calls “documents in action” – that is, texts that both express social relations of power (government mandates, funding requirements, conceptualization of peoples’ capacity and diagnoses) and have a direct impact on how those relations are operationalized in daily life (as cited in Bazerman, 2007, p. 147). This included but was not limited to: policy documents; promotional pamphlets, posters and website material; all program reviews, annual reports and strategic plans in agency-wide circulation (including those by external partners) and any newspaper articles written about PARC. I supplemented this with a survey of existing texts on Parkdale. Following approval from the Board, the RDSG decided as a group that all Parkdale agencies, including PARC, would be named in my analysis. All individuals, however, would be anonymized.

I came to this research hoping that I would find that PARC had made some missteps in its recent past; that organizational mistakes could be undone, if only they could be found. My greatest fear was that I would find that we were always doomed to neoliberalization. As I sifted through PARC’s written documents, I realized something odd: These hopes and fears were not mine alone. The agency had already long since been asking the questions that catalyzed my research. Perhaps more surprisingly, it had even suggested both of my potential answers. As I read more and more into PARC’s organizational canon, I noticed that two ideas had long marked internal research and Annual Reports. On the one hand, there was a sense that PARC had gone wrong somewhere in the recent past. On the other, some insisted that state and social domination are simply impossible for a government-funded agency to resist in any substantive way.

My first response to this discovery was to despair. What if I had nothing new to offer? My second, and more thoughtful, response was to take a step back and revisit my analytic framework. I knew that I would be using discourse analysis in order to understand PARC – that is, that I would be looking for how texts emerge within and come to define particular discursive practices. As Sara Ahmed (2012) writes, documents “are not simply objects; they are a means of
doing or not doing something” (p. 85). The *something* that texts – and, by extension, language acts – *do* is shaped by and contributes to the production of discourse, the truth-regime that both creates and constrains the realm of the thinkable and sayable. Discursive practice describes a set of norms, structures and rules for producing, organizing and maintaining forms of knowledge. As Hook (2001) writes, discursive practices are “strongly linked to the exercise of power: discourse itself is both constituted by, and ensures the reproduction of, the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion and domination” (p. 522).

Thinking through organizational history in this way, I came to realize that the initial questions of this research had emerged from within PARC’s discourse. If I continued along these lines, I risked “institutional capture” – that is, that I would be in danger of operating within rather the existing canon of knowledge rather than examining and unpacking it (Smith, 2005). I began to seek out other stories. This required moving beyond PARC’s most prominent figures – the managers, staff and members involved in producing agency documents – and looking for people whose voices are rarely heard.

In the second RDSG meeting, we strategized methods of critical ethnography – how would I make observations about how PARC’s discourse is lived in and through the agency? The RDSG decided that I should go about this in two ways – by observing public meetings and events, and conducting interviews with the PARC community. With the help of the RDSG, I sketched out a broad range of people to talk to – PARC members, staff and managers, current and former, from various demographic populations; representatives from partner agencies; local residents in Parkdale and long-time community activists. The RDSG and I developed a wide ranging outreach process, and I got to work.

I recruited current managers and staff for interviews via PARC’s email and word of mouth. I also attended periodic staff meetings to remind people that I was looking for interviewees. I reached out to former staff and managers, as well as local residents and agency partners in the same fashion: via email, in the case that I had email addresses; via other organizations in person; and word-of-mouth through current staff and members (Appendix F). I decided not to collect any identifying information from any of my interviewees, and therefore provided a detailed informed consent document (Appendix G, Appendix H, Appendix I) that did not require a name or
signature. I gave managers and staff the option of deciding where and when our interview would be held. Most chose to be interviewed on site at PARC, but some elected to meet me at cafes or their homes. Current staff were allowed to do interviews on their work hours compensated at their regular rate. Former staff and community members were given the option of a $25 honorarium for their time, which they could choose to either take in cash or re-invest into the project. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed, and the audio was destroyed.

I recruited members by multiple means. I sent out emails to the PARC internal server, hoping to catch those PARC members whose participation in committees has given them agency email addresses. I put up posters all over the agency and surrounding neighbourhood in English, written Chinese, Standard Tibetan, Polish and Hungarian (Appendix J). I chose these languages because they reflected both major demographics in Parkdale and my own sense of who was already coming to PARC. In retrospect, I recognize that this allowed me access to only a small slice of the non-English-speaking population. It did, however, give me the chance to speak to people who frequently access PARC services but cannot talk to management or staff. Over the course of six months, I made 10 announcements looking for interviewees on different days in the PARC drop-in. I also hired language interpreters from the Barbara Schlifer Clinic (BSC) to assist in making announcements in Mandarin, Tibetan, Polish and Hungarian. Finally, I relied on word-of-mouth to spread the information on interviews through the PARC membership.

In order to mitigate the power differentials inherent in the service-provider-to-member relationship, I decided not to approach or accept member interviewees whom I had provided any ongoing counseling to, nor anyone whom I had seen in situations that I perceived as particularly intimate or vulnerable. Before scheduling an interview, I had a conversation with each potential participant in which I asked them to reflect on the history of our relationship (if, indeed, we had a prior relationship) and gave them a copy of the consent form (Appendix K) to read themselves. For those who identified difficulties with literacy, I offered to read the consent document aloud to them. A few took me up on this offer. I asked that members interested in an interview peruse the document and get back in touch with me with any questions, or if they decided they wanted to schedule an interview. I gave them the option of meeting wherever they felt most comfortable. Many requested a small, private room at PARC, but I also held some interviews at local coffee
shops and peoples’ homes. Member interviewees were compensated with a $25 cash honorarium for their time.

In all of my interviews, I was careful to remind people that our conversation was ‘on the record.’ I urged my participants to only share data with me that they would be comfortable seeing in print. I was also conscious that the occasional presence of interpreters might present an additional challenge. I chose to retain the services of the Barbara Schlifer Clinic because they are versed in the particular difficulties faced by marginalized members of the PARC community. They also have the benefit of working mostly outside of Parkdale, which minimizes the possibility of personal ties to individual interviewees. All BSC interpreters signed a confidentiality agreement after a one-on-one conversation detailing my research (Appendix L). I let all interviewees know that they could withdraw from the interview at any time and still receive compensation. They were also given the option to withdraw their interview data at any point during the research if they saw fit. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The original audio data was destroyed.

It is possible that some of my interviewees may have spoken to me in ways that reflected institutional expectations rather than their own personal opinions. Despite my efforts at underscoring confidentiality, I recognize that many people might have told me things that they felt were required in order to receive services, retain their jobs or maintain our personal connection. I was particularly conscious of the dynamics at play with my co-workers and PARC members. My history with my co-workers inevitably shaped what we discussed in our interview. Long-standing personal relationships created a risk that many co-workers, some of whom I see as friends, may have been consciously or unconsciously motivated to tell me things they expected I would want to hear. Such complexities also existed with PARC members. This was made all the more dense because, as an employee turned researcher, I represented a dual site of power for many people who access services at PARC. In the context of the interview, I likely appeared as both the face of the organization and the face of the academy.

I used a number of tactics to mitigate the complexities in my interviews with members and staff. Some were micro-strategies; for example, I tried to be mindful of the myriad interpersonal issues that arise in researching friends and colleagues by beginning the process with a series of
questions designed to ensure that people felt “in control” (Appendix M). I often deviated from my interview script in order to follow certain threads, and I was sure to provide breaks for people to compose themselves when we engaged in particularly difficult conversation. Some were macro-strategies; for example, while I had initially proposed 20 interviews, it soon became apparent that the work would be more grounded in the community, and more likely to allow for anonymity, if the scope was larger. Over the course of a year, I conducted 80 one-on-one interviews, which lasted between one and three hours each. This allowed me to better conceal the identity of each interviewee. It also gave me a broader lens.

Approximately half of my interviews were with PARC members. Of these, 30% were with people who have accessed services at PARC for one to five years, 30% with people who have accessed services for five to 10 years, and 40% with people who have accessed services at PARC for more than 10 years. Thirty-five percent of my member interviews were with women, both cisgendered (that is, identifying with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth), and transgendered; 42% of these were with racialized or Indigenous women. Of my interviews with men, all of whom were cisgendered, 40% were with racialized or Indigenous men. The total racial breakdown of my member interviews was 60% white and 40% racialized or Indigenous. Of my racialized interviewees, 11% required language interpretation in Mandarin, Hungarian, or Tibetan.

PARC staff comprised the second-largest category of interviewees. Of these interviews, 72% were with current and former front-line workers from each of PARC’s various program areas. The rest were with current and former managers and/or Executive Directors (20%) and administrative or support staff (8%). All of these interviewees were cisgendered, and I interviewed an even number of men and women. Of these interviewees, 17% were with racialized or Indigenous people. I also interviewed PARC Board members, both men and women, and partners from 12 different agencies, as well as a small number of local residents who were completely unrelated to PARC. Finally, I held three focus groups with the help of language interpreters – one with 18 Mandarin-speaking PARC members, one with four Hungarian-speaking PARC members, and one with 16 Tibetan-speaking members of the Parkdale community, many of whom had accessed services at PARC. These groups were all mixed-gender.
Over the course of my interviews, a striking dissonance began to emerge. The narratives I had encountered in PARC’s institutional documents were repeated, more or less, by those at the agency with identities that most closely resembled my own – that is, by PARC’s white activists. There were, however, many other stories that hadn’t been told: stories of frustration, anger and discomfort dating back long before the recent changes, and, perhaps more importantly, stories of sexism and racism within the agency from the beginning. These marginal stories were told by racialized and Indigenous people, as well as many women within the agency. PARC’s discourse, it seemed, had an inside and an outside defined quite clearly by race and gender. This revelation introduced a new set of questions about the nature of resistance at PARC and in Parkdale. It caused me to reconfigure my data analysis – I began looking for the ways that differently situated people reflected on the same periods of time, or told the same stories about PARC. Finding increasing dissonance, I began to compare the variously constituted stories to ethnographic observation and historical research on the material conditions being described. What I found surprised me, and changed the direction of my research.

1.2. Dissonance

1.2.2. Power

I came to this research wanting to understand – and remedy – the growing chasm between PARC’s ideals and actions. As I engaged with the data, however, I noticed that the issue did not lie solely in the gap between our plans and their results. There were also differences across the agency in how we imagine power. For PARC’s primary discourse producers, power had always been articulated as a force applied from above. We positioned ourselves against damaging mandates from the municipal, provincial and federal government; the neoliberal privatization of the Canadian market; and the gentrifying work of corporate condominium developers, national chain stores and high-end restaurants. In so doing, we came to see ourselves as activists. Rarely, however, did we attend to how functions laterally between staff or how staff power impacts the members. Our tendency to look up to power rather than around at power was apparent in Annual Reports, internal documents and the narratives of many of PARC’s most prominent staff, many of whom expressed real shock in our interviews at the presumably new ways in which the agency
had begun to behave. For these interviewees, the dissonance between PARC’s rhetoric and practice seemed both unsettling and new.

Different ideas about power emerged in my interviews with racialized and Indigenous people and many women, members and staff alike. These more marginal voices appeared to take a Foucauldian tack, understanding power as a social relationship – a productive force that occurs among and between agents at various levels, constituting them as they deploy it. “Power,” Foucault (1998) writes, “is everywhere” (p. 63); it is “diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive” (Foucault as cited in Gaventa, 2003, p. 1). PARC’s racialized and Indigenous community members, as well as many women at the agency, seem to have always experienced lateral forms of domination. For these interviewees, the agency had never been a straightforward site of resistance – rather, it had always reproduced racism, sexism, classism and colonial relations in and through its activist identity. As a result, they did not seem to experience profound shock at PARC’s current direction. Notably, PARC’s institutional discourse and many of its most prominent voices never mentioned racial, gendered or colonial dynamics at the agency.

1.2.3. Race and Heteropatriarchy

When I noticed the striking difference between PARC’s main narrative of dissonance and its more marginal ones, it became apparent that I would have to radically reframe my analysis. While I had known that race and gender would be crucial elements to my investigation, I had not assumed that they would be so materially central to the activism that I had identified strongly with. Thinking about activism anew forced me to redefine race, gender, and colonial domination.

Race is a social strategy; a form of power that aggregates and sorts phenotypes, cultural practices, behaviours and material or social locations into categories of being pre-loaded with meaning. It is an “embodied and material event”; it does not describe a fixed state but rather a process that occurs between individuals and groups (Saldhana, 2004, p. 9). Within the contemporary Canadian state, racial logics are inscribed and maintained through explicit means, via racialization, and implicit means, via technologies of whiteness.
Whereas spiritual, cultural, locational and phenotypical differences always exist/have existed between and within groups of people, the contemporary notion of “the races” (colloquially, black, brown, yellow, red and white) emerged from the 18th century Western European collusion between imperial expansion and biological science. Racial hierarchy as such began as an attempt by the natural sciences to justify European colonial and trade expansion. Race logic presupposes white supremacy by design (Da Silva, 2001; Mohanram, 1999). The burgeoning 18th and 19th century disciplines of biology, naturalism and eugenics loaned scientific credence to the already-extant notion that Western Europeans ruled the lands and lives of others by divine right. What was once the proto-racial binary of “civilized” vs. “savage” – borrowed from classical Greek cosmographies¹ – became the scientific certainty of white racial dominance. This was, in turn, used to justify everything from the ghettoization of Jews in mainland Europe to the violent conquest of the Americas as an evolutionary inevitability (Anderson, 1991; Mohanram, 1999; Smith, 2005).

“Racialization” describes the process by which racial groups “are identified, given stereotypical characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions, often involved social/spatial segregation and always constituting racialized place” (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, p. 393). “Whiteness,” on the other hand, refers to the active unmarking of bodies, the making of an ostensibly de-racinated vision of certain people as models for a universal human. While whiteness is “a fickle entity, with the capacity to expand and contract membership as required,” white supremacy is firmly anchored in the fiction of biological race difference (W. Shaw, 2007, pp. 4 – 5). Membership in whiteness is currently related – though not equivalent – to phenotypes such as pale skin and light eyes. Whiteness also, however, represents an ideal/ized relationship to power over non-white people and their land. This manifests as the insistence that the white body is the universal and natural human body – as Mohanram (1999) writes, it is “the Europeanization of Neo-Europes [settler-colonies] that makes the European the Universal subject…a subject who is able to take anyone’s place, to occupy any place” (p. 15). Racialization thus describes the differentiation between the racialized body and the naturalized (though far from natural) white norm.

¹ According to Sibley (1995), classical Greek cosmographies marked “the ‘edge’ of civilization” by “the presence of grotesque people” (p. 51)
² The demographics collected at the time do not specify “whiteness” as an identity category. However, the neighbourhood was 73% “British” in 1951 (Whitzman, 2009, p. 154), and nearly evenly split between “British” and
In its lived complexity, race is often contradictory; it is, as Saldhana (2004) writes, “a chain of contingency, in which the connections between its constituent components are not given, but are made viscous through local attractions” (p. 18). Racialization has multiple effects; just as the history of chattel slavery, lynching and select targeting for the Prison Industrial Complex cannot be reduced to the experiences of WWII internment, neither can any experience of racialization be absolutely equivalent to any other. All racialization in Canada, however, interlocks with, is understood through and finds its coherence in the colonial mandate. Canada is founded on a spatial racial act: For the state to exist, it had to justify expropriation, dispossession and genocide. This required the invention of “The Indian” – an always-disappearing “race” inherently unfit to manage land, language, culture, or life. Race cannot be accurately or accountably studied within Canada without a constant attention to and awareness of the temporal and spatial processes of colonization, which condemn Indigenous people to extinction and racialized people to variously constituted subjugation (Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007).

Race and colonization are thus inherently linked within the Canadian settler colony. So, too, is patriarchy – or, more specifically, what Andrea Smith (2007) calls “heteropatriarchy.” Like whiteness, heteropatriarchy describes a process that simultaneously privileges certain subjects (namely, heterosexual men) and far exceeds the bounds of any individual. It is neither identical to nor separable from the categories of sex, gender and orientation that it appears to describe; rather, it encompasses a shifting set of physical characteristics, modes of comportment and relationships to power that work to exalt certain ideas/ideals and degrade others. In settler colonies, heteropatriarchal ascendency was established in and through originary gender-based violence. As Andrea Smith (2010) writes, “Colonizers did not just kill off indigenous peoples in this land—Native massacres were also accompanied by sexual mutilation and rape. The goal of colonialism is not just to kill colonized peoples—it's also to destroy their sense of being people” (para. 8). “It is through sexual violence,” Smith (2010) continues, “that a colonizing group attempts to render a colonized people as inherently rapeable, their lands inherently evadable, and their resources inherently extractable” (para. 8). Shari M. Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack (2010) add, “Although Indigenous women do not share a single culture, they do have a common colonial history. The imposition of patriarchy has transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women’s power, status and material circumstances” (p. 3).
Heteropatriarchal expectations continue to structure violence against Indigenous individuals and communities. For example, as Chrisjohn, Young and Maraun (1997) explore, both residential schooling and the 60s scoop depended on the de-legitimization of Indigenous kinship structures in favor of white, heteropatriarchal and Christian familial norms. Such norms are utilized not only against Indigenous communities, but also racialized and immigrant families, queer people, disabled people, and many others ejected from normativity, albeit in differing ways.

For David Eng (2010), the notion of (normative) family as “economic entitlement and legal right” (p. 101), and the “intimate public sphere of privatized citizenship...and hetero-sexist morality” (p. 6) are predicated not only on the simultaneous interlocking of whiteness and heteropatriarchy, but also their disappearance from public discourse. The story of the modern individual – the sovereign, rights-bearing, and, tacitly, white, non-disabled, heterosexual subject - that both constitutes and “saturate[s] our material and psychic lives” necessitates the erasure of race and gendered logics (p. 8). In civil modernity, race and gender can only appear “as disappearing” (Eng, 2010, p. 10). Indeed, racial dissonance is central to the modern liberal condition, which David Theo Goldberg (1993) refers to as a circumstance wherein “race is irrelevant, but all is race” (p. 6). The story of intimacy and private life in the global North is a project of racialized violence that relies on “the dialectic of affirmation (of freedom) and forgetting (of race) that defines the liberal humanist tradition” (Eng, 2010, p. 18). Gendered and racial attitudes might shift, Eng (2010) writes, “but the right to exclude remains a historical constant, one ultimately rendering liberal notions of continuous social process illusory” (p. 6).

Viewing power in this way allowed me to see the absence of race and gender in PARC’s institutional discourse as a form of presence. This, in turn, helped me understand PARC as a place that repeats rather than defies white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. I began to recognize that the disappearance of race and gender from PARC is an indication of how deeply important these flows of power are to the material and psychic structure of the agency. It slowly became apparent to me that if such whiteness and heteropatriarchy can be seen as constitutive of agency life, they must, too, influence agency activism.

Over the course of my research, my question changed from “when did we abandon our activism?” to “how have whiteness and heteropatriarchy structured our activism from the
beginning?” Wanting to maintain the transparency I had promised the agency, I began to weave these questions more explicitly into my interviews, my conversations with the RDSG, and my frequent report-backs to PARC staff. It was here that our various orientations to power revealed themselves to be at odds, and real pain began to emerge. I found that introducing questions of racism, sexism and colonial domination within the agency made people very uncomfortable. Many of PARC’s most prominent voices offered significant contestations to my growing analytic lens. One interviewee accused me of entrapment when I shared my initial findings. I received the same question from many different people at the agency: Why are you looking at such minute manifestations of oppression when the bigger issues of neoliberalism and gentrification are at stake?

It is important to note that at PARC, as on the Canadian Left more generally, neoliberalism is typically conceived as exclusively economic. Further, gentrification in Parkdale is understood as a spatial process targeting the poor and psychiatrized; a manifestation of class-based or medicalizing forms of domination. There is no doubt that economic and psychiatric powers have been instrumental in shaping the lives and life chances of Parkdale’s most marginalized. In this research, however, I argue that neither economic nor psychiatric domination can be imagined as race and gender neutral. This does not mean that I ignore class. Neither does it mean that I ignore psychopathologization. To the contrary, madness and psychiatrization are crucial elements of my critique.

In what follows, I use the term “madness” as Louise Tam (2011) does, to refer to “all manner of language and practice that invokes the ever-shifting, porous division between sanity/disorder and rationality/sentiment in the treatment of thought, feeling, and behaviour” (p. 1). I use “psychiatrized” more specifically for people whose behaviours, emotions, or forms of cognition have been explicitly pathologized/medicalized within the “psy disciplines” (Foucault, 2006; Rose, 1999; Tam, 2011). I see both the making of madness and the technologies of psychiatrization as emergent from and within the white supremacist, heteropatriarchal social order which, in Canada, is inextricable from settler-colonial power. Notably, I neither herein generate an integrated theory of mind nor investigate the social limits of madness. Instead, I look at how madness and psychiatric power relate to whiteness and its behavioral corollary – civility.
In her book on racism in Ontario’s midwifery movement, Sheryl Nestel (2006) describes the “deep resistance” white activists have “to acknowledging the limits of our own innocence” (p. 13). For her, this resistance surfaced not only in defensive responses from her interview subjects, but also as her own “nagging doubts about the veracity of seemingly incontrovertible facts and incontestable interview data” about racism (Nestel, 2006, p. 13). She describes her need for “constant reassurance that my claims were not exaggerated, and that what I was describing was indeed racism and not some other phenomenon” (Nestel, 2006, p. 13). “While this doubt has driven me to be exceedingly cautious in my claims,” she writes, “it has also forced me to confront how deeply committed we who enjoy race privilege are to versions of racism that allow us to refuse being implicated in the racialized order of things” (Nestel, 2006, p. 14). I identify strongly with Nestel’s experience. At many points throughout the research projects, I was filled with intense self-doubt, and considered aborting the dissertation entirely. I wonder, in fact, if my desire to contextualize madness in the way I do above is an attempt to manage the doubt and discomfort that I feel in writing this, and answer back to all the people who asked me why I wasn’t focusing on the issues of class and psychiatry. This shows I remain insistentely implicated in all that I analyze. The chapters that follow explore what happens when white dissidents ignore the racial and gendered underpinning of that which we oppose, returning again and again to my own complicity.

1.3. Scaling Resistance

1.3.1. Contributions

I recognize that this dissertation has the potential to do harm at the interpersonal and institutional level. It has already created discomfort within the PARC agency, and ended friendships between myself and other staff. I believe that it also has the potential to make a significant contribution, both academically and more practically to Parkdale and PARC.

This dissertation participates in and offers perspective to the disciplines of critical geography, critical social work and critical race theory. While a great deal of literature has been produced on the colonial, race-making and neoliberal applications and implications of gentrification (Aoki, 1992; Atkinson & Bridge, 2005; Banivanua Mar & Edmonds, 2010; Blomley, 2004, 2007;
Jacobs, 1996; Lees, 2000; Smith 1979, 1996; Wyly & Hammel, 2005), there have been few contemporary attempts to situate social service sites within these processes. Similarly, while there are many useful accounts of the development of social work as a colonizing practice (Badwall, 2013; Chapman, 2010, 2012; Chrisjohn, Young & Maraun, 1997; Heron, 2007; Thobani, 2007), few social work scholars have exposed the particularities of racial and heteropatriarchal power within an urban social services setting. I believe this work can create more space for interdisciplinary investigation and dialogue across and between canons. In particular, I aim to bring the questions of racial and gendered subjectivity into gentrification literature, and a firm grounding in urban spatial relations to critical social work. I hope that the nuance and ambivalence of this work will help unsettle some of the typical stories in urban studies and progressive social services that cast agencies, movements, or neighbourhoods into moral roles.

I further believe that this work may be of use to scholars examining governmentality and neoliberal change in the non-profit field, and to critical ethnography on social movements. My writing is indebted to a number of white scholars writing in self-reflexive ways on the relationship between whiteness and dissident identities. In particular, I hope to follow Sheryl Nestel (2006), Barbara Heron (2007), Emma Kowal (2010), Chris Chapman (2008, 2010), Kristin Smith (2011) and AK Thompson (2015) in asking crucial questions of white activists. This growing discipline is guided by the foundational and ongoing work of racialized and Indigenous women, including Sherene Razack (1998, 2000, 2004, 2015), bell hooks (1984, 1990, 1992, 2000), Andrea Smith (2005, 2006, 2010), and Sara Ahmed (2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2012) among many, many others. I hope I can do justice to such luminary influences, and make some small impact on how we who embody dominator identities can contribute to the work for change, without participating too much in the inevitable self-exonerating potential of such work.

Though I intend to make a contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship, I believe the greatest possible impact lies in Parkdale. I have always intended this work to be of use to PARC and other agencies in the neighbourhood. It remains to be seen whether PARC will take it up – regardless, I hope that it may at least assist other social service sites, as well as individual social service workers, city planners, anti-gentrification activists and concerned residents to hold in tension the various complexities at play in neighbourhood change, in Toronto and beyond.
1.3.2. Dissertation Structure

I began this introduction with a quote from Sara Ahmed’s (2006) *Queer Phenomenology*. As Ahmed (2006) writes, “the lines that allow us to find our way, those that are ‘in front’ of us, make certain things, and not others, available…when we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach” (p. 14). I juxtaposed it with a quote from David Bowie’s “Rebel Rebel,” a song off of his 1974 album *Diamond Dogs*. “Rebel Rebel” celebrates the revolutionary potential of hedonistic self-expression in the face of hegemonic familial norms and binary gender conventions. At the surface, the connection between these quotes and the work of this dissertation is clear – I am looking at the limitations inherent in the rebel identities that we, PARC’s activist subjects, take up. The connection is much deeper, of course, in my mind – I chose both these quotes because they help me remember that the questions that I’m asking about PARC and Parkdale have long been resonant to me as a queer white person. PARC is but one of the many seemingly dissident spaces that I inhabit. While this work does not specifically look to apply its analysis to other contexts – even to the queer spaces that I feel are equally important to interrogate – I do hope that people will find this work relevant in many contexts. Ultimately, I am interested in the broad question of how we as individuals act out structures of power in our relationships to others, and to ourselves. I focus on personal and intimate sites of domination because I feel capable of intervening on them. Further, however, I believe that interpersonal and intrapsychical dynamics warrant investigation because they are inextricably linked to systems of power. That which goes unaddressed at the individual level will manifest at the systemic one, and vice versa.

In order to make the connection between macro and micro dynamics of oppression, I structure this dissertation like a set of nesting dolls, tracking whiteness and heteropatriarchy through descending scales. I show how that which occurs at the national level occurs in a neighbourhood; what we see in a neighbourhood emerges within an agency structure; agency structure is repeated in its built environments; built environments manifest interpersonal dynamics; and interpersonal dynamics, in the end, are micro-manifestations of systemic power. Throughout the entire dissertation, I note that we, as activist subjects, have tended to only look “up” in terms of power; our resistance has relied on our ability to observe, examine and defy oppressive superstructures
hierarchically above us. What we have neglected to do, however, is look “laterally” or, indeed, “below,” at how we re-enact the same structures of domination we oppose.

The chapters each address a site of power, looking at how we as a neighbourhood, an agency or individual subjects have limited our lens to protect our dominance. I begin in Parkdale with a chapter entitled “A Kinder, Gentler Gentrification?” Here, I introduce the concept of the “enlightened bourgeois” as an activist subject, and look at how gentrification can be seen as a form of what David Theo Goldberg (2009) calls “racial neoliberalism.” I carry this concept into the second chapter, “Preserving the Enlightened Agency,” where I explore PARC’s narrative of institutional resistance, finding that it can only be understood as dissident if race and gender are ignored. The third chapter, “Building a Paradox,” looks at PARC’s activist identity as a set of paradoxical desires to be of and for the poor by catering to the private market. I suggest that relationships to agency space have been crucial in both securing and obfuscating whiteness, allowing PARC to repeat the spatial and subjective arrangements of power in the Parkdale neighbourhood.

The fourth chapter, “Resolving the Paradox,” offers PARC’s flagship drop-in space as a site wherein the tension and ambivalence inherent in the agency’s paradoxical desires are worked out. I note that this resolution is only possible for those whose identities and investments are tacitly centred in the space – that is, for white bourgeois subjects. I explore how PARC’s narrative of openness conceals a set of stringently enforced racial and gendered exclusions. The fifth chapter – “Making an Enlightened Activist” – examines the exclusionary construction of the PARC activist.

In the conclusion, I attempt to understand why the forms of subjectivity created and enforced in and through PARC’s discourse are so compelling. I examine the power of constitutive power of goodness and innocence. This dissertation takes its title from these ideas. In the coming chapters, I explore the many strategies – spatial and racial, discursive and emotional – that we who participate in acts of domination use to “make good” with our selves and the world. I am reminded of Robert Frost’s (1914) famous poem “Mending Wall,” about the peculiarities of rural isolationism in the United States. While my research does not explicitly take up Frost’s work itself, I am compelled by both his tongue-in-cheek assertion “good fences make good
neighbors,” and the deeper idea the poem addresses. In his poem, Frost’s (1914) narrator muses on the power of enclosure, and its relationship to social silence. He writes:

Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out
And to whom I was like to give offense
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That wants it down (Frost, 1914, as cited in Lathem, 1969, p. 33).
Chapter 1
A “Kinder, Gentler” Gentrification?
Emplacing the Enlightened Bourgeois

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. Placing Parkdale

At the edge of Lake Ontario, cross-cut by streetcars, buses, and the CN rail, is Toronto’s Parkdale neighbourhood. The visible landscape of Parkdale is a study in contradiction: tree-lined streets boast sprawling Victorian homes side by side with looming, overcrowded high-rises; hundred-year-old churches jockey for position amidst modern medical clinics. The population is similarly mixed: Parkdale’s approximately 35,628 residents include white-collar families; poor and working class immigrants; homeless and street-involved people; young professionals; artists; social workers; and psychiatric survivors, mad activists and other psychopathologized people (Statistics Canada 2012 as cited in Parkdale Peoples’ Economy, 2014, para. 2).

Diversity in Parkdale isn’t new; the neighbourhood has long been uniquely heterogeneous. This complex composition has attracted interest over the years, making Parkdale the subject of scholarly texts, mystery novels, documentaries and countless newspaper articles. From the early 1900s until the late 1990s, this attention focused primarily on situations of strife, as the proximity across difference often proved to be incendiary. For many years, Parkdale was known for its proliferation of social programs, an ebb and flow of extralegal activity and police surveillance; in the early 1990s, a “war” broke out between the rich and the poor (Bowie, 1993). But where other neighbourhoods would emerge from such a time of social cleansing gentrified, Parkdale didn’t. Instead, a surprising coalition arose between anti-poverty activists and social service providers on the one hand, and local homeowners, landlords, and business proprietors on the other. Through a unique community development initiative, the local elite were taught first to tolerate, and then love, difference. Social housing, social services, and small businesses, generally the first victims of spatial embourgeoisement, came to be seen as essential elements of a “vibrant” community (Langille, 2014, para. 1). Parkdalians now “celebrate” the neighbourhood
as an ideal “mix of high and low” (Langille, 2014, para 1). Since the early 2000s, Parkdale has been a model for the City of Toronto’s community development work, its ability to foster social cohesion through “inclusive planning” strategies (Groen, 2011, para. 5). Some writers have gone so far as to claim that Parkdale not only has not gentrified, but that it cannot. This is framed variously as a result of its uniquely mixed housing stock (Aguanno & Kemp, 2012; Findlay-Shirras, n.d.; Groen, 2011), or its remarkably diverse community (Langille, 2014; Teo, 2014; Whyte, 2004). Throughout the mid-2000s, Parkdale was often referred to by a journalist for the Toronto Star as Toronto’s most “gentrification-resistant” neighbourhood (Whyte, 2004, 2005).

In the past few years, however, popular consciousness has changed once again. Citing a sudden influx of condominium developments, and corporate chain stores, the media has identified Parkdale as finally under threat of “radical gentrification” (As it Happens, June 27th, 2014). The adversaries brought together by community development in the mid-1990s have been joined again by the fear that hard-won diversity and social mix – what many call “the Parkdale spirit” – might be lost.

This phased story is now ubiquitous – it appears in newspapers like The Globe and Mail and Toronto Star, in statements of the homeowner groups like the Parkdale Residents Association, and in the posters of anti-gentrification groups like the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and Parkdale Organize! I know it well. I believed it. When I came to Parkdale in 2007, I felt I had found a neighbourhood that was utterly unique. Where else in the world could I eat cheap and authentic Tibetan food cooked by recent immigrants and pick up a fair trade organic espresso at a social enterprise coffee shop staffed by street-involved youth on my way to work? As an employee at the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), I felt not only known in the neighbourhood, but truly a part of it. Everywhere I went, someone (a service-user, outreach worker, or local business proprietor) would say hello to me. I began this research in hopes of understanding what my much beloved community was facing – and how to stop it. I was desperate to preserve the “spirit” that I loved. What I discovered along the way, however, was that this “Parkdale spirit” is not an essence, but an experience. How I felt about the neighbourhood – and how I continue to feel – does not come from what Parkdale is, but rather how I encounter it. It is a situated interpretation mediated by my particular lens.
This chapter asks how my story of the neighbourhood, which is also the mainstream story, came to be. In it, I question what such a story authorizes and what it conceals. I begin with the assertion that the common account of Parkdale’s history and present is, in fact, a story: a discursive production, emergent from and responsive to a set of social and spatial relations that govern what gets told, and who does the telling. The story of Parkdale is what Blomley (2004) might call a “maintenance fiction” in and of colonial domination (p. 122), a fantastical production that follows from and works to generate not only a particular kind of material landscape, but also a form of normative subjectivity: the enlightened bourgeois. In order to understand the influence of such a subject, we must first make sense of how people and spaces mutually constitute and, in turn, delimit the field of possibility.

2.1.2. Mapping Spaces, Mapping Subjects

Though this dissertation focuses on PARC, this chapter does not. Instead, it takes Parkdale as its site of inquiry. I begin here for two reasons. First, I believe that it is essential to explore the landscape of PARC’s emergence. Parkdale gives PARC a name, a population and literal ground to stand on. Moreover, the agency understands itself to be engaged in urban planning and community building across the neighbourhood, necessitating a broader contextual lens. Second, and perhaps more importantly, this research uses PARC as a site to ask an urgent question: How are we – and here, I mean myself and my co-workers, alongside anyone interested in working for justice in the Canadian settler state – complicit in the reproduction of a raced, classed, and gendered social order even in our attempts to oppose it? As a whole, this dissertation hopes to uncover how we inadvertently repeat the kinds of white supremacist heteropatriarchal colonial domination that structure the nation in our micro-practices, the realm of the everyday and, most particularly, the things we do when we feel we have no other choice. In order to do so, I must first name the broader dynamics. To apprehend my own complicity, I must look at PARC’s. To understand PARC, I must look at Parkdale. As I argue below, what has happened in Parkdale itself can be seen to stand-in for the Canadian national project.

Tracking state power through its decreasing scales requires a particular understanding of space. Heteropatriarchy, white supremacy and colonial domination – as the primary forms of Canadian governmentality – are operationalized and enacted in and through spaces both abstract (i.e. the
space of the nation) and material (i.e. the land itself). Spatial analysis has the unique potential to expose the multiple modes of domination that shape the material and psychological landscapes of the everyday. Other forms of critique often seek out a single tributary of power and track it through its manifestations – looking, for example, at how racism exists in the law, or disableism manifests in popular culture. These studies perpetuate the fiction that oppression operates in discrete streams that sometimes intersect. To arrive at an interlocking analysis then requires an active process, knitting together diverse theoretical threads to make the whole cloth appear (Razack, 1998, p. 159). Spatial theory works in reverse; rather than mapping discrete forms of oppression onto the world, it asks us to study the world as it is. A spatial lens is insistently simultaneous: Contradictory experiences must be theorized together if they can be seen to exist on the same ground; the co-constitution of different kinds of violence must be acknowledged if they can be seen to affect the same people. As Lefebvre (1991) writes, “space is always, now and formerly, a present space, given as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and connections in their actuality” (p. 37, emphasis in the original).

Lefebvre’s (1991) emphasis on associations and connections here is crucial – he asks that we attend not merely to the relationship between inanimate objects in space, but animate subjects as they encounter each other and themselves through space. As Massey (2005) writes, “space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations…identities/entities, the relations between them and the spatiality which is part of them are all co-constitutive” (p. 10). This occurs at multiple levels. Material environments anticipate certain kinds of bodies and forms of comportment, influencing how people engage with the world, each other, and themselves. Space also penetrates and is penetrated by conceptual, psychological and emotional experiences that extend beyond what is understood to be the material plane. Space is thus fantastical in a Lacanian sense. For Lacan, as interpreted by Hage (2000), “fantasy” is not simply an imagined or projected psychological goal, but rather a form of desiring that inaugurates and permeates subjects and their material relations. As Hage (2000) writes, “fantasy gives meaning and purpose to the subject’s life, and the meaning and purpose which makes life worth living is itself part of the fantasy. People don’t have fantasies. They inhabit fantasy spaces of which they are a part” (Hage, 2000, p. 70, emphasis in the original). Material spaces are invented by and implicated in the “outer” and the “inner” lives of individuals.
In this way, a spatial theory is also always a theory of people. The kind of human experience that I investigate herein also warrants some explanation. While I look at the work of individual subjects, what is ultimately most interesting to me is the process of subjectification, a relational form of *becoming* and *recognizing yourself as having become* much like what Althusser (1971) calls “interpellation.” For Althusser, people come to know themselves in and through the speech acts of others. People are linguistically, ideologically, politically and spatially “hailed” or called into various forms of subjectivity. This contextually-generated notion of the human subject is enmeshed with but somewhat distinct from the idea of “identities.”

“Identity,” as I use it here, refers to an externality; a position, often fairly visible, within an existing matrix of social power – Black, white, woman, etc. Identity is spatial in that it emerges from and describes a position relative to others in the world. As Jacobs (1996) writes, “a politics of identity is undeniably also a politics of place” (p. 36) – rather, a politics of identity is always a politics of how and where people *are placed.* “Subjectivity” is somewhat different – this term refers to the individual experience of identity where it meets perception and emotion. This is commonly understood as self-consciousness – the experience of *being a self.* According to Foucault, this is shaped by a process of bio power, a “disciplinary form of knowledge” which sets “the parameters for subjection/subjectification” (Thobani, 2007, p. 8). Reductively, this is to say that the way that people experience their affect, consciousness and internal life emerges, in large part, from the structures of power and knowledge in the world.

Importantly, an individual’s experience of their own body, identity and subjectivity can also far exceed and, indeed, defy expectations, logics and available positions. For Foucauldian theorists like Rose (1990), “subjectification” describes the form of governmentality through which our “thought worlds” become objects of self-sustaining state and social power (p. 4). It is a form of external power that acts on the inner world of individuals through the internalization of available tools or technologies for sense-making, self-making. Rose (1990) writes, “Technologies of subjectivity thus exist in a kind of symbiotic relationship with what one might term ‘techniques of the self’: the ways in which we are enabled, by means of the languages, criteria, and techniques offered to us, to act upon our bodies, souls, thoughts and conduct in order to achieve happiness, wisdom, health and fulfillment” (p. 10) When I speak of subjects, I am referring to a
set of available ideas and self-making practices emergent from and within power but not always identical to peoples’ lived experience of their own individuality.

In what follows, I use spatial analysis to look at Parkdale in a number of ways. I examine the neighbourhood as a set of concrete relations between the built environments and the bodies they invite or expel from the material places of everyday life; as a peopled and governed location wherein individual and group identity is created or foreclosed; and as a fantasy production both emergent from and implicated in creating the enlightened bourgeois subject. I explore these two latter elements – the governance of identities and the creation of subjects – primarily through discourse. In the context of this dissertation, “discourse” means the field of loosely bound language products (words, phrases, metaphors, expressions of desire and so on as they are manifest in texts of various sorts) that appear to describe, resemble, relate or inhere to a particular object, place or concept. Discourse is not representational – it does not show a thing – but, rather, constitutive – it makes the thing appear as a thing through the act of naming it such. Discourse is itself a form of power, which simultaneously responds to and creates a field of knowledge naturalized as fact.

I study discourse – and, by proxy, space and subjects – through books and documentaries, newspaper articles, and, perhaps most importantly, the stories of individuals who live and work in the neighbourhood gathered from the 80 semi-structured interviews that I conducted over the course of my research. I examine the discursive products that make up the fantasy space of Parkdale – namely, “gentrification,” and its apparent antithesis “social mix” and “multicultural harmony” – as well as the other stories that refute, or at least complicate, the Parkdale we seem to know. In so doing, I attempt to perform what Said (1993) calls a contrapuntal analysis of Parkdale, excavating both “the metropolitan history that is narrated and …those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (p. 51).

This chapter proceeds in two parts. This first, “told stories,” probes how Parkdale has been understood by those who have written its history – how it is framed in newspaper reports, television programs, and by members of the public who align most squarely with certain dominant forms of power. In this section, I explore the common narrative about gentrification. This “told story” has a particular speaker and a situated audience: the enlightened bourgeois. The
second, “buried stories,” aims to enter the cracks and fissures in mainstream narrative. I look at the visible and violent processes of racial and gendered removal, restriction and culturalization and query how and why they have come to disappear in the told story. Here, I revisit “social mix” and “multicultural harmony” as discourses that respond to and constitute the enlightened bourgeois as a white, masculine figure of power. I conclude by asserting that Parkdale’s gentrification is far from recent; rather, it has long operated in and through what Goldberg (2009) calls “racial neoliberalism.”

2.2. Part One: Told Stories

The history of Parkdale as it is told through national newspapers, television programs and websites, public bodies like the City of Toronto and private entities like the Parkdale Business Improvement Association and the Parkdale Residents Association contains a number of sub-stories. First is the narrative of “turf war,” which separates early Parkdale into two distinct phases – a fractious century followed by a tipping point. Second, there is the story of Parkdale’s enlightenment, the process through which strife was transformed into tolerance. Finally, there is the narrative of contemporary Parkdale, a place which has not gentrified but, rather, has achieved an ideal state of “social mix” and “multicultural harmony” which are only now coming under threat. I present each of these stories below, with commentary on what they reveal about the neighbourhood’s central subjects.

2.2.1. Turf Wars

2.2.1.1. A Fractious Century

The story of a Parkdale divided has deep roots. The neighbourhood began as an autonomous village in 1879. In 1889, it was annexed by the City of Toronto. This catalyzed 100 years of discursive battle between two contrasting images. From the 1880s through the mid-1910s, Parkdale was marketed by City actors as a “garden suburb”: Its massive Victorian estates and easy access to Sunnyside Amusement Park on the shores of Lake Ontario made it “a guiding star for Toronto’s suburban development” (Whitzman, 2009, p. 150). The emphasis in mainstream media on Parkdale as a haven for the rich, however, belied its substantial population of impoverished single men and women. Geographer Carolyn Whitzman (2009), whose book
Suburb, Slum, Urban Village contains the most comprehensive historical study of the
neighbourhood to date, suggests that the “garden suburb” image was little more than a hopeful
invention: a product sold by real estate agents, journalists and local aldermen designed to force
the landscape to repeat the rhetoric. When restrictive social policy, zoning by-laws and sheer will
failed to prevent the construction of ever-more “tenement” apartments that could affordably
house the neighbourhood’s poor and working class, popular discourse became openly
racist/racializing, sexist, disableist and overwhelmingly negative. Thus began the open
acknowledgement of Parkdale’s fundamental fracture.

In the 1910s, a decidedly anti-immigrant moral panic over the “immorality and criminality” of
tenements began to damage the salability of neighbourhoods with mixed housing stock
(Whitzman, 2009, p. 110). Although Parkdale remained overwhelmingly white until the 1980s,2
budding diversity in the 1920s gave the still-extant elite cause to marry their desire to regain a
thriving economy to mounting, socially sanctioned anti-black and anti-immigrant racism and
xenophobia. In 1925, Parkdale became home to the first and only official chapter of the so-called
“kinder, gentler, Canadian” Klu Klux Klan (Whitzman, 2009, p. 134). Their principles were
altered from the American version to fit the context: Canada’s KKK was designed “to advance
and protect the interests of white, Gentile, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon citizens of this Dominion” by
“waging war against Roman Catholicism, Judaism, Negroes, the use of the French language in
Canada, separate schools and the immigration of foreigners” (Whitzman, 2009, p. 133). This first
iteration of the Parkdale Klan was short lived – it held two marches and became embroiled in
internal financial politics before dissolving. It did, however, make a significant impact in the
neighbourhood, revealing the racial dimension of the battle between the “garden suburb” and the
“serious slum.”

In the 1950s, the Parkdale landscape was massively reconfigured by demolition of Sunnyside
and subsequent construction of the cross-town Gardiner Expressway. What wealthy and middle-
class residents remained at this point fled to the suburbs during this period, causing Parkdale to
fully succumb to the “slum conditions” that had long threatened its image (Slater, 2005b).

Following the 1979 closure of the local Lakeshore Psychiatric Facility to the west and the

2 The demographics collected at the time do not specify “whiteness” as an identity category. However, the
neighbourhood was 73% “British” in 1951 (Whitzman, 2009, p. 154), and nearly evenly split between “British” and
non-British white (specifically Irish and Ukranian) throughout the 1960s (Whitzman, 2009, p. 156).
concurrent de-institutionalization of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre (now CAMH) to the east, the neighbourhood became home to thousands of ex-psychiatric patients in the 1980s. In 1975, the neighbourhood contained 12 group homes (Whitzman, 2009). By 1985, this number had risen to only 39, not nearly enough to accommodate the massive influx of new residents (Slater 2005b). This left the vast majority of people, many of whom had been institutionalized their entire lives, to find alternative accommodation in unofficial boarding homes, overcrowded rooming houses or self-contained units called “bachelorettes” (Slater, 2005b).

The closure of psychiatric facilities and policies of de-institutionalization freed up government funding, which was reinvested in sites of “community-based care” (Slater, 2005b, p. 2). Consequently, the late 1970s and early 1980s also saw a rise in social services. In 1971, Parkdale Community Legal Services opened a storefront space on Queen Street. In 1975, a group of residents made a proposal to establish Parkdale Community Information Centre, which opened in 1977. That same year, Kababayan Community Centre incorporated, Parkdale United Church opened, and the Queen Street Parkdale Community Response, the group which would, in 1980, become PARC, was founded. In 1982, the Parkdale Community Health Centre was developed; it received funding and opened its doors in 1984. By 1986, Parkdale was identified by the City Planning Council as the Toronto neighbourhood with the highest social service need (Bowie, 1993).

It is perhaps no surprise that by 1987, scholars Michael Dear and Jennifer Wolch had designated Parkdale a “service-dependent ghetto” (p. 1). The neighbourhood became known for both its poverty and, importantly, its small but vocal population of psychiatized people and street sex workers. Simultaneously, however, another process was also underway. In the early 1970s, developers began to reinvest in Parkdale’s row houses and single-family homes, modernizing their amenities while preserving their original features (Whitzman, 2009, p. 151). Middle-class families, young professionals and artists moved in droves, attracted by Parkdale’s spacious, low-cost “heritage” homes. Many of these new homeowners, especially those with young families, became active in neighbourhood groups that positioned themselves explicitly against the poor (Whitzman, 2009). By 1977, residents had formed the Parkdale Working Group on Bachelorettes, bent on changing city bylaw to shut down currently operated units and prevent the conversion of any new ones. By the 1980s, the South Parkdale Residents Association (SPRA),
founded in the 1960s over “concern for the growing number of poor people in the neighbourhood” and a desire to “preserve older housing stock,” had become a leading voice in the opposition to boarding homes, rooming houses and bachelorettes (Whitzman, 2009, pps. 162; 173). The Parkdale Village Residents Association (PVRA), a 1980s offshoot of the SPRA, devoted its energy to opposing affordable housing initiatives and social services, joined by a newly minted BIA (Whitzman, 2009, p. 188).

In the early 1980s, the KKK came back to Parkdale. Re-formed in 1976 by members of other explicitly white supremacist groups (the Edmund Burke Society and the Western Guard), the Toronto KKK was forced to leave its initial office in the east end after large-scale protests mounted by the Riverdale Action Committee Against Racism (RACAR). In 1981, they set up on Springhurst Avenue in South Parkdale. In keeping with the “kinder, gentler” image of the Canadian KKK (Whitzman, 2009, p. 134), the group’s de-facto leader James Alexander McQuirter considered himself a positive influence and an advocate for responsible governance: “We believe the government should pay for sending blacks back to their own country,” he told a local paper in 1980, “we’re not anti-anybody, we’re just pro-white” (as cited in Bateman, 2014, para. 18). It dissolved within a few years.

In the early 1990s, local homeowners formed what would prove to be Parkdale’s most infamous homeowner groups: Residents Against Street Prostitution (RASP) designed to rid Parkdale of street-based sex workers (Bowie 1993), and the ironically-named Parkdale Affirmative Action Committee (PAAC), a self-proclaimed “voice against drug use and street prostitution,” with a specific focus on driving drug dealers from the area (Kuszelewski & Martin, 1997, p. 842).

In 1992, tensions between homeowners and street involved people in Parkdale had reached a boiling point. RASP and PAAC began holding “stand-ins” or “john-a-thons”: all night pickets along the Queen Street stroll designed to shame and intimidate the sex trade out of the neighbourhood. Police harassment of street sex workers was profound and regular (Bowie, 1993; Kuszelewski & Martin, 1997). Toronto’s only chapter of the vigilante Guardian Angels,

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3 Though the legislated attempt at employment and educational equity termed “affirmative action” originated in the United States in 1961 and was implemented in Canada as “employment equity” through the Employment Equity Act in 1986, the cultural ties between the two nations have long been close enough to assume that there was at least some knowledge of how this phrase is otherwise used.
neighbourhood “crime-fighters” who patrol the streets in uniform (red beret, red jacket and/or white t-shirt with a red Guardian Angels logo) began to make “citizens arrests” of “predatory” drug dealers they claimed were “recruiting children to sell drugs” (Bowie, 1993). All this occurred with the full support of Chris Korwin-Kuczynski, who served as City Councillor for Parkdale from 1985 until 2003. Meanwhile, local tenants and service users tried to combat displacement, organizing against the powerful Wynn family real estate group, notorious for illegal rent increases in their slum-condition buildings (Parkdale Tenants Association, 2014; Whitzman, 2009). Parkdale, it seemed, had emerged from a century of struggle with two warring factions: the rich and the poor. By most accounts, the neighbourhood was perched at the precipice of profound gentrification.

2.2.1.2. The Tipping Point

The term gentrification refers to the political, economic, and socio-cultural spatial process wherein a discrete area shifts from socially-maligned to socially-desirable. Broadly understood, this occurs through “1) reinvestment of capital, 2) social upgrading of the locale by incoming high income groups, 3) landscape change, 4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups” (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2010, p. xvi). In 1993, TV Ontario aired “Zero Tolerance: A Documentary about a Neighbourhood in Conflict” which portrayed Parkdale quite clearly as a neighbourhood at the brink of such a change. Directed and narrated by local resident Geoff Bowie, the documentary chronicles the events of 1992, the year “war broke out” in Parkdale between homeowners and a loose coalition of street sex workers, poor and homeless residents and social service providers (Bowie, 1993). “Zero Tolerance” provides dozens of interviews with Parkdale residents; in an attempt to explore “both sides,” Bowie speaks to members of RASP and PAAC, the Parkdale police, and social service providers and clients. A picture emerges of a Parkdale marked by a small but powerful cadre of rich homeowners, obsessed with ridding the neighbourhood of sex workers, addicts, dealers.

“Zero Tolerance” is notable for two reasons. First, it provides the most wide-ranging, and widely-seen, investigation of Parkdale at a crucial moment in its history. Second, it does so from a very particular vantage point: that of a potential peacemaker. In order to understand how “Zero Tolerance” consolidates the mainstream narrative of this moment in Parkdale, I move
progressively through a series of essential ideas contained within: namely, the intolerable poor, the intolerant homeowners, and, finally, the enlightened bourgeois. I use the terms of “tolerance” rather than, for example, “worth” (as implied in the common language of “deserving” and “undeserving” poor) because this is language that Bowie (1993) himself employs. Further, I believe a discussion of “tolerance” keeps our attention focused on who, exactly, constitutes the centre of this film. I am indebted here to the work of Ghassa n Hage (2000), who notes that the language of tolerance secures power for dominant subjects. “Tolerance,” Hage (2000) writes, “always presupposes a control over what is tolerated. That is, tolerance presupposes that the object of tolerance is just that: an object of the will of the tolerator” (p. 89).

As is apparent in the film’s title, the story told by “Zero Tolerance” is one of tolerance lost. For Bowie (1993), this is apparent in the rage, fear and longing of the homeowners. In Bowie’s (1993) depiction, RASP and PAAC represent what gentrification scholars might call a “revanchist” force. Broadly understood, revanchism is the patriotic, nationalist desire for revenge, the retaliatory urge on the part of a national or social group to take back land lost during a war or revolution. The phenomenon it describes is unique to the modern colonizing nation state – it is associated with white, Western European empire-building or empire-securing moves (for example, the French government’s support for the Treaty of Versailles or the Pan-Germanists in post-WWI Germany). Its use in gentrification studies emerges from the work of Neil Smith (1996), and, later, Amster (2008), Blomley (2004), Granzow and Dean (2008) and Hammel and Wyly (2005). Revanchist theories of gentrification posit neighbourhood transformation as the result of an intentional attempt by the middle and upper class white bourgeoisie to take (or, in their logic “take back”) neighbourhoods “stolen” by poor communities, pushing out (and punishing) marginalized residents in the process. This manifests materially in, for example, “Neighbourhood Watch” groups and Business Improvement Associations that seek to “clean up” the streets by calling the police on homeless or street-involved people. It also occurs through public support for ordinances that criminalize the survival activities of poor and homeless people (i.e. panhandling, sleeping, spitting, urinating or defecating in public), and a general animosity towards poor and marginalized people, and (Blomley, 2004; Hammel & Wyly, 2005; Takahashi, 1999).
It is worth noting from the outset that the revanchism portrayed in “Zero Tolerance” is tempered. The members of RASP and PAAC that Bowie (1993) interviews take great pains to differentiate themselves from the truly intolerant. Many note that they are not opposed to “some degree” of class and racial “mix”; what they want to combat, rather, is the “overconcentration of services” and the “blight” represented by “the drug trade and sex trade” (Bowie, 1993). Indeed, what RASP and PAAC members make clear over and over again is that poverty itself is not intolerable, but rather three specific manifestation of poverty: street sex workers (“prostitutes”), drug users (“addicts”) and dealers. Together, these three figures represent what I am calling the “intolerable poor.” I want to briefly outline how they manifest, beginning with the figure of the sex worker.

The sex worker appears most frequently in “Zero Tolerance”; almost all the revanchist interviewees recount stories of close encounters with her with palpable disgust. She is figured primarily as a danger to family life – namely, to children (“I’m worried about my children hearing foul language and that sort of thing – I must protect their innocence”) and to husbands (“if wives are concerned about cheating, they should check if their husband’s car was in Parkdale”). In a particularly unsettling scene, Bowie attempts to get a member of RASP to empathize with the difficult lives and immediate needs of Parkdale’s sex workers. Her response is dismissive: “Oh, prostitutes are known to be manipulative….You can’t believe anything they say” (Bowie, 1993). This statement does work on two levels: it portrays the sex worker as an untrustworthy trickster, and it establishes “empathy” as a commodity that requires careful investment.

The sex worker is never referenced as a physical threat to the members of RASP and PAAC. Interviewees are fixated, rather, on how the mere presence of her body – and, specifically, her mouth – might ruin the neighbourhood. For the interviewees, sex workers speak words which, by their very foulness, rob children of their innocence and extort undeserved empathy from adults. She has performed (or perhaps will perform) fellatio on the front lawn, in full view of a family. Her open mouth apparently has the power to corrupt, to entice, and to corrupt through enticement. The inherent threat and degeneracy of the sex workers’ extralegal trade is not only inscribed upon but manifest as her body which, while insistently fleshy, can never be whole: Her threat lies in disembodied parts (mouth, bare legs and client’s penis). This apportioning is read as
“ugliness,” an idea which threatens not only the sanctity of the family, but the concept of beauty itself. This is apparent in the story of RASP’s birth: Local homeowner Arlene describes the night of her first stand-in as emergent from this duality. She describes looking at a wall on the corner of Queen and Gwynne, thinking of ways she could “beautify” it with art, when a local “screaming” sex worker accused her of “ruining her business.” “I thought, great!” Arlene recounts, “I’ll stand here all night, then!” (Bowie, 1993).

A similar narrative emerges in regards to what interviewees call “the addict.” Three separate RASP and PAAC members claim to have heard of or known a child in Parkdale who stubbed their toe on a “blood-infected needle” in the playground (Bowie, 1993). Unlike the sex worker, the addict is fearsome not in his (insistently masculinized) presence, but in his absence. His danger is ghostly: He leaves perilous detritus and is a harbinger of more to come. In this way, he remains both disembodied and material. Though AIDS is never explicitly mentioned by any of the homeowners interviewed, the implication is clear: A needle with blood in it is “infected” with AIDS. Bowie ensures the audience makes this connection: After one telling of the tale, he cuts to an interview with a local doctor on the fragility of HIV outside the human body. The actual viability of transmission here is not at issue; what is essential is the assertion that drug users are a priori HIV-positive. The aura of infection queers the figure of the drug user, extending his threat to touch, if not outright corrupt, the heterosexual family unit RASP and PAAC are so eager to preserve.

Perhaps the most fearsome character of all in the discourse of RASP and PAAC is the dealer. Indeed, he is so terrifying that he is outsourced entirely to the Guardian Angels and the police. While the homeowners acknowledge “breaking up the drug trade” as “central” to their mission, they make it clear that they do not feel equipped to confront dealers themselves. Instead, they work in conjunction with the police as “their eyes and ears,” “watching the street” and “reporting.” The vigilante Guardian Angels are clearer in their mission: They proudly proclaim to actively confront the “predatory dealers” who bring “violence” to Parkdale (Bowie, 1993).

While the sex worker and the addict are never explicitly racialized, the figure of the predatory dealer is insistently Black. This is tacit in the homeowners’ speech, but explicit elsewhere in the documentary. Bowie outright names racial profiling, seeking out interviews with local Black
residents and asking questions about the strategies of the police. Most explicit, however, is the police officer who follows a young Black man for the better part of the day on the assumption that he could only be in Parkdale to deal drugs. “He came from Scarborough,” the officer says, “He has no reason to be here.” For RASP, PAAC and the members of the local police, the threat of the predatory dealer lies not in the drugs he brings (no one mentions a fear that they or their children may develop an addiction), but rather his foreignness (he is from elsewhere) and his necropolitical body (he brings death wherever he goes).

Bowie (1993) thus links revanchism to its criminological corollary: “broken windows” or “quality of life” policing. Emerging in the 1980s, this form of police practice shifted the focus of law enforcement from violence against people to destruction of property. This change, according to Alex Vitale (2008), required a dangerous conflation of “disorder” (i.e. the visible appearance of homelessness and poverty that accompanied de-institutionalization, the expansion of the private market and the general dismantling of the social safety net) with criminality. He explains the historical context as follows:

The origins of this urban middle-class backlash date back to the 1960s and 1970s, when middle-class white constituencies began to question the liberal policies that were threatening their economic and social position in concrete ways. Efforts involving racial integration, in particular, challenged peoples’ commitment to the progressive tendencies of liberalism and pushed many more into conservative urban politics….Many whites felt that whatever gains blacks might achieve would come at their expense (Vitale, 2008, p. 60)

While Vitale (2008) explores the US context, the racial component of this change in police practice is common to many settler-colonial cities. Wendy Shaw (2007) offers that the fear of privilege-loss and the “feelings of besiegement” that marked urban life in the 1980s and 1990s can be best understood as “race fear,” wherein “whiteness is continually cast as innocent, as the (fear filled) victim” (p. 64), threatened by the encroachment of racialized bodies.

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4 Drawing from the work of Foucault and Mbembe, Nast and McIntyre (2011) explore two “regimes of governmentality” that they believe work through a hierarchical racializing order: the biopolitical and the necropolitical (p. 1466). Crudely put, the biopolitical is the realm of exaltation, movement, and life. The necropolis, on the other hand, is borne “through displacements, enclosures and containments, both in the context of slavery, the colony and (initially) the nation-state” (p. 1470). Necropolitans are people whom, for a variety of reasons (Indigeneity, racialization, queerness, poverty, etc.), are exposed to the “fatal coupling of power and difference” (Gilmore, 20002, p. 15). Denied legitimate citizenship and, often, even legitimated humanity, they are those people who belong socially to the space of violence, the space of death (Razack, 2000, p.126). Like most social binaries, the biopolis and the necropolis are borne together and require each other - “they constitute a spatial dialectical unity” (Nast & McIntyre, 2011, p. 1472).
Fear is a self-making practice: It works to patrol and preserve integrity of the particular subjects against an approaching danger. Fear is both constitutive (it shores up the boundaries of the fearing self and the calcified image of the fearsome other) and directional (Ahmed, 2004a). This directionality is key. Fear not only moves its subject away from a fearful object; it also moves towards objects of affiliation, resemblance, comfort or desire. As we see in “Zero Tolerance,” the intolerable poor work to generate revanchist homeowner selves and command movement not only away from danger but towards an idealized image of community. In “Zero Tolerance,” the homeowners affiliate – and thereby make themselves a part of – two separate but entwined objects: the beauty of Parkdale’s architectural landscape and the affective territory of the white, heterosexual family. They combine to create an image of the ideal Parkdale resident as white, heterosexual, properties and, while fearful and angry, also essentially loving.

Parkdale’s revanchists, as represented by Bowie (1993), are highly emotional. They are fixated on beauty, comfort and good feelings. “I wanted a street with trees. And old houses,” a young woman shares, “And I fell in love with Parkdale.” “The prices are low but the housing stock is great,” say another, somewhat excitedly, “Very pretty!” One woman attempts to merge her personal identity with the aesthetic character of the neighbourhood: “Parkdale is not a dumpy place! I live here and I’m not a dumpy person!” Another reflects on the community-building power of the “john-a-thons”: “The stand-ins initiated something interesting because we got to know each other. It was great to realize we had rather interesting neighbours, who were interested in architecture and food.” She describes the “nice community events” that RASP held: “People were very angry and suggesting we do violence to the johns. We realized there was a healthier way to go about things. So we held community events, outdoor bistros with balloons, and pretty soon you could see people knitting on the street” (Bowie, 1993).

These descriptions are loaded with significance: food brings satiation and comfort; knitting recalls warmth; and balloons, pleasure. Together, they stir up an image of home. One member identifies RASP’s work as attempting to create a “family values oriented community.” They are also notably full of emotion. Indeed, all of the statements of homeowners are marked by a strong emotionality. The same is true for the service-users and street-involved people Bowie (1993) interviews. Over the course of the film, they express sadness, frustration and loss in equal measure. Most often, though, they express helplessness in the face of intense oppression. “I’m
alone,” a sex worker tells Bowie, “I don’t have a group of other hookers, I’m alone. I don’t have police protection, I’m alone.”

Interestingly, as director and narrator, Geoff Bowie only articulates one personal feeling in “Zero Tolerance”: concern. He begins the film with a monologue about his own experience in Parkdale. He recounts moving to the neighbourhood in the 1980s and finding it “rough” and “lively”: “It was a reality check for me.” “Now,” he continues, “I’m worried” (Bowie, 1993). At first, it is difficult to discern what, exactly, is worrisome for Bowie. As the film progresses, it becomes apparent: His concern is that the elite have lost their ability to tolerate the diversity that makes Parkdale unique. In the final minutes of the film, he once again turns to the camera and offers a concession to revanchist sentiment. “Parkdale risks becoming a ghetto,” he admits, “It needs a mix of people and a mix of income levels. It could use the skills and political clout of the middle class. But it needs a middle class that is tolerant, level-headed and compassionate” (Bowie, 1993). Just before the credits roll, he cuts to a local social service provider, who accuses local homeowners of lacking empathy: They “do not understand the depths of struggle that people experience.” It is in these final moments that we realize “Zero Tolerance” has been designed to manifest what it prescribes: By engaging “both sides” of the “war” in a “tolerant, level-headed and compassionate” manner, Bowie has introduced his audience to the enlightened bourgeois subject that would soon become the primary form of mainstream social consciousness in the neighbourhood.

2.2.2. Enlightenment

2.2.2.1. The Enlightenment Subject

The conclusion of “Zero Tolerance” contains some assumptions that are essential to understanding the ascendant status of the enlightened bourgeois. The first is that Parkdale “risks becoming a ghetto” (Bowie, 1993). For Bowie, a “ghetto” is not just a space of enclosure, but, specifically, of visible poverty. Despite its extreme homogeneity, it is unlikely that he would refer to a gated community on a golf course as “a ghetto.” Further, Bowie asserts that such a space of poverty is inherently undesirable to live in. This helps to clarify why his solution is not, for example, the expansion of social housing and services, or the preservation of material spaces for the poor to conduct their everyday lives. In a subtle way, we can see that Bowie does not
imagine that Parkdale has a problem with wealth distribution or police violence. The problem in Parkdale, Bowie (1993) implies, lies in the emotional and behavioural comportment, the structure of thought and feeling, within the middle-class. His solution is a new kind of subject position – one of “tolerance, level-headedness and compassion” (Bowie, 1993) that I believe is best seen as a kind of enlightened individuality.

I use the term “enlightened” in specific reference to the 18th century philosophical and political movement known as The Enlightenment, which marked the birth of liberal civil society and installed the individual, rights-bearing subject as a primary site of agency and power. Enlightenment philosophy is concerned with such ideas as equality, liberty and freedom and, as such, it is seen as fundamentally progressive. At a common-sense level, these are ideal aspirations; it is admirable that Bowie (1993) would make such an appeal to what is generally understood as peoples’ “higher selves.” It is important to remember, however, that the very idea of “higher selves” justifies white masculinity as the template for human subjectivity. This, in turn, helped to conceal the land theft, labor exploitation, violence and, indeed, genocide necessary for European expansion. These two elements of the Enlightenment mode – ideological progressivism and white supremacist violence – are not contradictory, but imbricated. Their alignment can be seen at the level of the subject.

Within the Eurocentric post-Enlightenment paradigm, subjectivity is synonymous with individuality and self-consciousness with rationality (Blomley, 2004; Kirby, 1998; Mohanram, 1999; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007). Importantly, however, individuality and rationality are not granted equally to everyone; they adhere to particular bodies and elude others. This occurs on the basis of race, gender and disability.

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5 In her article “Towards a Critique of the Socio-Logics of Justice: The Analytics of Raciality and the Production of Universality,” Denise Ferreira Da Silva introduces the concept of raciality as an inherent logic of Enlightenment subjectivity, noting that the very conceptualization of the human subject as a potential conduit for supposedly transcendent notions of justice is predicated on racialization/abjection and, specifically, Blackness as “the other side of universality” (Da Silva, 2001, p. 421). For Da Silva, the production of universality, and the subject who can apprehend it, is a spatial and social process that emerges from and within modernity, shaped by the conceptual matrix of enlightenment science and moral codes. These, in turn, are emergent from and work to justify whiteness. As Da Silva (2001) writes, “racist ideas are not extraneous to the modern imagination but instead circumscribe the zone of operation of universality” (p. 424). The conception of transcendence underlying Da Silva’s (2001) universality is the same as the “higher self” that Bowie tacitly calls upon with his enlightened bourgeois subject.
In the post-Enlightenment paradigm, individuals first come to know themselves through the separation from their mother, a figure who represents dependence, femininity and, depending on the assigned-sex of the child, potentially homosociality (Mortimer-Sandilands & Erickson, 2010; Sibley, 1995). In this way, disableism (in the form of anti-interdependent sentiment) and heteropatriarchy guard the gates of Enlightenment subjectivity from the outset. People come to know themselves as rational – that is, as thinking minds – through a different kind of separation: separation from the body. In psychoanalytic development theory – the hegemonic mode for understanding the human psyche under liberalism – people individuate by developing mastery over their bodies and, in particular, over their “bodily residues” (Sibley, 1995, p. 7). According to Sibley, the desire to separate from the natural realm of “faeces, dirt, soil, ugliness and imperfection” is a “particularly puritanical, western obsession” which “in western societies [has] become the basis for distancing from others” (p. 17). Sibley (1995) writes, “the boundary between the inner (pure) self and the outer (defiled) self….is initially manifest in a distaste for bodily residues” (p. 7). These bodily residues have significant meaning – they represent dirt, ugliness and death that a subject must transcend to become individuated, rational, coherent and pure. As Nast (2011) explains, the Enlightenment subject emerges from a “logic that splits humanity into a hierarchized two: a lower animal nature “outside” the domains of politics and civil society – which correlates roughly with the biological…; and a sovereign human subject that calls the biological (animalized) world to order” (p. 1461, emphasis in the original). These ideas are overdetermined by race and gender: Racialization and femininity are the bodily abject against which the rational mind coheres.

How does this relate to Parkdale? Here, it is essential to recall the fundamentally embodied nature of Parkdale intolerable poor and the emotional expression of the revanchists. According to Lisa Lowe (2015), the Enlightenment subject relies not only on bodily separation but specifically on “a concept of universal reason out of which empiricist methods, liberal political economy, and modern philosophies of history followed” (p. 140). Indeed, the modern subject “acquires knowledge of himself and others through reason” (Lowe, 2015, p.140). What Bowie (1993) calls for in his final monologue is the tolerance and level-headedness that comes from transcending both the (racialized) body and the (feminized) realm of emotions. This is undercut only by his reference to “compassion,” which is generally understood to be a feminine trait. I argue,
however, that the emphasis on compassion can be understood as a further articulation of Enlightenment subjectivity when viewed in light of Canadian civility.

Though “Enlightened subjects” must show a “censorship of feelings,” Goldberg (2009) notes that this must not occur to the exclusion of “refinement, urbanity, sociability and courtesy” (p. 41) – that is, civility. As Razack (2004) explores in *Dark Threats and White Knights*, Canadian national subjects are markedly more benevolent – indeed, more *emotional* – than their counterparts in the United States. Compassion is a national project: Canadian settler subjects know themselves as people from “the nicest place on earth….a peacekeeping nation,” and as “modest, self-deprecating” individuals whose role is to “gently teach” Others “about civility” (Razack, 2004, p. 9). This allows for such masculinized compassionate subject positions as the “traumatized hero,” who Razack (2004) explores as architects of extreme violence and repositories of and for national compassion in the context of the ostensible Canadian “peacekeeping” mission in Somalia (p. 6).

There are profound resonances between Lowe’s (2015) description of the Enlightenment individual and Bowie’s (1993) middle class subject which, I will argue, became the template for contemporary citizenship in Parkdale. I call his form of subjectivity “bourgeois” following Heron (2007), who uses the term to refer to the particular type of power that sits at interstices of heteronormative masculinity, whiteness and middle class stability (p. 6). For Heron (2007), a subject or institution does not need to be middle class, masculine or even white to repeat or exert bourgeois power. Bourgeois power describes a form of comportment and a matrix of state and social power that organizes many of the foundational paradigms of Canadian political life: property ownership, economic growth and, indeed, the notion of discrete individuality. It is both sturdy and diffuse.

Bowie’s (1993) enlightened bourgeois is as an idealized, aspirational subject. He is a man of the political sphere (“with... skills and political clout”) who is not only reasonable (“level-headed”), but also uniquely able to transcend both the object-status of the poor and the emotionality of the rich. As a rational being, he is the best equipped to engage in the intellectual process of determining the precise “mix of people…and income levels” Parkdale needs to retain its spirit without becoming a “ghetto” (Bowie, 1993).
2.2.2.2. The Enlightenment Process

Despite his normativity as a Canadian national subject, the idealized position and comportment of Bowie’s (1993) enlightened bourgeois was not the primary mode of consciousness in 1990s Parkdale. It had to ascend through a process that I call “enlightenment.” This transformation required a unique alignment of state actors and “rebellious” thinkers, which I describe below.

In the mid-1990s, Parkdale underwent a City-facilitated mediation. For most of my interviewees, this was a deciding moment, a hinge point when Parkdale shifted from a site of fracture to a place of tolerance. The Parkdale mediation process was catalyzed by two City of Toronto acts: the passing of a by-law and the subsequent release of a proposal for local “revitalization.” In 1996, the City of Toronto passed an interim control by-law prohibiting all new construction in South Parkdale other than detached or semi-detached residences. This by-law was explicitly designed to put an end to bachelorette construction. According to my interviewees, the by-law was received by low-income tenants and local service providers as a direct attack on the poor. One year later, the City introduced a paper called “Ward 2 Revitalization: Draft for Discussion.” This proposal suggested dramatic and permanent limits on land use and zoning in Parkdale in hopes of “rebalancing” the neighbourhood, quietly displacing poor people and simultaneously drawing in middle and upper class families (Barna, 1997, p. 4).

The “Ward 2 Revitalization” was met with understandable anger from Parkdale’s existing anti-gentrification forces. It also, however, caused outrage amongst landlords, and an unprecedented coalition arose between these formerly antagonistic groups. In 1997, The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), Parkdale Association Against Poverty, People Against Coercive Treatment, the tenants’ rights group Parkdale Tenants Association, the local legal service PCLS and, surprisingly, the Bachelorette Owners’ Association formed the “Common Front” to advocate for bachelorette retention and more inclusive zoning measures. Tensions between the “Common Front” and local home and business owners (including RASP, PAAC, the BIA and other bodies) exploded at an October 1998 meeting of Urban Planning and Development Services. The meeting began with a highly polarized debate between the homeowners applauding the revitalization’s plan to “get the scum out” and the “Common Front” accusing the City of “social cleansing” (Barna, 2007, p. 17). According to the Toronto Star, the meeting
descended into “chaos” when then-Councillor Chris Korwin-Kuczynski was ousted as the Chair and replaced with a member of OCAP.

This moment received a great deal of press – it was covered in now-defunct newspaper *Eye Weekly* as “the Parkdale Rebellion” (Lyons, 1998). What made it a tipping point, however, was not merely the drama of the event itself, nor the coverage in the local press; rather, it what the municipal government did in response. Immediately following the meeting, the City retracted the proposal. A week later, they endorsed an unprecedented community conflict resolution process in hopes that they might “achieve consensus on the appropriate approach …to existing bachelorettes and illegal rooming houses in Parkdale” (as cited in Barna, 2007, p. 22). The City released a statement that read, “solutions to complex community problems are best worked out collaboratively with community associations, agencies and city departments” (as cited in Barna, 2007, p. 22). A mediator was appointed to facilitate a year-long consensus based development process, which was to include representatives from many different sides of the conflict: the Parkdale Village BIA, the Roncesvalles-MacDonnell Residents Association, the Parkdale Village Residents Association, St. Christopher House, Habitat Services, Queen Street Mental Health Centre (now CAMH), PCLS, PARC, a Bachelorette Tenants group, the Parkdale Tenants Association and the Bachelorette Owners Association. This group met frequently over the course of a year. Together, they developed recommendations to the City and changed the course of Parkdale.

The mediation process resulted in a document of compromise. The final report delivered to the City nullified the zoning changes and proposed three primary directions for future work: “1. Licensing bachelorette buildings, pre 1978, post 1978, post 1996, according to the agreed standards 2. Minimizing and dealing with any cases of tenant relocation 3. Ensuring on-going maintenance and standards” (as cited in Barna, 2007, p. 30). These recommendations were to be implemented by the tandem work of a newly-formed Parkdale Housing Committee, designed to give consistent community input to the city on housing issues in Parkdale, and the Parkdale Pilot Project, which would license and monitor previously illegal bachelorettes. Both were comprised of landlords, tenants, community stakeholders, and social service users.
The Parkdale Housing Committee and Parkdale Pilot Project were unique in Toronto’s history; the City’s first truly mixed group tasked with preventing gentrification. According to those involved, however, their efforts were stymied by the increasingly restrictive policies of then-Ontario Premier Mike Harris. In 1996, the provincial government passed the Tenant Protection Act, which decimated rent control and gave landlords financial incentive to push tenants out (L.B. Smith, 2003, p. 13). A spate of what my interviewees call “suspicious” rooming house fires in the late 1990s led to the permanent closure of many boarding homes; a few years later, many of this properties re-entered the market as single-family homes. Simultaneously, the Drake and the Gladstone, two local “fophouses,” which rented rooms by the week, were redeveloped into boutique hotels. As a result, despite the concerted efforts of the Parkdale Housing Committee and the Pilot Project, Parkdale experienced a decrease in low-income apartments (Slater, 2004) and a net-loss of 12 rooming houses (Parkdale Peoples’ Economy, 2012) and a general displacement of poor people between 1997 and 2012. The Housing Committee and Pilot Project were successful, however, in two significant ways. First, they were able to license a large number of rooming houses, thereby both preserving them and enforcing higher living standards. Second, they assisted Parkdale into its current state of civility. Many in the neighbourhood look back at the mediation process and subsequent committee initiatives as a moment of real change. As a long-time activist recounts:

I maintain that the fight– back – the Parkdale Rebellion – slowed gentrification down. It didn’t stop it, but it made it must slower. It forced the NIMBYs to step back and be nice – at least, surface-nice. The sort of classic NIMBY-type, “we don’t want those druggies in our neighbourhood,” realized they couldn’t say that in public, at least not as easily as before. It changed peoples’ minds.

This sentiment is echoed by participants in the process, including those with ties to homeowner organizations. A representative from the Roncesvalles MacDonnell Residents Association muses: “When you see how life is on a daily basis for people on the margins, you can’t objectify it and just say they should be kicked out, because where are they going to go?” (in Barna, 2007, p. 34).

In a few short years, widespread anger and fear appears to have been turned to tolerance and empathy. While the exact mechanism and moment of this change was likely quite different from every individual involved, the “Parkdale Rebellion” and subsequent mediation appear to have
reoriented public discourse. Whereas for decades what my interviewee calls “classic NIMBYism” was a common, by the late 1990s everyone, even “the classic NIMBY-type” had to be “nice.” By the early 2000s, the formerly marginal figure of the tolerant, level-headed, compassionate middle class had become the main spokesperson for Parkdale, as tolerance slowly but surely turned into a shared experience of harmony.

2.2.3. Harmony

2.2.3.1 Multiculturalism and Social Mix

The years following the “Parkdale Rebellion” were understood by many as a test of the neighbourhood’s newfound tolerance, as diversity began to increase exponentially. In the early 1990s, immigrants from Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Guyana, India, Pakistan, China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Somalia, the Balkans and Trinidad and Tobago moved to Parkdale (Urban Planning and Development Services, 1998). In the mid-1990s, a large number of Tibetan refugees from China and India came to the neighbourhood; the number increased throughout the mid-2000s. This period is remembered as “exciting” by many of the same people who might have felt opposed to increasing mix just 10 years prior. As a manager at a local business initiative tells me that “the influx of new immigrants has been a great benefit to the neighbourhood.” City Councillor Gord Perks’ website describes how “new immigrants” add to “the vibrancy of the neighbourhood.” The emotional dimension of this discourse is perhaps best captured by a white professional, who tells me:

When I walk around Parkdale now, I see a lot of great cultural diversity… you know, shops and restaurants and people that you see on the streets…and so, that makes me really happy. We see so much diversity and beauty in Parkdale because we’ve had so many different immigrant groups bring their knowledge, their culture and their foods to the neighbourhood. It’s so rich in that.

This sentiment has become so pervasive that even the Parkdale Business Improvement Association has begun to sell cultural diversity as a part of Parkdale’s charm. The BIA website reads, “The presence of a large immigrant community has done much to create the distinct personality that Parkdale Village is known for, making it a multicultural destination with unique shops and restaurants that represent its diverse community” (“About the BIA,” 2015, para. 5). New immigrant communities – and, in particular, Parkdale’s Tibetan population – are mentioned
consistently as Parkdale’s “strength” (Martinez, 2010, p. 5; “Toronto Community Garden Network,” 2015, para. 4), echoing the City of Toronto motto “Diversity: Our Strength” (“City Hall,” 2015, para. 15). Indeed, it is Parkdale’s “multiculturalism” that anchors the vision of the neighbourhood’s “vibrant,” “diverse” and “unique” spirit (“About the BIA,” 2015, para. 5).

Social mix - that is, the idea of mixed-class, mixed-use neighbourhoods as anchors for community strength – has also become a central element of Parkdale’s contemporary identity. It is anchored by a mixed housing stock. Whereas in the early 1990s, architectural diversity – and, particularly, the existence of service sites amidst single-family homes – was seen as blight, now the close proximity between different kinds of built environments is understood as an expression of beauty. This sense hinges on the presence of artists, whom many Parkdalians cite as central to creating links between the rich and the poor. In 1994, in the midst of Parkdale’s “war,” the Parkdale Village Arts Collective was founded. In a 1998 deal with the Parkdale Village BIA and City of Toronto, PVAC moved into an abandoned police station at 1313 Queen Street West, becoming Gallery 1313. The gallery marked the first large artist-run space on the Queen Street main stretch. The space remains at the epicentre of arts in the neighbourhood. In an interview with the website ARToronto, its founder and curatorial director brags that Parkdale currently has “the highest concentration of cultural workers in the country” (Scarpati, 2013, para. 7).

Many in the neighbourhood cite the increase in artists and immigrants as an entry-point for an increased understanding of Parkdale’s large population of deinstitutionalized people. In the early 1990s, it was typical for Parkdale’s homeowners to refer to psychiatrized people as “real low life, pathetic creatures” who “checked out of the mental hospital too early” (as cited in Finkler, 2014, p. 234). Parkdale was home to Canada’s first Psychiatric Survivor Pride Day in 1993. In the early 1990s, these annual events were small-scale and sparsely; they were held inside community centres, away from the often hostile landscape of Queen Street. Following the “Parkdale Rebellion” and subsequent cultural revitalization, however, these events were expanded. By the early 2000s, it was a week-long celebration. In 2002, it became “Mad Pride,” rebranding itself as “an arts, culture and heritage festival created by psychiatric survivors, consumers, mad people, and folks who the world has labeled ‘mentally ill’” (“About Mad Pride,” 2014).
Since its renaming, “Mad Pride” has become a significant part of Parkdale’s arts and culture identity. Events are held throughout Parkdale; they culminate in a large-scale public march and celebration down Queen Street. News outlets like BlogTO (Baek, 2009; Harris, 2009; Spurr, 2010; Steidman, 2013), Now Magazine (Eisenberg 2013; Gostick 2013) and the Toronto Star (Baird 2014; Gallant 2012a, 2012b) regularly give Mad Pride significant spreads. In 2003, the City of Toronto released an official proclamation designating a week in mid-July “Mad Pride Week.” In 2010, then-MPP Gerard Kennedy designated Parkdale-High Park Canada’s first “mental health stigma-free zones”: “A neighbourhood that is inclusive, respectful and supporting of all its members, including our neighbours living with mental health challenges” (“About the Program,” 2010, para. 1). In the past 10 years, Parkdale has come to see madness as part of its cultural landscape. As a member of the Parkdale Residents Association explains:

> The halfway houses, rooming houses and stuff – I’ve talked to the neighbours in that area who have learned to appreciate the people who live in those buildings. They know that being crazy is not necessarily a bad thing. They’re not gonna hurt you, they’re just gonna talk to themselves and holler in the street. That’s the neighbourhood. That’s diversity. It’s the Parkdale spirit.

The lasting impacts of the “Parkdale Rebellion” are perhaps most readily seen in the notion of the “Parkdale spirit,” a shared sense of civic responsibility and cross-cultural community that pervades even the most mainstream institutions. The Parkdale Village BIA, for example, which once understood itself as the voice for the homeowners, is now conceived as a “community organization,” working “collectively” with “local businesses” and other interest groups “to be catalysts for civic improvement.” (“About the BIA,” 2015, para. 1). The current Executive Director tells me:

> There used to be tensions between parts of the community and the BIA in the past. But now, businesses are much more aware of the neighbourhood that they’re in, and I think have learned to embrace all the differences in the community. People are much more open to, whether it’s multiculturalism or different incomes now. A business owner who maybe 10 years ago would have asked someone panhandling outside of their storefront to get the heck out of here, that person today might be on first name terms with them, allow them to be out front, ask them how they’re doing…maybe they’re even the ones that are serving them breakfast at some of the breakfast programs in the community.

> When someone gets to know Parkdale’s history, they realize how much people embrace difference. There’s a reason that people want to live in this neighbourhood,
even when they know that there’s public housing across the street. They choose, they make that decision. Many people who live in the neighbourhood are advocates for the neighbourhood. I think it’s probably just taken time for people to protect and stand up for the neighbourhood.

While this interviewee gestures at diversity within the community, it is clear that the central concern is with those who might understand, consume or promote that diversity – that is, enlightened bourgeois. The selective use of the word “people” is telling. “People are much more open to, whether it’s multiculturalism or different incomes…now,” this interviewee says. “There’s a reason that people want to live in this neighbourhood, even when they know that there’s public housing across the street. They choose, they make that decision.” Those empowered with both rationality and economic freedoms of choice become the central figures in contemporary Parkdale.

This quotation also reveals what Ghassan Hage (2000) identifies as the “then we were nasty, now we are nice” polarity common to “tolerance” building processes (p. 105). For Hage (2000), this binary distracts from the fundamental proximity between the “nasty” and “nice,” the “intolerant” and the “tolerant.” Tolerance does not disturb the balance of power. As Hage (2000) puts it, “those who were and are asked to be tolerant remain capable of being intolerant or, to put it differently, that the advocacy of tolerance left people empowered to be intolerance. When they wished and felt capable of exercising their power to be intolerant, people did” (p. 85, emphasis in the original). Tolerance, thus, “is a strategy aimed at reproducing and disguising relationships of power in society, or being reproduced through that disguise. It is a form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism” (Hage, 2000, pp. 85 – 86). As will become increasingly apparent, in Parkdale this symbolic violence was anchored by material processes of removal, restriction and culturalization.

2.3. Part Two: Buried Stories

Parkdale’s recent history seems straightforward enough at first: The explosion of tensions in the early 1990s created an unprecedented opportunity for open dialogue. With everyone’s opinion out in the open, a seasoned City facilitator was able to step in and implement a process which, while imperfect, harnessed the power of proximity to bring about mutual respect and understanding. This newfound sense of community was tested with the influx of new immigrants
in the late 1990s and the main streaming of Mad Pride in the mid-2000s; with the help of artists and other cultural workers, it proved not only resilient, but increasingly powerful. Indeed, it laid the groundwork for the idealized social mix and multiculturalism of today. Not only does this read rationally, at least at first blush; it is also extremely compelling. It resonates with my personal experiences of the neighborhood. But this story – my story – is not the only one.

In what follows, I explore other stories of Parkdale’s recent history, those that are not commonly foregrounded. For the most part, these stories are pulled from my interviews with those local residents whose voices do not often appear in newspapers or the minutes of BIA or PRA meetings. While they offer a counterpoint to the mainstream narrative, their scope is limited by the particularly situated confines of my research. For example, I did outreach for these interviews by word-of-mouth, emails and posters circulated through my contacts within local social services. My interviewees were thus limited to people who have some peripheral relationship with Parkdale services and/or have the ability to read posters in English, written Chinese, Tibetan, Polish and Hungarian. I only speak English, and only secured interpreters who spoke Mandarin, Tibetan, Polish and Hungarian. I have attempted to broaden my scope by reading as many alternative accounts of the neighbourhood as possible, but it remains restricted by my own vision.

Listening to the buried accounts of Parkdale’s development reveals two essential dynamics. First, the late 1990s and early 2000s were not simply marked by reconciliation and growing tolerance, but also the violent removal of sex workers, drug users, drug dealers and many racialized people from the neighbourhood; the strict emplacement of the immigrants deemed tolerable to a commoditized multiculturalism; and the de-politicization and subsequent culturalization of the movements of psychiatrized people. Second, these acts of removal, restriction and culturalization were rendered unspeakable in and through the process of “enlightenment.” These dynamics lead me to believe that the ascendancy of the enlightened bourgeois subject has become – or, at least, results from – a larger project of heteropatriarchal domination, white supremacy and colonial entrenchment that casts significant doubt on the idea that Parkdale is only now under threat of gentrification.
2.3.1. Spatial Violence, Social Violence

2.3.1.1. Removal

The mainstream story of Parkdale’s development has a notable hole. The sex worker, addict, and dealer, central preoccupations of revanchist sentiment in the early 1990s, seem to have disappeared entirely from popular consciousness. When I asked representatives of the BIA and PRA what changes they had seen in Parkdale over the past 20 years, I received a consistent answer: In the early 2000s, the neighbourhood became more diverse, more socially mixed, and more pleasant to live in. When I asked boarding home and rooming house residents, service users, and homeless people what they had seen in Parkdale, I heard something quite different. These people told me immediately about those the neighbourhood had lost. “There used to be dealers on Queen Street,” one interviewee tells me. “The drug users have disappeared,” says another. Many explained that “all the working girls are gone.” Whereas the mainstream story imagines the late 1990s as a time of growing tolerance, many of Parkdale’s most marginalized residents remember it as an era of intense surveillance, policing and murder. Indeed, the figures that appear in Bowie’s (1993) “Zero Tolerance” are significant in the stories of the poor.

Many of Parkdale marginalized residents remember the 1990s and 2000s as a time when sex workers were violently swept from the streets. As one recalls: “The police used to have that paddy wagon for the working girls. They’d go around and just pick girls who were standing on the corner. This is how morbid, how stupid, how wild it was. Like cattle, bang!, throw ‘em in the van.” Others remember the police officer who would assault sex workers in plain sight. Former community legal workers Kuszelewski and Martin (1997) write about pervasive stories of an officer known as “sperm whale” who would use his handgun to rape street sex workers with impunity (p. 849). In the mid-2000s, police began to target clients rather than workers; a CBC news article from March of 2006 details an initiative the Toronto Police Department referred to as “Operation Clean-Sweep.” Instigated by complaints by Parkdale residents, the four-day operation resulted in the arrest of 130 “suspected johns” and nine “alleged prostitutes” (CBC News, 2006, para. 1). The pressures of such targeted policing between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s made it increasingly difficult to work in Parkdale’s sex trade. As my interviewees recount,
many sex workers left Parkdale for elsewhere in the city. “Either that,” one tells me, “or they would get sick or they would die.” Another interviewee remembers a string of very public murders: “We had a rash of sex trade workers who were being disappeared. They would be assaulted, or be they would be killed.”

Between 1994 and 1998, at least 12 Toronto sex workers were the victims of homicide (Krivel & Duncanson, 1998). Four of these women were Parkdale residents, three of whom were found in the neighbourhood. In July of 1994, the body of Julieanne Middleton, a 23-year-old Black mother, was discovered nearly nude on the shores of Lake Ontario. Three months later, police found the clothed body of Virginia Lee Coote, a 33-year-old white woman and long-time Parkdale resident. In October 1997, Darlene MacNeill, a 35-year-old white woman and mother of five, was found near Exhibition Place (Stancu, Edwards & Poisson, 2010). These murders were so-called “cold cases” for over 15 years. Sex workers continue to be murdered in Parkdale: In 2012, 59-year-old South Asian sex worker Rita Adams was killed in her rooming house on Maynard Avenue (Robertson, 2012). As of 2015, her killer still had not been identified.

This form of violence against street-level sex workers is not uncommon. It is characteristic of the job. Explanations for the vulnerability of street sex workers run the gamut: For some, the dangers arise solely from the criminalization of such work in Canada. For others, settler-colonial heteropatriarchy makes the sex trade a site of unavoidable abjection and exploitation for workers. In either case, what is notable in Parkdale is not that sex workers were criminalized, displaced and murdered, but rather that this process did not seem to register on the public consciousness.

A similar dynamic can be seen with regards to Parkdale’s drug dealers. Over the course of the 1990s, Parkdale dealers fell victim to targeted policing, backed up by new laws. In 1997, the Federal government amalgamated and streamlined the previous assortment of drug laws into the

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6 A process which did not necessarily resolve the danger; in fact, it was sometimes amplified by relocation. As a social services manager with ties elsewhere in the city describes, “I think there were a lot of safety issues for people who were street involved at that time, women doing sex work, and there was a lot of police activity, police violence – the women I worked with on Weston Road were actually swept out of Parkdale into a much more dangerous situation, into much more violence”

7 Interestingly, though Middleton’s Blackness is never explicitly mentioned in the many CBC, Toronto Star and CityTV articles about her murder, every article mentions that she was found “wearing only a bra,” whereas Coote is described “fully clothed” and MacNeill’s state of undress is never indicated. Following countless Black scholars, I would argue that the sexualization of her corpse is inextricable from her Blackness; that the erotic power of racialized violence endemic to white supremacy is apparent in these casual descriptions.
Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA). The CDSA created a multi-tiered drug ranking system referred to as “schedules,” and prescribed heavy sentences and/or fines for possession, trafficking, exportation and production of each. Targeted policing of drug dealers ramped up significantly with the inception of the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS). Born out of the 2005 “summer of the gun” and the shooting death of white teenager Jane Creba, Toronto Police Services website describes TAVIS as “an intensive, violence reduction and community mobilization strategy intended to reduce crime and increase safety” (“TAVIS,” 2015, para. 1). In 2006, Parkdale was identified as a “neighbourhood of special interest” to TAVIS. This status was championed and renewed by then-Councilor Sylvia Watson. Though TAVIS is designed to intervene on “violence,” the association of the drug economy with gang and gun activity gave police officers cause to focus their energies on arresting Parkdale dealers. This process does not appear in the stories of neighbourhood enlightenment.

During this same period of time, drug users began to vanish from Queen Street. Some of this is due to structural changes to the environment – most notably, the removal of places for drug users, homeless people, and the poor, in general, to socialize, sit, sleep and/or use substances. In 2005, for example, the Parkdale Village BIA, in partnership with the City of Toronto’s Economic Development program, commissioned a piece of public art to be installed in the busiest part of Parkdale, next to a Queen Street streetcar stop, a block away from the Lansdowne bus, in front of the public library at the corner of Queen and Cowan Avenue. The final design – a $300,000 metal globe called the World Peace Monument – called for the removal of a bank of benches in this highly trafficked spot. In response to public outcry, the BIA defended the decision: “[The existing benches] were being slept on all the time and were a magnet [for drug dealers and users]. Benches may be the best way to bring a community together for other neighbourhoods, but Parkdale Village is unique. Benches are currently not a priority.” (Zankowicz, 2006)

By removing benches, the World Peace Monument colluded with the existing legislative apparatus to criminalize the activities of daily living for the poor. With nowhere to sit, people were banished from Queen Street to the high-rises and boarding homes to the south, where there are few pedestrians, let alone street outreach workers. This opened them up to incredible
vulnerability; my interviewees note that after this period, many drug users began to die on Parkdale’s side streets with little public response, let alone outrage.

Like sex workers, drug users experience what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) calls “group differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (p. 28). According to the Toronto Drug Strategy, there were 1,923 drug-induced deaths between 2002 and 2012, an average of 192 a year (Toronto Drug Strategy Implementation Panel, 2014, p. 20). A Black PARC member involved in the local drug trade speculates that the police were responsible for a number of deaths in the drug-using community in the late 90s and early 2000s:

> There’s no trust in the police. It changed when the police started killing people. It changed when, I’m sorry to say this – this is what I heard on the street – but it changed when drug users started winding up dead. In the 1990s, a lot of drug users – they keep putting them in jail, they come out, they keep putting them in jail, they come out – and then people die all of a sudden.

The fact of disparity between the stories of the mainstream and the stories of the marginal is unsurprising. The nature of this dissonance, however, is perplexing. The abjection of the sex worker, the drug dealer and the drug user were absolutely crucial in forming the identity of the middle-class homeowner of the early 1990s. In the wake of the “Parkdale Rebellion,” however, they disappeared from both the landscape and discourse. Why? As I argue below, these processes of removal and violence could not be spoken of because they would destabilize the civility so crucial to contemporary Parkdale. The neighbourhood elite did, however, require some figures of marginality in order to define themselves. They found these in what I call the “tolerable poor.”

2.3.1.2. Restriction

Parkdale, so the story goes, diversified in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This era is narrated as a time of arrival, when the immigrant appeared as the figure of a new multicultural discourse. Yet Parkdale has always been home to immigrants. Though the neighbourhood remained predominantly British-identified until the 1950s, by the end of the 1920s there were enough Ashkenazi Jewish and Italian residents to make it “fertile ground” for the first Canadian chapter of the Ku Klux Klan (Whitzman, 2009, p. 132). In the 1940s, a so-called “invasion” of poor Polish and Ukrainian immigrants and widespread associations between immigrant communities, overcrowded tenement apartments and criminality led to Parkdale being deemed a “serious
slum” in the mainstream media (Whitzman, 2009, p. 32). By the 1950s, Eastern and Western European immigrants comprised 27% of the neighbourhood’s population and a large part of its industrial workforce (Whitzman, 2009, p. 23; pp. 154 – 156). These people clearly do not figure into the narrative of immigrant arrival.

A review of newspaper articles on Parkdale reveals that the celebrated figure of the immigrant that appeared in the 1990s and 200s refers nearly exclusively to members of the Tibetan community. In a 6-page spread on Parkdale’s revitalization for Porter Airlines’ inflight magazine re:Porter, the neighbourhood is described as “a diverse community of artists and immigrants – including a massive Tibetan diaspora” (Mintz, 2013, p. 7). Parkdale is referred to as “Little Tibet” by The Toronto Star (Bain, 2010; Loriggio, 2008; Taylor, 2009), and Students for a Free Tibet (2013). In my interviews with non-Tibetan Parkdale residents, many people responded to my questions about “multiculturalism” by talking solely about Tibetan immigrants. In an exemplary moment, a PARC member shares a sense of how Canada has changed over the past 20 years, saying “there’s been an increase in the number of newcomers to the country. I think we see a lot of that in Parkdale; namely, the Tibetans.”

What makes the Tibetan community the locus of this discourse? It’s not numbers alone: While Tibetan people constitute a significant proportion of the demographic; they are not always the most populous group. It is not necessarily the ubiquity of Tibetan people in the neighbourhood, but the particular ways in which they are logged into the mainstream articulation of the collective Parkdale psyche that makes them central. For Parkdale, Tibetans are a happy, peaceful people whose value to the community is measured in their cultural contributions. As a supportive housing tenant notes, “I notice there’s a lot more Tibetan people and stuff, but they don’t do nobody no harm, with their little rosary beads and stuff. They’re peaceful people. I love their food.”

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8 The 2011 Neighbourhood Census / NHS Profile of South Parkdale identified 2,075 Tibetan folks in the neighbourhood, a number closely followed by 1,165 immigrants from the Philippines. The census also notes 1,750 Black-identified people in Parkdale, many of whom, from anecdotal evidence gathered in my interviews, are likely immigrants (Toronto Social Policy, 2014b, p. 4). Between 2009 and 2012, however, Hungarian Roma people outnumbered all other immigrants in the neighbourhood by a margin – a 2014 Toronto life article put the 2011 Roma population at 4,423.
The image of the “happy, peaceful” Tibetan is pervasive in Canadian media. It is consolidated in Parkdale in the figure of the restaurateur, whose “cluster” of restaurants along Queen Street proudly display “colourful altars” with their “simple offerings” and serve food “steeped in tradition.” (Bain, 2010) This is perhaps most apparent in Jennifer Bain’s 2010 Toronto Star article “Eating Tibetan to Preserve a Culture,” which provides evocative descriptions of the preparation of many of the dishes served in Parkdale Tibetan restaurants, while noting the “honour bound” work of cultural preservation through food (Bain, 2010, para. 1). Sasha Chapman’s 2008 Globe and Mail article “Tibetan Delights Await in Parkdale, Toronto’s Shangri-La” similarly uses James Hilton’s classic Orientalist text (which also happens to be the name of a Parkdale restaurant) to paint the neighbourhood as an exotic food-lover’s paradise, a mythical utopia of simple yet transcendent pleasure.

The narrative of “the immigrant” in Parkdale is thus remarkably restricted. It does not include the massive number of immigrants who arrived before the 1990s. It similarly has no room for African and Caribbean immigrants and other Black Canadians, who continue to be linked with violence or the drug-trade in public discourse. Despite the large number of Caribbean roti shops and in Parkdale and the neighbourhood’s proximity to the Caribana festival (now called the Scotiabank Toronto Caribbean Carnival), most of the media coverage specifically linked to the Black community concerns drugs, violence and death (Bloor West Villager, 2009; Casey, 2013; Mandel, 2012; Pazanno, 2012; Porter, 2013; Powell, 2012; Todd, 2008). It is even restrictive for the Tibetan community. The vision of a Tibetan community comprised solely of restaurateurs, monks and “peaceful people” enforces the idea that to be otherwise is not to be Tibetan. There is nowhere in this narrative for the Tibetan gangs (Boesveld, 2008), or the many hundreds of Tibetan people whose experience of Parkdale is one of profound, painful poverty (City of Toronto, 2010). There is no room for the many elderly Tibetans who have been pushed out of the neighbourhood by rising rents and yet return every weekend to a local service site to share tea

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9 The City of Toronto’s (2010) “Profile of Low Income” does not specifically look at poverty rates among Tibetans, but conjecture can be drawn from the following facts: first, “immigrants and visible minorities” account for a disproportionate number of low-income persons in the city and the low-income rate for immigrants is 50% above that of all low-income persons as a whole. Second, China (which occupies Tibet) and India (where many Tibetan refugees are) were the top two countries of origin for low-income immigrants to Toronto (City of Toronto, 2010, p. 7). Third, 29% of East and Southeast Asian people in the city of Toronto are low-income (City of Toronto, 2010, p. 8). And fourth, 38% of Parkdale is identified as low-income (City of Toronto, 2010, p. 8).
and conversation\textsuperscript{10}. Certainly, there is no mention of the reality that many elderly Tibetan immigrants are survivors of China’s slaughter of 1,000,000 during the Great Leap Forward, or participated in any number of sovereignty uprisings. Indeed, there seems to be little public recognition that Tibetans young and old live with the brutal realities of occupation in Tibet and racism in Canada.

Perhaps the starkest exclusion from the figure of “the immigrant” is Parkdale’s large population of Hungarian Roma refugees. The recent deportation of thousands of Roma refugees from Parkdale – including 500 teenage students at Parkdale high schools – in the span of a few months went nearly unmentioned in Parkdale’s popular discourse. Indeed, Parkdale’s Roma population are characterized as simultaneously dangerous, pathetic and contagious; certainly separate from the lauded figure of the immigrant (Hune-Brown, 2014). As a result, they are simultaneously rejected from Parkdale’s discursive life and, indeed, the political boundaries of Canada. Despite documented danger for Roma people, including significant paramilitary actions by Nazi sympathizers, racist firebomb attacks and state sanctioned murders, in 2012 Hungary was included on a Canadian list of safe countries (Hune-Brown, 2014; Westhead, 2012). Two months later, the government passed Bill 31 requiring new arrivals from countries deemed “safe” 15 days – half the time provided other refugee claimants – to submit a comprehensive refugee report that would be decided on within 45 days. Around this same time, the Canadian government bought radio spots and handed out pamphlets in Hungary designed to deter Roma refugees. The government erected a billboard in Miskolc, Hungary’s third-largest city, to advertise the changes to the Canadian immigration system: “An announcement from the Government of Canada. To deter abuse, Canada’s refugee system has changed…. Applicants with unjustified claims will be sent home faster” (Hune-Brown, 2014).

2.3.1.3. Culturalization

“The immigrant” was not the only tolerable poor figure to enter Parkdale discourse in the 1990s. Parkdale’s second new discursive figure was that of the mad activist. According to the mainstream narrative, in the early 2000s, Parkdale began to celebrate its psychiatrized residents. Once intolerant business proprietors and homeowners came to accept – even appreciate – the

\textsuperscript{10} When I was invited to speak to the 16 Tibetan seniors who attend this weekly group, they shared with me that only one or two of them have been able to remain in Parkdale; the rest have been forced to move.
presence of psychiatric survivors and boarding home residents. As the PRA member tells me, “That’s the neighbourhood. That’s diversity.”

A close examination of Parkdale’s mad population tells a different story. In 1997, as the “Common Front” was forming, Toronto police murdered a 36-year old psychiatric survivor on a public bus. Edmond Yu, an immigrant from Hong Kong, was purportedly behaving erratically. Armed with nothing more than a toy hammer, he was shot six times. Months later, a Parkdale boarding home operator planning a renovation moved 33 of her residents to the small town of Aylmer Ontario town with less than 24 hours’ notice and abandoned many of them there (Mahoney, 1997; PARC, 1997, p. 11). Events of this nature continue in Parkdale, even as madness has presumably gone mainstream. What, then, constitutes the tolerable mad activist? The key appears to lie in the Mad Pride movement.

Mad Pride did not become an active part of the Parkdale identity outside the survivor community until the celebrations took up space along Queen in the early 2000s. The retention of the “pride” theme throughout the movement’s history has been essential to ensuring its wide reach; following from the increasing marketization of LGBTQ movements over the 1990s and 2000s, pride has become easily commoditized (Chasin, 2000). At the individual level, Mad Pride’s focus on self-assurance can assist in political advocacy; at the systemic level, however, pride often occurs at the cost of power. The notable lack of attention within the Mad Pride movement to criminalized forms of madness helped to secure the idea that pride is only for those assimilable into civil norms.

According to the Mad Pride Toronto Website, Mad Pride focuses on “affirming mad identities” and “having fun” (“About Mad Pride,” 2014). The emphasis on claiming or reclaiming positive affect is crucial here; Mad Pride organizers often focus on restoring joy and laughter to the lives of psychiatrized people. One organizer says, “It’s about mad people poking fun at ourselves…using our experiences to talk about things that are funny, that other people wouldn’t always laugh at” (Dart, 2013, para.7). The centrality of pleasant affect to Mad Pride ensures critical distance from the most marginalized members of the community, whose anger, sadness or confusion might be destabilizing, frightening, or simply anti-social, or whose focus may be on immediate survival rather than cultivating confidence. It also tacitly fortifies the whiteness of the
movement by relying on assumed mutual legibility between mad people. Madness thus becomes essentialized as a tacitly white, English-speaking experience with little-to-no attention paid to how “racialization, gender, class, disability, sexuality, and other processes shape and define” it (Diamond, 2014, p. 71)

The focus on legible positivity extends outwards from the movement, reassuring those outside of it that mad folks are joyful rather than dangerous. At a time when madness was coming to be understood as a threat potentially lurking in any brain, it was likely soothing to see jovial representations of psychiatrized people. The rebranding of Mad Pride occurred simultaneous to other changes in the discourse of “mental health.” In 2003, the government established the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to study mental illness. In 2006, this committee released the Kirby Report, which established the Mental Health Commission of Canada to design and deliver, amongst other things, a large-scale 10-year anti-stigma campaign and promote mental illness as “a disease like any other” (White & Pike, 2014, p. 245). These projects focused on repeating the idea that mental illness is a blame-free condition that can happen to anyone, and promoting the notion “at least 1 in 5 Canadians will experience some form of mental illness in their lifetime” (White & Pike, 2014, p. 245). Good feelings tie Mad Pride to the recovery movement, as well as the progressive streak within mainstream healthcare at large. As blogTO Journalist Peter Harris writes, “Like other medical conditions, there are advocates who push for better understanding and a stronger organized movement towards change and hope as core elements of health management. That where MAD! Pride comes in” (Harris, 2014, para. 2)

Even in its earliest iteration, Mad Pride made the complex move of identifying proud madness not only with happiness, but with cultural production. The inaugural event was organized around six main objectives, each of which simultaneously refuted and reinforced culturalized and assimilationist politics: 1) to combat stigma; 2) to celebrate psychiatric survivors as active members of Canadian society; 3) to “present the history and culture of psychiatric survivors”; 4) to “link up with other marginalized groups” in “rejecting oppressive cultural stereotypes”; 5) to connect with “other community based groups in Parkdale to ensure visibility and acceptance of persons with psychiatric histories” and 6) to “to participate in the creation and preservation of our contribution to Canadian culture” (Reaume, 2008, p. 2). The appeal to Canadian citizenship
via cultural identity was cemented by the 2002 change from “Psychiatric Survivor Pride Day” to “Mad Pride.” This move shifted the identity of participants from *psychiatrized* (survivors of the social process of diagnosis and the incarcerative logic of enforced “treatment”) to *mad* (a self-ascribed identity that is appropriately broad, but often appears to be connected to cultural production). A concurrent change in programming centered arts events designed to celebrate the “unique, mysterious, wondrous identities and culture” of madness (Costa 2008, 4). Madness thus came to occupy a confusing space as a cultural label, akin to yet discrete from the image of multiculturalism. This is apparent in my interview with the Parkdale Residents Association member who notes that crazy people hollering in the street embody “the neighbourhood,” and exemplify “diversity.”

Not all mad people can comfortably occupy such a lauded position. As White and Pike (2014) explain, those people who cannot or will not be assimilated via the disease-discourse – and those who invest in culturalized joy – suffer from an enduring association between “crime, madness, disease and danger” (Foucault 1962; Menzies, 1989 as cited in White & Pike, 2014, p. 246). Racial narratives are particularly potent here; schizophrenia, for example, is still figured as both a predominantly Black diagnosis and an inherently dangerous, violent, or criminal one (Metzl, 2010). As White and Pike (2014) write, “Today still, it is typically these individuals – the mad and criminal – who are represented as the most disordered, dangerous, and unrecoverable, and who thus make unsuitable candidates for anti-stigma programs” (p. 246). Legislation was designed to specifically ensure that criminalized mad people remained non-assimilable – in 2000, the Harris government introduced Brian’s Law in response to the murder of hockey player Brian Smith by Jeffery Arenburg, who had been diagnosed as schizophrenic. Brian’s Law established draconian Community Treatment Orders that restrict the freedom of psychiatristized people through enforced medication, consistent surveillance and the constant threat of rapid re-institutionalization (Fabris & Aubrecht, 2014).

2.4. Gentrification as Racial Neoliberalism

Parkdale’s revanchism had strong racial undertones – the intolerable poor, especially the fearsome drug dealer, were often racially marked. A close examination of neighbourhood enlightenment reveals that the tolerable poor are also organized along racial lines, albeit
somewhat differently. “Immigrant identity” in contemporary Parkdale refers specifically to racialized immigrant identity\textsuperscript{11}. Not just any racialized immigrant, however, is seen as tolerable: Roma refugees are characterized in queer and feminizing terms\textsuperscript{12}, and Black immigrants appear to exist outside the bounds of the “immigrant” category completely. Further, the mad considered tolerable only through association with cultural events which are always held separately from “immigrant” cultural initiatives, making Mad Pride a tacitly white site and rarely addressing the ways in which mad people uninvolved in arts and culture production remain targets of violence\textsuperscript{13}.

The period of “enlightenment” must be seen not as a refutation of the goals of RASP and PAAC but as the time of their most thoroughgoing accomplishment. Throughout the period of the Parkdale mediation, the neighbourhoods most intolerable residents were violently ejected from the streets, while those deemed tolerable were folded into an aestheticized, culturalized vision of “healthy” mix (Bowie 1993). The violence – and, importantly, the silence about the violence – is not a limit of enlightenment bourgeois subjectivity but its very articulation. It is worth recalling here that the “tolerant, level-headed and compassionate bourgeois” emerges from an appeal to supposedly white masculinity as universal human subjectivity. As Lowe (2015) writes, “rationality is the mark of the ‘human’ subject, and the condition for being accorded full moral treatment, and sets the limit on the natural equality for all those beings taken to be ‘human.’” (p. 140). Those seen as non-rational, or intolerable to enlightenment, are conveniently ejected not just from the realm of rights, which might warrant remedy, but rather from the category of human.

\textsuperscript{11} Though Polish, Ukrainian, Ashkenazi Jewish and Italian immigrants may have been racialized and/or ethnicized at the time of their arrival in Canada, by the late 1950s they had been thoroughly deracinated within the social sphere (Brodkin, 2002; Epstein, 2014).

\textsuperscript{12} Roma refugees are seen as manipulative and “bogus” (Butler, 2015, para. 3); a Globe and Mail article indicates that Roma people have “taken advantage of legislation” and “flooded into Parkdale” (Bielski, 2010, para. 3). They are articulated as dangerously non-normative, perhaps even queer – they are “flamboyant” and “like to party,” and live in extended family units, which “upsets” their neighbours and the vision of the nuclear domicile (Bielski, 2010, para. 22).

\textsuperscript{13} This is particularly true in the case of racialized and/or immigrant psychiatrized people like Edmond Yu, but also applies to those mad folks, consumer/survivors or deinstitutionalized people who live in boarding homes and rooming houses and focus the majority of their energy on the activities of daily survival (Kendal, 2009).
The process of enlightenment in Parkdale was fundamentally one of liberalism. As Lowe (2015) writes, “Liberal forms of political economy, culture, government and history propose a narrative of freedom overcoming enslavement that at once denies colonial slavery, erases the seizure of lands from native peoples, displaces migrations and connections across continents, and internalizes these processes in a national struggle of history and consciousness” (p. 3). Even as it proposes universal egalitarian rights, liberalism, Lowe (2015) reminds us, “effects principles of inclusion and exclusion….liberal ideas of political emancipation [and] ethical individualism…were employed in the expansion of empire…affirming liberty for modern man while subordinating the variously colonized and dispossessed peoples whose material labor and resources were the conditions of possibility for that liberty” (p. 6).

As a liberal (or, as I offer below, a neoliberal) subject, the enlightened bourgeois depends on the erasure of outright racial violence. Certain stories must remain untold for this form of subjectification to continue to be experienced as tolerant, level-headed and compassionate. When the mainstream discourses of “multiculturalism” and “social mix” are viewed with an eye to the buried stories of race and gender, the role of the enlightened bourgeois as normative (white, masculine, colonial) national subject becomes ever more apparent.

### 2.4.1. Parkdale Revisited

On September 28th, 2014 the website *blogTO* posted an article entitled “How to spend a day in Parkdale.” Journalist Erinn Beth Langille takes the reader through her vision of an Parkdale ideal day: breakfast at the recently opened Glory Hole donut shop, coffee at the new Capital Espresso, a game of hockey at the McCormick Recreation Centre or a bike ride by the water, lunch at Bacchus Roti, Mother India, or Om restaurant (“a great place for Tibetan”), shopping at one of the many vintage clothing stores or specialty home décor shops, an afternoon snack at a tea shop and dinner, followed by drinks and dancing at any one of the new establishments that “dazzle” along Queen. Her introduction to this whirlwind tour provides a snapshot of the Parkdale that the enlightened bourgeois will fight to preserve:

…once a posh west-side address, [Parkdale] took a turn with the installation of the Gardiner….High-rise apartment buildings went up, filled with new immigrants, and the older homes were sectioned off into many low rent apartments. Instead of undermining the pride of the neighbourhood, these developments seemed to only solidify the Parkdale
spirit - citizens celebrate a mix of high and low...old charm, enthusiastic businesses, and vibrant ethnic communities (Langille, 2014, para. 1)

Langille’s description encapsulates the dominant sense that Parkdale has come back from the brink of gentrification more diverse, more mixed, and more spirited than ever before. This, she and many mainstream actors hope, will help prevent or at least soften the encroachment of true gentrification brought in by the rich – condominium developers, multinational corporate chains, and extremely upscale businesses.

As I have shown, Parkdale can only be seen as “gentrification resistant” (Whyte, 2004, para. 13) if the racial and gendered dimensions of both poverty and its violent expulsion are ignored. Viewed from a race-conscious lens, the neighbourhood is an exemplary site of gentrification accomplished through the mechanism of racial neoliberalism, a continuation of the liberal tradition of racialized capitalism14.

Parkdale, I argue, did not appear to gentrify as a direct result of revanchist sentiment. This is not because revanchist goals of social cleansing and spatial change were not accomplished – they were. It is rather because the revanchists themselves, through the process of enlightenment, became proponents of a highly controlled diversity. In so doing, they became compassionate advocates for an ideally mixed neighbourhood. All the while, discourse remained squarely focused on the elite. While some gentrification processes do occur through outright revanchism, it is essential to note that Ruth Glass’ (1964) original term establishes the centrality of gentlemanliness – perhaps enlightenment – to this process of social, spatial and economic upgrade. There has been important work by contemporary gentrification scholars to connect show the apparently tolerant, compassionate and diversifying projects of the Canadian state – namely, multiculturalism (Goonewardena & Kipfer, 2005), beautification (Goonewardena, 2005), and green development (Rankin & McLean, 2015) – to the silenced displacement and violence they require. I hope to add to this work by asserting that the form of social mix and multiculturalism apparent in Parkdale’s idealized contemporary state reveals a spatially, socially and economically privatized form of racial and gendered power that David Theo Goldberg (2009) terms “racial neoliberalism.”

14 Which Lowe (2015) reminds us relies on “the commodification of human life” (p. 196).
As Boudreau, Keil and Young (2009) define it, neoliberalism is “the theory and practice of running the economy in a way that frees markets from state and bureaucratic control” (p. 24). Notably, this “freeing” of the market from state and bureaucratic control is a narrative rather than material gesture. In his study of Toronto’s urban amalgamation, Isin (1998) notes that neoliberalism only *appears* as “governance without government” (p. 173) – that is, it claims to reduce government intervention while simultaneously engaging in tacit and often extreme state interventionist tactics through social prohibitions, cultural norms, criminalization regimes, and legal or political regulations that favor a free market governed by the same hegemonic white supremacist capitalist colonial norms that shape state bureaucracy. As Badwall (2013) writes, liberalism was racially organized; it followed, then, that “neoliberalism” is founded through and expressed in terms of racial domination and control (p. 129).

The major difference between liberalism and neoliberalism lies not in the racialization and subsequent commoditization of human life – which, as Lowe (2015) notes, were established in colonial/imperial expansion and the slave trade – but how racial power is dealt with in discourse (p. 196). Under liberalism, race was an explicit site of domination. Neoliberalism, as a modern form of liberal governance, silences the racial dimension of power, attributing all social domination to the rhetorically race-neutral market (Goldberg, 2009). “Racism” is thus relocated from a state structure to a personal and subjective experience, a transmutation that helps to entrench the enlightenment individual as a key site of power. Goldberg (2009) calls this updated version of liberal logic “born again racism,” “racism gone private” and, fittingly, “racism without race” (p. 23). As Badwall (2013) summarizes, “Goldberg (2009) argues that racial neoliberalism fashions a new racism that attempts to move forward ‘without (fully) coming to terms with racial histories and their accompanying inequalities… to transform, via the negating dialectic of denial and ignoring racially marked social orders into racially erased ones” (as cited in S. Giroux, 2010, p. 4)” (as cited in Badwall, 2013, p. 134). This dynamic is apparent in the contemporary status of Parkdale as “multicultural” and “socially mixed.”

### 2.4.2. Multiculturalism Revisited

Contemporary race scholars Sherene Razack (1998, 2004), Ghassan Hage (2000), Himani Bannerji (2000) and Sunera Thobani (2007) have long asserted that multiculturalism as state
policy entrenches rather than undercuts white supremacy and colonial domination. Following Thobani (2007), I contend that Canadian multiculturalism in particular was designed to convert racialized and Indigenous peoples’ political demands for rights and sovereignty into matters of cultural diversity and social tolerance (Thobani 2007). Then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s 1971 commitment to bilingualism and multiculturalism was particularly timed; it occurred just two years after the Indigenous resistance to the “white paper,” which attempted to involuntarily enfranchise Status Indians (thereby stripping them of their land title). Trudeau’s statement – and its legal corollary the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms and 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act – was designed to ensure that Canada was seen as a French and English nation, tolerant of cultural diversity but not, importantly, racial sovereignty. As a hegemonic paradigm, culturalism renders discussion of race obsolete – even backwards. In so doing, it casts equity-seeking, anti-racist and anti-colonial movements as outdated or extreme. Functionally, multiculturalism works to entrench social power in white Canadians and white Canadianness; through the architecture of multiculturalism, the white Canadian citizen becomes exalted as tolerant, modern, and worldly (Thobani, 2007, p. 145).

Jodi Melamed (2006) describes multiculturalism as “a liberal symbolic framework for race reform centred in abstract equality, market individualism, and inclusive civic nationalism” (p. 2). In so doing, she ties it to neoliberalism. Canada’s state multiculturalism policy was certainly economic in nature; in 1971, the Economic Council of Canada released “Looking Outward: A New Trade Strategy for Canada,” which cleared the path for the multiple free trade agreements of the 1980s. The celebration of Toronto as the nation’s most multicultural city was born in neoliberal marketing; Premier Mike Harris’ dubbed Toronto a “global city” in an attempt to rebrand it as “a location for international capital accumulation” (Boudreau, Keil & Young, 2009, p. 59). Toronto’s “global city” status was confirmed by the 1998 amalgamation, which shifted notions of city citizenship and calcified myths of belonging in a discursively internationalizing space.

For Melamed (2006), the “the ethic of multiculturalism” is “the spirit of neoliberalism” (p. 1). Ahmed (2010) might add that the neoliberal/multicultural ethic is, in fact, an affect – it is tied to a structure of good feeling. For Ahmed (2010), settler-colonialism and/or economic empire, and its current manifestation in neoliberal governance, is accomplished, at least in part, via an emotional
pedagogy: Racialized Others are civilized into happiness through various forms of tacit and explicit moral education (Ahmed, 2010, p. 127). Under multiculturalism, “the immigrant” becomes the object of happiness – that is, the figure acted upon by the happiness project – while the white citizen remains its subject. The white citizen experiences joy and satisfaction both from the altruistic act of imparting happiness and the pleasure of consuming difference, herein understood as not-whiteness. The assumption that difference always means racialization is clear in my conversation with the young white woman who works with Parkdale’s immigrant community. When she says “we see so much diversity” because “we’ve had so many different immigrant groups,” she does not need to qualify who this “we” is: in speaking to another young white woman, it is implied. The fact that she identifies as Portuguese or that I am an Ashkenazi Jew from New York City does not destabilize our shared place as the reference point for difference.

As a neoliberal project, multiculturalism is more interested in commodities than lives. It requires a double move – the rejection of racialized communities as rights-seeking political bodies and the simultaneous embrace of tacitly racialized cultural products. As Thobani (2007) writes, “the liberalization of immigration policy and the adoption of official multiculturalism facilitated both a material inclusion of increased numbers of immigrants within the population and their simultaneous exclusion from the nation, primarily through their reification as cultural outsiders” (p. 147, emphasis in the original). In its current manifestation, multiculturalism requires culturalized people to bear – or, sometimes, be – consumable products. A middle-aged white fundraiser for a local non-profit explains her feelings about Parkdale in a fittingly commoditized way:

I love Parkdale. It’s very accepting, people are different and don’t want to be all the same. There’s nice sharing, a nice exchange of…basically, all the recipes. I appreciate that kind of complexity and learning all the time about somebody else’s culture and life and incorporating bits of it in mine, right? It’s great, very…pungent. It’s not a clean neighbourhood, it’s a pungent neighbourhood. And I prefer that over, like, Pleasantville. I’d never want to live like that.

Here, diversity is apprehended as olfactory and gustatory experiences: smells, recipes, goods. Culture can be literally consumed, and to overwhelmingly positive effect. The rewards, for those
brave enough to partake, include both learning and love. Gord Perks’ #ParkdaleLove campaign page contains a similar narrative:

#ParkdaleLove I love the wonderful music and restaurant scene in Parkdale. On any given night artists are at work, and hungry crowds enjoy the plethora of options from the diverse variety of cultures.

#ParkdaleLove because people diversity = food diversity

#ParkdaleLove I lived in Parkdale for years, and I miss it. I love the Tibetan restaurants, the vintage shops, the proximity to Lake Ontario, and the diverse, vibrant communities that call it home.

The vibrancy and personality of the neighbourhood seem to emerge predominantly from food – particularly Tibetan food. The promotion of multicultural eating invites white subjects to participate in the “commodification of difference” by framing culturalized people as “a spice, a seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture” (hooks, 1992, p. 21). In the case of Parkdale, the gustatory pleasures of multiculturalism become happy feelings, which, in turn, allow white consumers to understand themselves as “sophisticated” – indeed, “enlightened.” The unspoken effect of this process of subjectification is that the enjoyment of multicultural food translates into suitability for participation in the global economy (Thobani, 2007, p. 153). Food has long been the “banal, acceptable face of multiculturalism” (Gunew, 1993, p. 13), in no small part because it is such a conveniently in-demand commodity. As Damaris Rose (2004) writes, “the ability of urban communities to compete in a knowledge-based global economy and to draw capital is tied to a city's ability to sell the desirability of racialized culture in their cities” (as cited in Teelucksingh, 2006, p. 1). The Parkdale Village BIA promotes the neighbourhood’s “diverse” restaurants as crucial to its “thriving, competitive and safe, business area,” which attracts “shoppers, diners, tourists, and new businesses” from around the globe (“About Us,” 2014, para. 1).

I argue that the subject of multicultural happiness – the Parkdale resident who can appreciate difference, beauty, and pungency – is simply a specific manifestation of Bowie’s (1993) “tolerant, level-headed, compassionate” middle class. This subject is also uniquely economically viable; the market invites them to become the purveyors of the culture they enjoy. Parkdale is now one of Toronto’s “hottest dining destinations” in no small part because of its “ethnic food” options (“Foodies on Foot” 2013). Yet as the neighbourhood has garnered more and more press,
restaurants owned by immigrants and racialized people have been increasingly replaced by upscale eateries owned and operated by young white chef/entrepreneurs whose image relies on the successful incorporation of racialized cultural products. Take the Grand Electric taqueria at 1330 Queen Street, for example, which regularly has a two-hour wait for seating. It is owned by restaurant moguls Colin Tooke and Ian McGrenaghan, two young white men who, according to the *Toronto Star*, make “Toronto’s best Mexican food” (Pataki, 2012). They recently opened a second Parkdale restaurant, the Electric Mud BBQ, just steps north of Queen next to the neighbourhood’s heavily trafficked LCBO. Electric Mud exclusively offers working class dishes from the American south, perhaps benefitting from the unspoken association with Black soul food: rib ends, fried chicken, shrimp n’grits, squid po’boys, collard greens and catfish sandwiches (Electric Mud BBQ, n.d.; Nuttall-Smith, 2013). The Boreal Gelato Café at 1312 Queen Street, just across from the 1313 Art Gallery, owned and operated by a white woman named Melanie Clancy, manages to even incorporate Indigenous imagery, which is generally evicted from the realm of multicultural eating, into its brand identity – the shop website notes that it is “homage to the North, to Canada, to the boreal forest and the trees” and its logo is an Inukshuk holding an ice cream cone (“About Us,” 2014).

### 2.4.3. Social Mix Revisited

Social mix is morally persuasive; its implied claims to “inclusivity, tolerance, and social ‘balance’” make it a compelling urban policy (Blomley, 2004, p. 99). This is especially true, according to Tom Slater (2005a) in Canadian cities, which pride themselves on their “liveability, freedom, tolerance, cross-class interaction, diversity, mixing and conviviality” as compared to the cruel, revanchist gentrification in the United States (p. 46). This comparison is an essential building block for national identity; Slater (2005a) writes “American and Canadian city discourses: images of decay…and images of civility are not simply contrasting; they are mutually constitutive” (p. 45). The kinder, gentler, Canadian image of gentrification via social mix is maintained through the silent rules: Only concentrations of poverty can be referred to as ghettos, not concentrations of wealth; positive outcome must be measured only in the lives of the elite; the initial displacement required to achieve social mix can never be mentioned. The gradual disappearance of poor and marginalized people wholesale must only be logged as an unfortunate inevitability (Blomley, 2004, p. 99).
Over the past 20 years, Parkdale has become a space of ideal social mix – it is, as a representative from the BIA describes, “a lovely balance…50/50 in terms of income.” The Parkdale section of Queen Street is exemplary. It is architecturally diverse: It contains storefronts and second floor apartments in many different styles, and boasts 29 designated heritage properties (Richter et al., 2010, p. 17). It is a transit hub, with a streetcar and two bus stops, encouraging a great deal of foot traffic. The businesses are mixed: The BIA representative describes the area as “thriving, young, busy…with a bar crowd and renowned restaurants” at the east end, “a food court” with “a rush of high school students” looking for “affordable options” in the middle and as-yet underdeveloped “antique alley” on the western edge.

In keeping with the rules of social mix, this diversity is also highly controlled. Between 2001 and 2009, 30% of businesses along Queen Street that catered to poor clientele closed (Richter et al., 2010, p. 13). According to Richter et al. (2010), by 2010 “small, ethnic shops” were struggling to stay open, with families “sharing the hours to stay in business” (p. 14). In 2014, Coffee Time, the last remaining 24-hour coffee shop that was accessible to poor and marginalized people in the neighbourhood closed to remodel. It reopened a few months later massively overhauled, with a bright, crisp new aesthetic and, crucially, changed hours. It currently opens at 7:00 a.m. and closes at 11:00 p.m. An employee there informed me that this is the only Coffee Time in Toronto that has been redone in such a way – it’s a prototype for a remodeled brand image. With the exception of the two remaining inexpensive bars, there is currently nowhere along Queen Street that is accessible for poor people after 11:00 p.m. There are no options at all for poor people after 2:00 a.m.

While Parkdale’s housing stock is lauded as an anchor for its idealized social mix, conditions in the neighbourhood’s affordable apartments are as abysmal now as they were in the early 1990s. Further, rents are increasing dramatically. The appearance of the Akelius Company, a large-scale corporate landlord buying up Parkdale’s high-rise apartments at a remarkable rate, has generated significant community upset. Between 40 and 50 tenants in Parkdale’s four Akelius-owned buildings have brought Akelius to the Landlord Tenant board for trying to force tenants out of their units by delaying repairs, removing building superintendents and investing in noisy aesthetic renovations in order to access above-guideline rent increases (Spurr, 2014). The increase in policing responsible for the removal of sex workers from the neighbourhood and the
displacement of the drug economy onto the back streets has also generated fear amongst people in alternative economies – a PARC worker shares with me that people have become less likely to seek out assistance. Violence in the sex and drug trade persists and people living in poverty in Parkdale continue to die at an overwhelmingly high rate; in the seven years that I have been connected to PARC, over 100 street-involved, psychiatrized and/or homeless people that I have known personally have died.

The increasing gentrification of the main stretch has not gone unnoticed by the enlightened bourgeois who, it is essential to remember, must be seen as the architects and protectors of the ideal mix. City Councillor Gord Perks’ recently proposed a moratorium on restaurant development and density cap to halt this process along the Queen Street main drag. Organizations like Parkdale: Organize! and Parkdale Against Poverty (a division of OCAP) have formed to fight the tide of embourgeoisement. While these organizations make claims to non-hierarchical, community-based advocacy, their campaign architecture is explicitly vanguardist. Three of the four main organizers are white, middle-class local residents, and offer to “train” low-income tenants on how to combat gentrification through a particular model of “building committees.” They focus on protecting Parkdale’s existing mix from further encroachment.

In her 2008 article “Gentrification and social mixing: Towards an inclusive urban renaissance?” Loretta Lees summarizes the work of Schoon (2001) on the three distinct rationales currently put forward for social mixing. First, she notes, is the “neighbourhood defense” argument, which claims that middle-class people are better advocates than the poor, and thus mixed neighbourhoods will “fare better” than those that are predominantly poor. Second, the “money-go-round” argument, which asserts that mixed neighbourhoods support stronger economies than poor neighbourhoods. Finally, the “networks and contacts” argument, which indicates that proximity between classes will promote bonding and help to redirect capital towards social causes (Lees, 2008, p. 2451). Each of these arguments appear in Bowie’s final monologue. They came to be adopted in and through the 1998 mediation process. They were cemented with the popularization of the activist identity, and are currently distilled by the discursive output of the BIA, PRA and local publications which celebrate Parkdale’s diversity. Interestingly, they even seem to appear in the sentiments of current anti-gentrification activists, both within purportedly
non-hierarchical organizations like Parkdale: Organize! and in more mainstream structures like the PRA. A local advocate and PRA member shares:

I was listening to a guy talking the other day and he was saying, “I made Parkdale a hip place.” And I was thinking, you’ve gotta be kidding. You believe that? I was here before you; I was part of the hipsters moving in way back…so I’m concerned about that. Because of the landlords who want to raise the rents….that’s an issue. We’re losing the less expensive accommodation.

He continues:

I do hope that there’s a community of people – socially minded, with money and clout – that could offer an influence. Because I don’t think the community that needs the support is offering a challenge for them to do it. I mean, people already have a problem. If they can’t fight, then it’s time to move on. So I’m hoping there are people out there who can take on those issues and challenge the status quo. I’m trying to do my little bit. Because I have the time. If you’re working 2 jobs, 3 jobs, you don’t have the time. I do.

This argument is eminently rational – those people who already have power, knowledge, time and the right kind of social-mindedness are best positioned to make changes that will benefit everyone. It is persuasive precisely because it appeals to rationality of social mix as the ideal outcome of Canadian urban development, and preserves the notion that existing power relations are normal, natural, and settled. Advocacy for the preservation of variety in land use or economic opportunities across race, class and culture relies on colonial hegemony. The emphasis on creating economic opportunity and social integration for immigrant communities presumes, for example, that all immigrants will want or need to assimilate into the Canadian whitestream economy or affective norm. The belief in healthy cross-class balance relies on the notion that a concentration of poverty-class people in a single place is always undesirable, and that alternative economies and/or outright market refusal are by necessity violent and wrong.

Parkdale’s social mix is represented as progress; diverse housing stock and multicultural harmony as hard-won victories. A current BIA representative, who grew up in the neighbourhood, recounts the following, “I remember running home from school because it was a scary place. It was quite scary when I was younger, but over the years it became a much safer, more welcoming place. Now, it’s thriving on so many different levels.” Though this woman does not explicitly credit RASP, PAAC or the Guardian Angels with making the neighbourhood safer, the timing fits: Whatever shifted Parkdale from “scary” to “safe”/“thriving” occurred between
the 1980 and 2014. Over this period, she herself grew from a frightened white girl into a financially secure and powerful adult white woman.

I heard something quite different from the racialized people I spoke to. One particular quote from a middle-aged Black woman who raised her children in Parkdale stands out:

Those children, they’re now in their 20s and 30s. They all played together! When they got a certain age, they’re all fighting against each other – and why? The drug trade! Now that these children, a lot of them are behind bars – a lot of them got killed. This was a neighbourhood where children never got killed! Any gun play was with adults! But now, it’s different – children from the 90s to now, they’re killing each other.

These stories are diametrically opposed – on the one hand, it seems that children are getting safer and safer in the post-RASP Parkdale. On the other, it appears that children have been in increasingly more danger. Race is the crucial factor that holds these two realities apart. It is also the unspoken dynamic that, I conclude, has both shaped Parkdale’s gentrification and has made it impossible for the enlightened bourgeois to acknowledge.

2.5. Conclusion

The ejection of intolerable bodies, as well as recent efforts towards social and economic upgrade, make Parkdale a neighbourhood that has long since gentrified. The racial character of these processes – both central and unspeakable – reveals Parkdale’s gentrification as racial neoliberalism. I know from experience that Parkdale’s artists, social workers and anti-poverty activists are smart, sensitive people with a genuine desire for equity and justice. I count myself among them. But excavating the history of Parkdale leaves me with many questions. What if general consciousness turned against dynamics like criminalization and policing rather than towards multiculturalism and social mix? Would my feelings and actions in the neighbourhood have been different if I had treated my own comfort and joy at diversity – the comfort and joy of a white, middle class, overeducated person – with suspicion rather than celebration? Why, indeed, has it been so hard for me, people like me, for the public consciousness as a whole to see racial and gendered power operating in and through efforts to oppose gentrification? This common condition, I believe, is neither attributable to malice, ego, or even base ignorance, but rather to the interlocking set of spatial and social flows of power that make racial neoliberalism the dominant modality of Canadian life and the enlightened bourgeois its primary subject. This
situation wherein genuinely good intention inadvertently becomes racial and gendered exclusion is even more apparent at the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre.
Chapter 2

Preserving the Enlightened Agency:

The Neoliberalization of the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre

3.1. Introduction

The Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC) is a large multi-service agency on the western edge of Queen Street with a broad mandate, mission and scope. The organization offers direct survival services and arts, culture and recreation programming to Parkdale’s poor. It oversees 29 units of supportive housing, and functions as a landlord to various other social agencies in its main building at 1499 Queen Street West. PARC also engages in community research and urban development work. The agency currently describes itself as an “animated community hub…where people come together and ideas are born,” a “welcoming space” for anyone interested in creating “a healthy, inclusive and socially-minded” Parkdale (PARC, 2013, p. 20). It is Parkdale’s most well-known social service.

PARC has not always been so multifaceted. For the first 20 years of its existence, the agency offered one program: a daily drop-in based on the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation. Nor has it always been so well-integrated into Parkdale: From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, PARC drew the ire of revanchist groups, as well as the police and local representatives for its participation in psychiatric survivor movements and housing advocacy campaigns. Indeed, in “Zero Tolerance,” Bowie (1993) interviews multiple members of the PARC community. He concludes his film with a clip of one of the agency’s most well-known workers, advocating for empathy and understanding.

The expansion of PARC’s size, scope and mandate occurred in a notoriously difficult time for social services. Simultaneously to Parkdale’s enlightenment, Ontario Premier Mike Harris’...
“Common Sense Revolution” began to target agencies like PARC for amalgamation or closure. Yet PARC not only survived – it thrived. This chapter asks how – and why – PARC grew in the face of massive disinvestment. I argue that PARC’s uncommon resiliency is connected to the ascension of the enlightened bourgeois. PARC, like Parkdale, was able to both assimilate and subsume racial and gendered technologies of neoliberalism and gentrification. This has resulted in an ambivalent situation: PARC remains a life-saving resource for the marginalized in a rapidly changing neighbourhood. Simultaneously, it is PARC complicit in the very neoliberal gentrification that drives members to its doors.

It would come as no surprise to PARC’s leaders and discourse producers that the agency has adopted some of elements of neoliberalism. PARC has long had a sharp and cogent analysis of oppressive economic structures. This allowed the agency to anticipate and sometimes even preempt the effects of government austerity. PARC’s Annual Reports, as well as many of its staff and managers, narrate the shift towards neoliberalism as a conscious strategy of survival. I offer that PARC’s turn towards the private market was never quite as strategic, nor as necessary, as it believed. Rather, PARC’s foundational and unacknowledged investments in whiteness and masculinity limited its options and structured its strategies.

This chapter examines white, masculine, bourgeois consciousness at PARC. It does not seek to name or blame individuals – I am looking for the how and why of neoliberalization rather than the who. I designate the agency as an exemplary site of enlightened bourgeois subjectivity, and identify some key structural positions in PARC’s process of becoming such; I do not, however, attribute change to any individual subject, white man or otherwise. Such a process of subjectification is interesting precisely because it exceeds the bounds of individual will and intention. Neoliberalization at PARC was mercurial and messy, with no definitive architects. Indeed, throughout the past 36 years, PARC has become a kind of decision-making entity onto itself, a fantastical construction and personified superstructure that functions to contain, constrain and consolidate the actions of those who work within it.

This chapter introduces PARC as an organization that both helped to create and functions to repeat the broader flows of spatial and social power that have unfolded in Parkdale. It lays the groundwork for the increasingly closer, more micro-cosmic investigation of racial neoliberalism
and enlightened bourgeois subjectivity in the chapters that follow. As an introduction to the agency, it draws primarily upon PARC’s “official story,” the narrative of the past and present that is told through the agency’s Annual Report. This document, released to the public at the Annual General Meeting, provides a thorough accounting of a year’s operation, reporting on issues of governance, staffing, program/service provision and finances. It is written by the administrative and front-line staff team in collaboration with the Executive Director and Board of Directors, and read by a variety of stakeholders within and beyond the agency. I read the Annual Report and other official texts contrapuntally, looking at what is absent as much as what is present, what is silent as much as what is spoken. I do so with the help of personal accounts from my interviews with current and former managers, staff and members, focusing particularly on how people with a long-term relationship with PARC reflect on the changes to its programs and mandate.

I lay out my arguments as follows: First, I give a brief history of PARC’s development before the election of Mike Harris. I show how PARC’s organizational identity made it particularly vulnerable during the provincial “Common Sense Revolution” in the mid-1990s. Then, I track the ways in which PARC narrates its own survival. I identify two intentionally neoliberal strategies at play in PARC’s development – flexibility and branding. In the section on flexibility, I explore how PARC began to see itself as a place that must “change” – and keep changing – “to survive” (PARC, 1995, p. 2). In the section on branding, I describe the technologies designed to generate local support and diversify funding by marketing PARC as an asset to enlightened Parkdale. I note the general consensus in the agency that these strategies, while somewhat distasteful, were necessary to buoy the organization in a time of economic upheaval.

In the second half of this chapter, I explore how unspoken sexism, racism and colonial sentiment operate within both PARC’s neoliberalization and the narratives of necessity. Following the testimony of interviewees, I suggest that flexibility may have functioned to disempower the agency’s most marginalized members. I recount the story of PARC’s “Tibetan period” to expose the tacit racial limits placed on organizational adaptation. I offer an alternative story of branding from the perspective of those who fall outside acceptable “social mix.”
What I hope to suggest herein is that while PARC genuinely believed that it was taking the only available path, its decisions and their outcomes were not inevitable. The agency was presented with other options – some of which may have de-centred whiteness or unseated masculine power. PARC was not able to register these options as options because of its pre-existing constitution and commitments.

3.2. The Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre

PARC began as a fully government-funded agency with a small-scale drop-in program that focused on Parkdale’s boarding home and rooming house residents, most of who identified as psychiatric consumer/survivors. Its first 15 years can be divided into three semi-distinct phases: the “clubhouse phase” from 1977 to 1981; the “activist phase” from 1981 to 1991; and “sanctuary phase” from 1991 to 1995. Below, I briefly detail each.

3.2.1. The Clubhouse Phase

The Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre was born as a response to psychiatric deinstitutionalization. Between the mid-1960s and the early 1990s, the number of psychiatric beds in Toronto hospitals was reduced from 16,000 to 4,600. The downsizing of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre (QSMHC) at Parkdale’s eastern edge sent thousands of ex-psychiatric patients into the neighbourhood. Many had spent the majority of their lives psychiatrically incarcerated. Most were released with little more than a bus ticket and the address of a local boarding home. All were expected to live on government assistance, which, at a rate of $258 - $364 a month barely covered rent. This left Parkdale’s deinstitutionalized people destitute and with little to do during the day (Dear & Wolch, 1987, p. 108).

In 1977, a group of nurses, social workers and Parkdale residents came together to discuss the sudden proliferation of deinstitutionalized people in the neighbourhood. Many were employees at QSMHC or its satellite clinic Archway, who saw that downsizing left their former clients completely bereft of services. They called themselves the Queen Street Parkdale Community Response (QSPCR). Hoping to lay the groundwork for a new social service site, they incorporated themselves as a Board of Directors and in 1978 began to lobby for money from the provincial government.
In 1979, the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital at Parkdale’s western edge was defunded and closed for good, turning hundreds of ex-patients onto the streets. Simultaneously, QSPCR received funding to open its drop-in: the Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre\(^\text{16}\). PARC opened its doors in March of 1980. For the first few years of its existence, PARC was governed by a Board of Directors that was overwhelmingly professional, with a single representative of the local psychiatric survivor community. The agency used a hierarchical staffing structure: The four-person “front line” staff team was overseen by a “coordinator” who also functioned as the agency’s Executive Director. Staff who were employed at PARC at the time remember the agency as “basically institutional,” cut through with “a touch of chaos.”

PARC was initially designed to fit within the clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation, a paradigm which sits at the interstices of the psychiatric survivor mutual aid/“peer support” and mainstream social work/rehabilitative practice. Begun by North America’s first organized group of psychiatric survivors – New York City’s 1940s ex-patient advocacy group We Are Not Alone – the clubhouse is an expressly non-clinical space where pathologized people go to experience a sense of belonging regardless of their diagnosis, emotional state or behaviour. Participants are called members to indicate their value as participants in the club. There are no behavioural contracts or rules associated with membership, and there is no expectation that people will “move on” – membership is voluntary and without limits; it is “for life” (Pratt, Gill, Barrett & Roberts, 2014, p. 217). The clubhouse model focuses on establishing three things for its members: a secure base (stable housing, food security, etc.), opportunities for community connection and, eventually, employment.

Clubhouses were originally based on mutual support between psychiatric survivors without the participation or oversight of paid professionals. Since the mid-1950s, however, they have been almost exclusively staffed by licensed social workers. These employees are meant to be “generalists,” responsible for sculpting and delivering the “work ordered day,” a schedule of social recreation activities, employment and life skills trainings and possible case management or group therapy (Edward, 1994, p. 141). While the clubhouse model does not explicitly participate in psychiatric surveillance (i.e. medication monitoring), it still commonly uses hospitalization as a punitive measure (Shimrat, 2014). It also aspires towards mainstream social reintegration and

\(^{16}\) PARC would later replace the “and” with a hyphen.
employment readiness. This makes it explicitly rehabilitative in form: It assumes that an ideal or successful social service will cause madness or disability to dissolve into “a greater social whole” (Stiker, 2000, p. 28).

For the first year or so of its existence, PARC was committed to the clubhouse model’s assimilative structure. Soon, however, it would abandon this for what one staff calls a more “anarchist mode,” ushering in the agency’s activist phase.

3.2.2. The Activist Phase

In 1981, PARC expanded its drop-in team, hiring a social service provider who mistakenly believed that the agency was responsible for a psychiatric survivor advocacy publication called Cuckoo’s Nest. Fittingly, a few months later, a well-known psychiatric survivor advocate and the true publisher of Cuckoo’s Nest applied for an additional drop-in position. Her first application was turned down. In what is understood as the first real protest by a PARC staff, the agency’s most recent hire refused to accept this. Citing the importance of psychiatric survivor advocacy to the existing PARC membership, he threatened to go on strike if she wasn’t hired. In mid-1981, she re-applied and was granted a position. Within weeks she had begun to organize drop-in members against revanchist homeowners, irresponsible boarding operators, and the violent local police. Advocacy quickly came to supplant social recreation as PARC’s primary offering.

PARC’s newfound activism became entrenched in agency structure in the mid-1980s with two events: the dissolution of the staff hierarchy and the creation of a new Board structure. In 1983, PARC’s psychiatric survivor staff challenged the commitments and qualifications the existing Coordinator. “I forget the specifics about what I challenged her on,” she recalls, “but I challenged her at the Board, and she said ‘either she leaves or I do.’ So she left. I said to the Board, ‘quick, write it down, quick!’” “Right after that,” she tells me, the agency hierarchy dissolved and “the staff decided to be a collective.” Three years later, the Board of Directors instituted a policy of equal representation of PARC members and community stakeholders. Around the same time, the staff collective hired an “activist” nurse who had recently been given his “walking papers” from the Queen Street Mental Health Centre.
From the late 1980s through the early 1990s, PARC became increasingly involved in local activism, spearheading calls for inquests and inquiries into the deaths of psychiatric survivors, and creating media campaigns designed to shame boarding home operators into improving conditions. The 1990 Annual Report celebrates PARC’s “critical perspective” on social issues (PARC, 1990, p. 5). It recounts the agency’s participation in large-scale demonstrations, and the beginning of an outreach committee focused on gaining raising the social assistance rates, documenting the abuses within the medical system and seeking “alternatives to traditional psychiatric answers” (PARC, 1990, pp. 6 – 7).

3.2.3. The Sanctuary Phase

While PARC continued to identify as an activist organization for many years, the primacy of this rhetoric was soon replaced by a “sanctuary” model (PARC, 1990, p. 4). As a long-time staff recalls, the early 1990s were extremely difficult for Parkdale’s psychiatrized population. In response, the agency began to refigure itself as “a refuge” from oppressive boarding home operators, insensitive psychiatrists and revanchist homeowners. The image of PARC as a place of respite was cemented by its 1991 purchase of the building at 1499 Queen Street West. Building ownership is articulated in the Annual Reports as a guarantee that PARC will remain a physical and psychological oasis, a place where members can “take off…armour,” “become unmasked,” and “recover…lost love” (PARC, 1991, p. 8). PARC’s status as a sanctuary for the neighbourhoods most marginalized, however, would soon come under threat.

3.3. Neoliberalization

For the first few years of the 1990s, the NDP government continued to invest in services. By 1993, however, rising provincial debt caused “all political parties” to become “seized with a collective urge to cut back” (Stapleton, 2009, p. 4). That year, then-Premier Bob Rae introduced a restrictive Expenditure Control Plan and the so-called “Social Contract,” which froze raises and forced all public sector employees to take 12 days of unpaid leave annually (Brennan, 2009). In 1994, social assistance rates were frozen and the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services introduced its “Case-file Investigation” program to root out “welfare fraud” (Stapleton, 2009, p. 4). The 1994 election of Ontario PC Premier Mike Harris represented a turning point.
Between 1995 and 2003, Mike Harris and his successor Ernie Eves’ “Common Sense Revolution” dismantled the social safety net and, in keeping with the broader strategies of neoliberalism, both truncated and expanded the purview of the municipal government.

Though neoliberalism claims to reduce the size and scope of the government, Boudreau, Keil and Young (2009) recall Harris’ regime as “the most interventionist government this province and city has ever” (p. 58). In fact, it was micromanagement, not laissez-faire economics, which most profoundly interfered with social service practice during this period. Harris’ first major policy decision was the 1995 reduction in the social assistance rates by 22%. This was followed by the permanent restructuring of social assistance, and the destruction of rent control in 1998, and the criminalization of poverty and homelessness in 1999. This led to an exponential rise in poor people seeking services (Boudreau, Keil & Young, 2009, pp. 56 – 58; Carniol, 2000, pp. 1 – 5).

Though the Harris government plunged many people into poverty, it also sought to downsize, amalgamate or outright defund social services. The province drastically reduced Ministry monies in favor of new, competitive, grant-based funding vehicles such as the Ontario R&D Challenge Fund, and the Ontario Innovation Trust. It suggested an increased reliance on older competitive, project specific funding bodies such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, as well as private donors and funding initiatives from municipalities. It also made structural changes to the safety and security of social workers and social service employees, legalized the 60-hour work-week and shut down anti-scab legislation, making it more difficult for unions to wield power. All these changes threatened the social service environment, calling upon agencies to bureaucratize, professionalize, individualize and corporatize their work in order to retain funding (Kivel, 2007; Ng 1988).

17 The 1998 Social Assistance Reform Act replaced the previous system of General Welfare Assistance and Family Benefits Allowance with Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. Both of these programs were extremely restrictive; they introduced an 80% reduction in allowable assets in some cases and created multiple, confusing ineligibility clauses. The mandatory work-fare component of OW and volunteer benefits in ODSP further forced various social service bodies, even those technically unrelated to the provision of social assistance, to participate in low-wage job creation and extensive surveillance. These systems remain in place, and the rates have never been readjusted.
18 The 1998 Tenant Protection Act replaced rent control legislation with vacancy de-control and removed power from tenants fighting rental increases and evictions in the courts.
19 The 1999 Safe Street Act entrenched “Quality of Life” policing regimes by criminalizing panhandling and, by proxy, homelessness. For an incisive account of this, see Nicholas Blomley’s (2007) article “How to Turn a Beggar into a Bus Stop: Law, Traffic and the Function of Place.”
20 Including the immediate lay-off of hundreds of healthcare workers, the closure of multiple hospitals and the downloading of health services to a newly created telephone inquiry system called Telehealth.
In the early 1990s, PARC was extremely vulnerable. All of its core characteristics marked it for amalgamation or closure. It was small\textsuperscript{21}, left-wing / “activist” identified, and explicitly non-professionalized. It was also exclusively provincially funded, and run by a Board of Directors with little connection to the private market. Yet PARC not only survived this era – it grew. This, I argue, was due to the agency’s ability to selectively neoliberalize.

3.4. Strategies of Survival: Flexibility and Branding

Broadly put, those social services that survived the Harris era did so by reducing their programs or securing other forms of financial and social support (Woolford & Curran, 2011). Following this pattern, during the 1990s austerity movement, many Ontario social services shrank dramatically, merged with other agencies, or came under the purview of larger institutions (hospitals, foundations, etc.). PARC, however, took a different route by adopting two essential neoliberal strategies into its basic governance and operation: flexibility and branding.

Following Freeman (2008) I define flexibility as the capacity for “fluid movement” and selective “restructuring,” a “supple” quality that allows an organization to repeatedly redefine itself to meet the needs of a changing market (p. 252). As I detail below, in the mid-1990s, PARC committed to organizational malleability in order to chase new funding streams. It began to plan reactively. This resulted in a drastically reorganized, management-heavy governance structure and surprising partnerships with previously distrusted agencies and institutions. The agency also began to prioritize the diversification of its funding base. This required an appeal to the private market, accomplished by branding.

Neoliberalism disinvests from the welfare state, forcing social services adapt to ever more stringent government requirements or compete for funds from the private sector (Woolford & Curran, 2011). Privatization demands that agencies commoditize elements of their work, mission

\textsuperscript{21} In the early 1980s, PARC had a registered membership of 275, serving an average of 50 people a day in the spring and summer and 94 in the colder winter months (PARC, 1984, p. 6). In 1989, PARC served approximately 400 people a year (PARC, 1989, p. 6). By 1992, membership has risen to 700 (PARC, 1992, p. 9). This was accompanied by a steady increase in the number of staff. When the agency opened its doors in 1980, it had a staff of four. By 1993, PARC had over 20 employees. Notably, however, before 1995, PARC never employed more than 10 full-time workers. The majority of its staff team was comprised of non-unionized casual positions: relief drop-in workers and a rotation of member receptionists and maintenance workers. Further, despite the exponential increase in PARC’s membership, the agency was still seen as extremely small by the mid-1990s.
or identity. Social services do not, as a rule, deal in commercial products; therefore, they must generate cultural capital to attract support. This results in the development of agency brands, which promise ideological or emotional returns. Over the past 20 years, PARC has refigured itself in just such a manner. I explore both strategies briefly below.

3.4.1. Flexibility

While PARC shifted and changed a number of times in its early years, the agency did not adopt flexibility as an explicit organizational direction until 1995. The Annual Report for that year begins with a question that would loom large in the coming decade: “In these tough times…what is PARC going to do? How are we going to change to meet new demands, how are we going to change to survive?” (PARC, 1995, p. 2).

This report clearly and cogently articulates the significance of the Harris government for PARC’s future. It also introduces “change” at the agency as a foregone conclusion, a clear necessity for survival. Over the next 10 years, this idea would become the central aspect of PARC’s identity. PARC would soon come to be count its success on its ability to be “flexible and responsive” (1997, p. 3).

PARC’s first act of organizational flexibility was the rearrangement of its staff structure. After 10 years of collective governance, PARC reintroduced a hierarchy. There is some disagreement at the agency over exactly how and why this change occurred. Many articulate it as the result of an “ultimatum” by the Ministry of Health: “We were told we had to have an Executive Director or risk losing important funding,” one staff person recounts. “A lot of the change was not driven by PARC. We felt it would have been selfish to resist, we would have been shut down, pure and simple,” another muses. Some, however, remember the change quite differently. As one former Board member puts it:

PARC changed because one staff person started to get into that sort of Napoleon, control, in charge mode with everyone else. He was part of the collective, but he wanted to be ED. He needed that. So he started moving up to be in that sort of role. He felt he was worth a lot more, and he should be the Executive Director and he pushed for it.

I do not seek to determine definitively whether this change was “necessary for funding” or the result of an individual’s desire to be “in charge.” Rather, what I find interesting here is the
pervasive narrative of necessity, the consistently mournful resignation I heard repeated in my interviews. There is a shared sense that PARC begrudgingly, perhaps tragically, did what it had to do to survive.

PARC’s rearrangement was significant. Not only did the agency reintroduce an agency leader in 1995; it also created three new management positions, all with greater responsibility and higher pay: Program Coordinator, Community Housing and Support Program Coordinator and Administrative Coordinator. These positions were filled by pre-existing members of the former staff collective, reducing the full-time drop-in team to six. The 1995 Annual Report articulates this change as reasonable response to the “changing and uncertain time” (p. 2). It reads:

Of great significance this year was the restructuring of the PARC staff. As PARC has grown both in size and complexity, the Board and the Staff felt increasing pressure to reorganize the responsibilities of the Staff. Toward this end, a new Staff structure was developed and is now active...since this initiative began, the Staff and Board have succeeded in implementing a number of important and long over due [sic] measures, including staff evaluations and the development of a personnel policy. In general, our restructuring efforts have been very beneficial to the program (PARC, 1995, p. 3).

Growth is herein figured as both a pre-existing fact and a positive change. The reintroduction of hierarchical governance is articulated as not only the natural choice to manage PARC’s expanded responsibilities, but a boon to organizational efficiency.

PARC’s second act of organizational flexibility was the refocusing of its mandate. Whereas the agency began exclusively for deinstitutionalized people, in the mid-1990s PARC named the provision of homelessness services as its primary direction. This was driven, at least in part, by the availability of new provincial and municipal funding packages to address the growing homelessness crisis. In 1995, for the first time in its history, PARC added a new service: an “intensive outreach” and case management designed to connect with homeless people in the shelter system and provide one-on-one support in the activities of daily living and “case coordination” across various social service sites (PARC, 1995, p. 15). Until this point, PARC’s sole program had been the spatially-fixed, group oriented “social recreation” drop-in, designed to serve Parkdale’s psychiatric survivors. The outreach program, a mobile, one-to-one service for homeless and under-housed people, represented a significant departure. The change caused some upset in the community. In particular, there was opposition to the “case management” paradigm,
which some staff saw as “too much like social work,” and “counter to our principles.” A current case manager stresses, “PARC did not want to have case-managers. They didn’t like the term. I keep hearing this over and over – ‘people are not cases.’ So it was a culture-shift.”

The addition of the case management outreach program is also narrated as a logical necessity. According to a former manager:

I mean, no one liked the case management paradigm, the documentation requirements, or the oversight. But they needed to get more positions into PARC and the only game in town was case management. It was the only funding priority, as far as the Ministry of Health was concerned. You weren’t gonna get more drop-in staff, it had to be a case manager.

By 1996, PARC had shifted its priorities; in both its case management program and its flagship drop-in service, it had begun to focus its efforts on meeting the basic needs of homeless people, psychiatric survivors or otherwise. This allowed the agency to receive funding earmarked by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Metro Toronto Administration and the City of Toronto Administration for homeless services (PARC, 1996, p. 2). It also opened the opportunity for PARC to expand its funding base into the private market: In 1997, the agency received a large sum of money from the by the United Way, “the largest private-sector supporter of social services in Toronto” (“About Us,” 2014, para. 1). These funds were earmarked for “harm reduction…programs designed to help meet the emergency needs” of the homeless and under-housed (PARC, 1997, p. 2).

In 1997, the PARC’s community was shaken by two acts of violence which would cement the growing focus on homelessness and redirect agency efforts towards housing provision. In February, Toronto police murdered 36-year old Hong Kong immigrant and long-time PARC member Edmond Yu. Yu had been recently evicted from the boarding house at 194 Dowling, next door to PARC. In July, a Parkdale boarding home operator planning a renovation moved 33 of her residents to the small town of Aylmer Ontario town with less than 24 hours’ notice (Mahoney, 1997; PARC, 1997, p. 11). Many of my interviewees recall these two incidents as the seeds for a new PARC direction: the provision of social housing.

In 1998, PARC’s Executive Director announced his departure. In 1999, the agency found a new Executive Director in a former relief staff and member of the Board of Directors. His tenure
coincided with the renovations to the PARC building. Between 1999 and 2000, PARC relocated its programs to a small section of its storefront space. When it reopened the building in 2000, it had 10 units of supportive housing designed for PARC members, as well as a number of commercial rental spaces designed for like-minded local businesses and other agencies. This would usher in an era of new partnerships which, in turn, would help PARC expand significantly into the housing market.

While PARC had always undertaken work with partner agencies, the mid-1990s emphasis on organizational flexibility allowed it to expand its reach from long-time activist allies to former enemies. In 1997, for example, PARC partnered with the QSMHC and the Metro Police (PARC, 1997, p. 3). Five years earlier, PARC had been advocating against police involvement in the neighbourhood. In 1993, at the first Psychiatric Survivor Pride event, PARC had tacitly joined the fight against QSMHC. By 1997, however, staff and members had been called upon to generate “imaginative and creative responses to difficult and complex situations,” and to do so “without hesitation” (PARC, 1997, p. 3). This call, rearticulated yearly in the Annual Reports, may have quelled some of the opposition to these unexpected alliances.

After the renovations, PARC began renting space to the Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (OCAB, now Working for Change), a consortium of psychiatric consumer/survivor-run commercial enterprises. In 2001, PARC and OCAB developed an employment partnership designed to create new “social enterprises,” or partially-subsidized commercial businesses designed to support marginalized peoples’ transition to paid employment. Staff recall this partnership as “controversial”: “For some on the drop-in team, this was a terrible betrayal. At the time, OCAB was the enemy.” As another tells me, long-standing “beefs” between psychiatric survivor employment agencies and the PARC drop-in, and the well-known stance that many social enterprises took against what they saw as “moribund, depressing, de-activated, terrible drop-ins” caused a split in the agency. While some members and staff were genuinely interested in expanding the opportunities for paid employment, others felt it would destroy the “spirit” of “volunteerism and communal support.” As one staff recalls: “There were some real struggles

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22 Social Enterprise Canada’s website defines a social enterprise as follows: “Social enterprises are businesses owned by nonprofit organizations, that are directly involved in the production and/or selling of goods and services for the blended purpose of generating income and achieving social, cultural, and/or environmental aims. Social enterprises are one more tool for non-profits to use to meet their mission to contribute to healthy communities” (n.d., para. 2)
there in terms of trying to identify...is this what we really ought to be doing? Managing social enterprises? Would this take us away from our mandate?"

Throughout the next 10 years, PARC’s partnerships would continue to cause ambivalence and upset within the agency. Perhaps the most notable of these was the 2006 partnership with Habitat Services, a Ministry and City of Toronto funded supportive housing / boarding home provider. Together, PARC and Habitat would develop Edmond Place, a 29-unit social housing facility for psychiatry survivors in PARC’s adjacent property at 194 Dowling Street.

In 1999, the Toronto Police Special Investigations Unit undertook an inquiry into murder of Edmond Yu. While their eventual findings “cleared police of any wrongdoing,” the subsequent coroner’s inquest into the death emerged with 24 recommendations for the Ontario mental health system and Toronto police services (Green, 1999, para. 6). Among them was the recommendation that the “Ministries of Health and Community and Social Services should continue funding for the purchase and construction of new housing for consumer survivors in Toronto” (NFB/ONF, n.d., p. 10). In 2000, PARC struck a committee of 20+ psychiatric survivors called the Edmond Yu Safehouse Project (EYSHP). Their goal, as one person involved puts it, was “to develop housing that would be relevant to Edmond.” In the fall of 2003, they launched the “Edmond Yu House Profile,” a plan for the creation of transitional housing for people “experiencing homelessness and mental health issues” (PARC, 2003, p. 43). It defined the “Edmond Yu Safe House” as “a place to begin recovery in a peer-supported living environment,” and promised “it will be...run, managed and governed as a Consumer-Survivor initiative” (PARC, 2003, p. 43).

In 2005, PARC’s Board of Directors passed a motion that PARC acquire property to develop the Edmond Yu Safehouse “within a reasonable radius of the centre.” (PARC, 2005, p. 3). Later that year, PARC made a proposal to the City of Toronto acquire 194 Dowling, just next door. The proposal was predicated on the idea that the Ministry of Health would provide most or all of the funds. According to an interviewee, however, by the time PARC’s proposal was accepted “the Ministry of Health had decided that they weren’t going to fund housing.” This left PARC in a difficult situation. As one interviewee tells me, “PARC couldn’t take it on alone. We couldn’t afford it. That was when the Executive Director knew he had to have a partner.” Habitat, an
agency with a long and terrible reputation in the psychiatric survivor community, presented itself enthusiastically. As a staff involved in the EYSHP recounts, the Executive Director came to the Edmond Yu Safehouse committee and asked “do you guys want to partner with Habitat?” The answer was a resounding no: “Most of the committee members had lived in Habitat housing and said, ‘We will not partner with them, look what they do to people!’” But, she continues, “There was no way of stopping it. It was clear that we would have to partner with them or the housing wouldn’t get built.” The partnership was accepted and the existing EYSHP committee dissolved. As someone involved tells me, “Edmond Place represents nothing even close to what we wanted – the Habitat partnership, the funding structure, the way people are living in there, nothing.” However, she concludes, “I can tell you today, as I sit here, that if PARC hadn’t partnered with Habitat to develop Edmond Place, CAMH would own PARC right now.”

3.4.2. Branding

Edmond Place would prove crucial in the rebranding of PARC. This process began, however, some years earlier, when the agency shifted the focus of its discourse production from state funders, staff, and members to partners, private donors, and the neighbourhood elite. Following PARC’s renovation, it began to reimagine its audience. The 2000 Annual Report articulates this as part of an historical trajectory: “PARC’s history can be divided into decades. In the first ten years, PARC established itself…as a dynamic community mental health centre….during the next ten years, PARC secured its home by purchasing the building….as we venture into this next decade, it is time to refocus on people….” (PARC, 2000, p. 1). It continues, “We can begin by welcoming those who have chosen to live under our roof” – the commercial tenants renting space in PARC renovated building – as “new members of our community” (PARC, 2000, p. 2). It concludes by asking its readers to imagine “PARC as an ark, picking up people on the way, a ship with room for many passengers, navigating the daily storms and sailing to far off destinations. ‘All aboard…’” (PARC, 2000, p. 2).

The shift in PARC’s central metaphor from sanctuary to ark represents a change from stasis to momentum. It also both reflects and prefigures expansion – whereas a sanctuary provides a hiding place, the ark is a site of coupling, movement, and birth. By 2001, this had become a strategic direction, “As we develop our communities it is clear that transformation is vital. What
better model of change than one based on joint interest. Partnerships” (PARC, 2001, p. 12). It returns to the metaphor of the ark: “How like an ark PARC has become…if Noah’s ark reflected his efforts, then PARC mirrors yours” (PARC, 2001, p. 12). The “you” in this excerpt is vague. It potentially encompasses all readers of the Annual Report, which, by 2001, would for the first time include partners, commercial tenants, and private funders. In 2006, it adopted a new mission statement reflective of its broadened vision: “A community where people rebuild their lives” (PARC, 2007, p. 2). In 2007, it established a set of similarly vague “fundamental values”: “Belonging, community,” “Respect, dignity, integrity,” “Encouragement,” “Equity, fairness,” “Choices and opportunity,” “Freedom of expression,” “Confidentiality” and “Continual self-improvement” (PARC, 2007, p. 5). This same year, two significant events occurred, cementing PARC’s newly outward-looking direction.

On April 1st, 2007, the Local Health System Integration Act came into effect. This act downloaded all Ministry of Health funding to municipally managed bodies called Local Health Integration Networks (LHINS). Immediately, PARC’s Ministry of Health money, along with that of 100 community mental health and addictions programs, 26 hospitals and various withdrawal management programs, came under the jurisdiction of the Toronto Central LHIN (PARC, 2006, p. 3). The sheer number of other programs managed by the LHIN made PARC management nervous; the Board of Directors adopted a new fundraising direction, seeking private donors and grants. That same spring, PARC and Habitat were awarded the redevelopment of 194 Dowling Street. This would prove instrumental in the generation of a PARC brand.

Despite the success of the “Parkdale Rebellion,” PARC feared a resurgence of local revanchism in response to the Edmond Place development. As a result, the agency made an unprecedented decision: it decided to market Edmond Place and, by proxy, PARC, as an asset rather than an anathema to homeowners and business proprietors. It did so by following the guide of enlightened civility. As a long-term Parkdale activist remembers:

There was real opposition from the Parkdale Residents Association and other places to Edmond Place. It wasn’t the evil reactionist NIMBY thing we had before, though…it was a nice lefty, “let’s keep the neighbourhood diverse” thing. We at the Tenants Association supported Edmond Place, and so we said, “Let’s go get these fuckers.” But [PARC’s Executive Director] told us to wait. He said, “Hold on, I’m talking to the BIA.” And he came up with this idea of turning the lefty thing against itself. The opposition was the
business people and the homeowners, the idea was that you could go in and confuse them and co-opt them and get them on your side.

The technology for “co-opting” the business people and homeowners was the PARC Ambassadors, an outreach program to educate the local elite about the benefits of social housing. The project employed a small group of PARC members to act as “Ambassadors” for the agency, knocking on doors and talking to business owners about the benefits of Edmond Place. They were compensated at a rate of $10/hour, paid by honoraria so as not to interfere with their social assistance cheques. A founding member shares, “we realized that PARC had a lot of people, a lot of members, who were quite talented and skilled and educated and so we thought ‘why not use some of them to go out and talk to people in the neighbourhood?’” Criteria for employment in the Ambassador program included familiarity and connection to PARC, outgoing personality, good communication skills, and a willingness to work on a team (PARC, n.d., para. 1). There was no explicit call for members with experience of psychiatrization or homelessness, but members employed at the time tell me that it was “implied.”

The creation of the PARC Ambassador program marked a serious shift in the agency’s focus – it was the first time PARC would create a project explicitly to communicate with the neighbourhood elite. As a long-term staff notes: “The whole coming to fruition of Edmond Place was synchronous with increased levels of activity in terms of neighbourhood relations and neighbourhood profile, activities that may have been anchored inside here, but their locus is outside.”

As a founding PARC Ambassador tells me, “PARC knew there was a lot of NIMBYism in Parkdale from the residents, store proprietors and businesses when it came to people with mental health issues, addiction issues, due to not being educated or aware of what PARC really was.” He continues, “when PARC got the building, they decided, well, at least let people know what the development was about – they could have gone ahead with the development and not said anything, but they wanted to change the attitude of people in the Parkdale neighbourhood to one of acceptance.” This education was designed specifically to clear up “common misconceptions” about social housing, including the concern that new social housing initiatives would lead to “crime, noise, and lowered property values” in the neighbourhood (PIVOT, n.d., p. 8). As one staff puts it, the goal was to “sell Edmond Place” to entities like the BIA and PRA by promoting
its parent agency “as a solution rather than as a problem in the neighbourhood.” PARC was thus sold as a place that would “rebuild the lives” of its members and, in so doing, harmonize them with the rest of the neighbourhood. As one Ambassador explains:

When we knocked on doors, we talked about PARC and the programs and services offered. We told people to come over and see for themselves. When people came in, they saw how clean it was, they found out that PARC members do the maintenance, they found out about the meals, the food bank, they saw the paintings on the wall and all these groups like the art group, the writing group….and we mentioned that other members at PARC volunteer elsewhere – on panels at hospitals, committees, Boards of Directors, that they do part-time work.

The Ambassador program generated a picture of PARC as a place where psychiatric survivors produced art, participated in gainful employment, connected with the community and otherwise led fully recovered lives. The formerly insular agency was reframed as a “remarkable community asset,” helping Parkdale become a better neighbourhood (Brule, 2010, p. 12). The broadened motto of “rebuilding lives” was seen as an anchor for PARC’s “inclusivity approach,” which worked to build an alliance across identities (Hypenotic, 2012, p. 4). The metaphor of a “wide tent” is often used to describe PARC’s ability to bring many seemingly-disparate stakeholders together in one space (Porter, 2014, para. 19). Within a few years, PARC had remarketed itself as “a West End Hub” where “Parkdale community members (businesses and residents) participate in creating a healthy community for all,” a site of “innovation” with “programs, partnerships and policies that are on the ‘cutting-edge’ of citizen-driven social inclusion” (Hypenotic, 2012, p. 4).

3.5. Strategies of Silence: Racial and Gendered Conditions for Flexibility

The story PARC tells of its own survival is ambivalent: there is triumph and resignation, joy and sadness and, perhaps most of all, there is an acknowledgement of the intense power of neoliberalism to force progressive initiatives towards the centre. What is oddly absent from PARC’s otherwise transparent and nuanced story is an analysis of race and gender. Below, I argue that a fundamental whiteness and masculinity has always shaped how PARC perceives possibility. It is not, then, just selective assimilation that has allowed the agency to survive in an
increasingly bourgeois neighbourhood under pervasive white supremacist heteropatriarchy, but, specifically, the tacitly racial and gendered mandates neoliberalism. Ultimately, I hope to contextualize how these changes came to be seen as PARC’s only available options.

3.5.1. Changing Structure, Continuous Whiteness

PARC has neoliberalized in some straightforward ways. The agency moved from a consensus-based collective to a multi-tier hierarchy. Its programming shifted to reflect funding priorities, and it has done a great deal of work to reframe itself as an asset to private market donors. It has also adopted a growth model, expanding its size and scope. PARC now employs over 90 people and runs a plethora of programs across a variety of different service disciplines. These changes are understood as necessary concessions to a neoliberal social order that would otherwise have crushed the agency.

Despite the substantial change over the past 36 years, however, PARC has also maintained a remarkable and unacknowledged homogeneity in its population. It is here, I argue, that the racial and gendered mandates of neoliberalization can be seen. According to a former staff, PARC’s original population was “mostly guys, white guys, the same guys that had been out of hospital for years.” Another former staff concurs: “You know, I always experienced it as a place for white men.” Though the agency has broadened its mandate – and, further, though the neighbourhood has diversified dramatically – the membership today remains demographically similar to that of the 1980s. According to a 2012 Census, PARC’s current members are 96.9% English-speaking and 81.9% “Canadian,” the overwhelming majority of these being white people who do not self-identify as recent immigrants. Those that do are primarily Polish (4.9%), Ukrainian (2.8%), and Italian (2.8%). Further, 65.6% of drop-in members are men (PARC, 2012, p. 2). How did PARC retain such a consistent and narrow membership in the midst of such significant structural and neighbourhood change? A careful inspection of PARC’s growth reveals that organizational flexibility operated within narrow limits set by the unacknowledged homogeneity of its original population and entrenched by the subtle mandates of racial neoliberalism.
3.5.2. Homelessness as White Masculinity

One of PARC’s most significant shifts over the past 36 years has been the refocusing of its target population from “psychiatric Consumer/Survivors” (PARC, 1995, p. i) to homeless people. This was accomplished through the rearticulation of the agency’s mission in new terms. Whereas in 1990, PARC’s “task” was conceived in terms of generating “a framework for dramatizing the courage, skills and strength of psychiatric survivors” (PARC, 1990, p. 4), by 1995, agency identity had become much broader. The 1995 Annual Report reads: “PARC has always been and remains today a sanctuary for those most in need. PARC has always been and remains today a catalyst for positive change and a defender of the right to a dignified life for all people” (p. 2). The transmutation of what the 1997 Annual Report calls PARC’s “fundamental principles” from their earlier investment in psychiatric survivor support to what was fundamentally a set of abstract ideals – “responsibility, generosity and justice” – allowed the agency to pursue multiple program directions without appearing to contradict its mandate (PARC, 1997, p. 2).

The departure from psychiatric-survivors was framed as both a natural reaction to the explosion in membership and a moral imperative in the austerity climate. PARC’s politicized rhetoric on the “anguish and suffering of homeless people,” victims of the provincial “war on the poor” is both astute and compelling: The agency identifies the “grim reality” of “growing need for community supports…and crisis intervention…directly linked to the downsizing and cutbacks…of the provincial government” (PARC, 1997, p. 10). Race, however, is never mentioned; an absence that is all the more telling when understood alongside dynamics in Parkdale at the time.

As explored in the previous chapter, the “broken windows” or “quality of life” policing of the mid-1990s disproportionately targeted Parkdale’s growing population of racialized poor people, as well as those involved in the local sex and drug trade. Yet PARC’s programs did not change to specifically accommodate street sex workers, immigrants and/or racialized poor people; rather, they focused on the tacitly white, masculine category “homelessness.” Homelessness appears as white in two discrete ways. The first is in its status as an additive identity. “Homeless” is used colloquially with other identity words: People are referred to as “a homeless man,” “a homeless woman,” or “a homeless child,” rather than simply “a homeless.” If under
colonial capitalist white supremacy, whiteness represents universality, then it follows that the “person” of “the homeless person” is prefigured as white unless otherwise indicated. This is apparent in popular descriptions of homelessness: White homeless people are described as indicated above, whereas racialized homeless people are always marked as such (“a homeless Black person,” or “a homeless Indigenous person”).

Homelessness is also seen as fundamentally urban, and therefore white. This dispossession of “home” understood to be the precondition of the homeless body requires that this subject, abject as he may be, can be seen as potentially at home in the urban environment. Urbanity is linked inherently to modernity, and therefore produced in opposition to what Mohanram (1999) might call the “pre-modern, pre-capitalist” Black or otherwise racialized body (p. 22). Further, as a discursively settled space, urbanity precludes Indigeneity entirely, at least in the Canadian imaginary. As Banivanua Mar and Edmonds (2010) note, settler cities are narrated sites of “progress, commerce and modernity – spaces of the highest stage of development in the Western historicizing narrative aggressively exclusive of Indigenous peoples” (p. 11). Indigenous people, who comprise only 17.3% of city dwellers, yet count for a staggering 16% of the homeless population, are often ejected from the image of homelessness (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter & Gulliver, 2013, p. 27).

Homelessness is further constructed as inherently masculine. Economic and social researcher Lindsey McCarthy’s (2013) review of U.K. news media and literature on “homeless identity” reveals the “construction of a defined homeless person as quintessentially male” (p. 47). She writes that the “homeless identity” as “the dishevelled man in a duffel coat on the street” (Burman in Breeze and Dean, 2012: 134)” connects the narrative of homeless to “that of the white man as the universal (Pascale, 2005),” rendering poverty as “neither racialized nor gendered” (p. 46). This reinforced by the Homeless Hub / Coalition to End Homelessness in Canada’s recent report “The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013,” which takes great pains to note that, despite stereotypes, “homeless women and families” and “Aboriginal people” represent a significant proportion of the homeless population (p. 7).

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23 A scan of articles from the past 10 years in the Toronto Star, Globe and Mail and other outlets gives this result. Further, the first 25 image results from a Google search of the term “homeless person” conducted on March 3, 2015 yielded images of middle-aged, bearded white men.
The fact that PARC’s new homelessness services were both materially and discursively figured as white and masculine does not mean that individual racialized homeless people and/or women were driven from or experienced oppression within the agency. My interviews with racialized PARC members show that individual experiences run the gamut: While some people felt they had experienced racist behaviour and language from other members and, occasionally, staff, as many others tell me that they “never experienced anything like that,” that PARC is “good to everyone.” The issue here is not so much individual experience as agency alignment. This is visible to the community. According to an interviewee who works for a local immigrant services site, PARC’s whiteness and masculinity make the agency inaccessible for who do not fit the norm. She says, “It seems like PARC is perpetuating the stereotype that you think of when you think of someone who is homeless: an adult white male, who is by himself, may have an addiction, and may have mental health. That’s who I see coming to PARC” she says, “whereas there are so many people who actually live in the neighbourhood, who are under-housed or in and out of shelters in the neighbourhood, are not using PARC, because they don’t see people who look like them going there.”

3.5.3. Gender, Indigeneity and Madness as Excess

PARC’s focus on white men is not only manifest in its relationship to homelessness; it is also apparent in the lack of specific services for women, racialized people, immigrants and Indigenous communities. Interestingly, many such identity-based services were briefly offered by the agency, only to be relocated or dropped due to lack of funding or support.

Between 1985 and the mid-1990s, PARC had a number of women’s conversation circles and craft groups, as well as a limited number of services for families. In the beginning of 1995, the agency’s fourth attempt at a women’s group began meeting monthly to discuss “health, sexual abuse, housing, etc.” and a six-week Wen-do self-defence course was designed and delivered. By the fall, however, this group had been put on hold; the Annual Report promises “our women’s gatherings will resume in the near future” (PARC, 1995, p. 13). This same year, the small women’s arts and crafts group, an offshoot of the larger women’s program, was “unfortunately…moved to another location” (PARC, 1995, p. 13). By 1996, women’s programming had disappeared as the agency refocused its energy on homelessness initiatives. It
would not re-emerge at PARC until 2008, with the advent of a weekly sex worker support group called KAPOW.

KAPOW was a short-lived drop-in food program and “healing space” for sex workers in Parkdale. The program was started by two PARC staff who had noticed “that sex workers, women, were really underserviced. In fact, they were really mistreated, even by some staff.” Over the course of two years, it secured stable housing for 10 of its participants. One participant tells me that KAPOW was “a life saver.” Yet it was unable to sustain momentum. As a facilitator explains: “Well, no one ever actually applied for funding for the group. We were running on $30 a session. The truth was, it was a lot of extra work. A lot of extra work, a lot of vicarious trauma,” and, she adds crucially, “no infrastructural support.” By the time the program closed, it was being run by just one staff who was attempting to balance it with her own “huge workload.” She tells me that PARC felt it just wasn’t “a priority.”

A similar issue emerged with PARC’s Indigenous programming. In 2009, the agency applied to the Federal Government’s Urban Aboriginal Strategies Program and was given a one-time grant. It used these funds to create Four Directions, a twice-weekly drop-in cultural revitalization and cooking program facilitated by representatives of various First Nations. It was designed to serve PARC’s relatively substantial Indigenous membership – as of 2012, 12.5% of PARC members identified as “Aboriginal,” making them the agency’s largest racialized community by a factor of three (PARC, 2012, p. 2). As a staff involved in the project explains: “It was based on the Native culture. They had traditional food cooking, activities based on Native cultural learning, traditional dancers, and healing circle conversations.” She continues, “It was great. A lot of people came, a lot of people started asking about what’s taking place and when is it on.” All of the Indigenous members that I interviewed note the importance of this program. When asked what PARC could do to improve, three members answered offered “get a new native group going” as their primary suggestion. But the program was eventually closed. As the staff involved explains: “Eventually they shut it down. Everyone wanted it to continue. But it didn’t happen. Funding was not available.”

New program offerings are often announced in the PARC Annual Report. Rarely, however, is the discontinuation of a program mentioned. This is particularly telling in light of the previous
chapter’s discussion of buried stories as constitutive of and necessary to certain forms of subjectivity. When my interviewees – particularly those not involved in these programs – discuss programs like KAPOW and Four Directions, they seem mournful and resigned. Most repeat the standard economic explanation: Programs are only viable insomuch as they can obtain and maintain funding. As one staff explains to me, “it’s just difficult to sustain those kinds of groups” given “changes” to social services at large. Another says, “You just can’t keep something going if you don’t have the money.” The loss of such programs is, indeed, broadly attributable to changes from above. The 1998 Social Assistance Act, for example, gave social services agencies incentive to participate in the roll-out of OW/ODSP, allowing them to create volunteer opportunities that would make clients eligible for more benefits. PARC’s participation in this program added a significant amount of bureaucratic work to the implementation of small programs, making them more difficult to sustain. Further, in 2008, PARC became an “early adopter” of the Ontario Common Assessment of Need, which by 2010 would become a required site of data collection for community mental health agencies. This added a huge amount of note-taking to daily staff responsibilities, drastically reorganizing PARC work hours.

Looking back at Annual Reports, however, it becomes apparent that the de-prioritization of “small groups” emerged earlier. Whether by choice or necessity, groups were de-prioritized in the service of homelessness programming in the early ears of the Harris government. The reason provided in agency discourse is exclusively economic; small groups were articulated as a waste of limited resources better spent on the activities of “survival.” The 1997 Annual Report reads: “When despair casts a lengthening, darkening shadow in which more and more of other citizens gather to suffer and die, the word ‘program’ loses all meaning” (p. 4). This resulted in a situation, it continues, where “all so-called ‘small group’ programs” had to take “a back seat” to “survival” programs (PARC, 1997, p. 4).

In order to understand how race and gender structure the limits of PARC’s flexibility, it is essential to ask what, exactly, was understood as necessary to survive. The 1997 Annual Report lists food banks, meal programs, and a warm, clean, open facility as PARC’s contribution to the endurance of the community: “any other definition…would simply be an attempt at camouflaging what goes on at PARC” (PARC, 1997, p. 4). Between 1995 and 2014, PARC reinvested a great deal of its energy into food and general facility management. Over this time,
the weekly meal became a twice-daily food service. As PARC developed two housing sites, it simultaneously committed itself to running a comprehensive building maintenance program. The expansion of these services appears to have come at the direct cost of member involvement in them. What in 1997 was an entirely member-run food bank and kitchen program by the 2010s had become a staff endeavour. The maintenance program, which formerly employed a rotating cast of members, some of whom held “crew lead” positions of relative power and authority, by 2014 had come under the purview of a manager. Member employment opportunities were reduced from over 100 to three. Member-run program advisory groups have also shut down due to lack of infrastructure. Almost all of my member interviewees told me they felt like they had been increasingly left out of decision-making. As one puts it, “we used to have a voice. Now we don’t have any voice at all.” When asked, managers and staff express regret mixed with a sense of sad inevitability; one tells me “you have to choose between what is ideal and what is actually doable.” But, she adds, “We still try to have member input on important decisions.” Members, however, overwhelmingly feel like their opinions “don’t matter at all”: “Members don’t make any real decisions.” Survival is thus seen not to extend to matters of representation, voice, or even employment.

Though the mid-1990s saw the overwhelming disinvestment from small groups, many of PARC’s programs did emerge from this era. The PARC writing group, for example, turned 30 in 2014; the hockey program has been running for over 15 years. Even those staff that facilitate these programs, however, note the difficulty of sustaining momentum: One shares with me the frustrated sense that initiatives not buoyed by external funding streams have been left in the care of one or two dedicated staff. As individual staff workloads grow, program commitment shrinks. “When I leave,” a staff person tells me “my program will disappear completely.”

The individualization of collective responsibility is endemic to neoliberalism. As PARC dedicated more of its resources to reinvention, the responsibility for its essential programming was downloaded to a handful of staff. Further, given the pre-existing alignment of the agency with sites of material and discursive whiteness and masculinity, power continued to consolidate in the spaces where it was traditionally held. In an agency with a predominantly white male staff, those programs which primarily served white psychiatrized or homeless men endured, while those that focused on women and Indigenous people fell away.
3.5.4. The Limit-Case of the Tibetan Community

It is impossible to determine the exact relationship between PARC’s survival under neoliberalism and the whiteness and masculinity that structured and were served by its program offerings, member community and staff team. Whether PARC’s flexibility was predicated on these dynamics or resulted in them remains obscure to me. What is notable is rather than when PARC changed, it did so directionally. All choices, of course, inevitably preclude infinite others. In the case of PARC, however, there was one particular choice in which the otherwise subtle racial directives of neoliberalism became abundantly clear: the refusal to structurally adapt to or accommodate Tibetan immigrants and refugees. Over the course of one year, PARC saw a dramatic rise and subsequent steep decline in Tibetan people requesting or utilizing organizational services. One staff refers to this as “PARC’s Tibetan period.” The agency’s reaction to this period shows how racialization – or, as it is articulated by staff, “cultural difference” – functions as the limit of flexibility. PARC’s decision not to bend towards the Tibetan community functionally reinforced the relationship between malleability and whiteness.

In 2009, the PARC drop-in saw a sudden influx of poor, Tibetan-language-speaking immigrants. As one staff remembers, “there was this moment when there was a substantial number of Tibetans at PARC…. enough that it had an impact.” The pause tells a story of upset and strife. Another adds, “There was a time when Tibetan folks were becoming….a bit overwhelming.” People remember this time as “a little tense.” Then, just as suddenly as they had arrived, PARC’s Tibetan community was gone. Though one staff shares with me that there are still “quite a few Tibetan members,” a 2012 PARC Member Census registered no Tibetan people at all. This was underscored in my research; I spent a few months looking to interview Tibetan-speaking PARC members in particular. I followed the same protocol that I did with other linguistic communities, scheduling two focus groups, on separate weekend days, with childcare, TTC token, food, and a language interpreter. They were advertised widely by posters, in-person announcements and word-of-mouth, in English and Tibetan, throughout the PARC drop-in and case management.
programs. My previous focus groups, organized and advertised in the same fashion, yielded a significant turnout²⁴. In the case of my Tibetan focus groups, however, no one came.

When I asked my interviewees to speculate on the lack of Tibetan people at PARC, they told me three things. First, that almost all Tibetan people in Parkdale are English speakers. One staff said that Tibetan community members would be less likely to come to a focus group with a Tibetan-language interpreter than one that was being held in English and open to all communities.

Second, that Tibetan people only required services for a brief period and have since become successful in the neighbourhood. Another staff tells me, “They got on their feet. Many of them just needed a place to land, and then they moved on.” Third, that Tibetan people only came to PARC to volunteer. This third explanation was by far the most popular. Many told me that Tibetan people weren’t interested in “the PARC community,” they were only there “for their volunteer shifts.”

PARC’s volunteer program was undoubtedly a draw for many communities. Between 2007 and 2009, PARC’s volunteer program was an ad hoc system wherein members could work various unpaid positions and, with an official confirmation letter from PARC, be eligible for an additional $100 on their social assistance cheque. In less than two years, PARC signed 2,000 volunteer letters. In 2010, the province gave PARC an ultimatum: reduce its number of volunteers to 300 or discontinue the program entirely. They elected a volunteer coordinator, and asked staff to make relevant reductions. “When we restructured the program,” a staff tells me, “people who weren’t otherwise connected to PARC left. So we lost a lot of Tibetans.”

These stories are pervasive at PARC. They are also, however, contradicted by statistical data. The 2011 Parkdale Census, for example, registers 2,075 Tibetan people in the Parkdale neighbourhood. Approximately 1,780 of these people identify Tibetan languages as their mother tongue and 1,595 speak Tibetan at home (City of Toronto, 2014, pp. 3 – 4). Anecdotal evidence of the enduring poverty amongst Parkdale’s Tibetan population is confirmed by the City of Toronto’s (2010) “Profile of Low Income,” which marks the low-income rate for immigrants at 50% above that of all low-income persons as a whole, and further establishes that 29% of East and Southeast Asian people are low-income (pp. 7 – 8). Thus, not only are there still a substantial

²⁴ I held a focus group for PARC’s population of Chinese immigrants, for example, that 18 people attended and one for PARC’s Hungarian Roma population that was attended by four.
number of Tibetan-speaking people in the Parkdale neighbourhood; many of them remain poor. As one of Parkdale’s largest and most comprehensive service sites, PARC should be receiving a large number of Tibetan people.

After my second failed focus group, I connected with a service in Parkdale that holds a weekly meeting of Tibetan seniors. I was able to attend one session and, with the help of an interpreter, asked a group of 16 elderly Tibetan immigrants some questions about PARC. Eight of them told me that they learned about PARC through a friend in the volunteer program. They always felt they were treated well – one tells me that she was always given food and was able to take a day off whenever she requested it. When asked why, thy all had the same answer – no one at the agency spoke Tibetan. Hoping to fill a gap, I listed PARC’s programs for them. They had a range of responses. One told me, “In our culture, we feel bad just going for a free meal when there are people who might need it more than you,” but then said that she would love to speak to “housing workers and lawyers.” Three participants asked with urgency if PARC could get them housing. As one puts it, “I want to stay here. I need help finding housing. Do you have someone who speaks Tibetan?”

When asked why they stopped coming to PARC, some of my focus group participants explained that it was because they left the neighbourhood. One, however, said, “I heard they stopped taking Tibetans.” Another told me that after two weeks, she was “refused”: “They used to pay $100, but then they said I couldn’t come anymore.” Some people at PARC seem to recognize this dynamic. When I asked the RDSG, for example, why so many Tibetan’s had left the agency, one participant recalls how the restructuring of the volunteer program “inadvertently prioritized certain people.” She explains that individual staff were charged with reducing the number of volunteers connected to their programs – they were given lists of names and told to identify only those who were really involved: “So who rose to the top? People who spoke English, had English-sounding names or knew a staff.” Others were asked to leave the program.

While this participant’s point is crucial, the disappearance of PARC’s Tibetan community is not merely the result of a few individuals with a list of names. The agency appears to have a collective sensibility that Tibetan people exist spiritually and cultural outside the PARC member identity. The racial element story is at once central and subsumed. A staff involved in
programming during PARC’s “Tibetan period” explains the mismatch between Tibetan people and PARC members as follows: “Tibetans, because of their cultural, social and religious beliefs, feel compelled to help somebody less fortunate. So they would just start doing things for PARC members. I don’t think they understood [PARC’s] idea of rebuilding your life.” Staff tell me that they tried to engage Tibetan people in PARC activities “so that their community could understand what PARC was and….what PARC was trying to do.” This attempt, however, was doomed due to the sheer number of Tibetan people, and the overwhelming difference of their cultural paradigm. Many staff agree that there were simply “too many Tibetans,” especially when compared to “what you would call PARC members.” As one recalls, “the balance was way out of whack.” This juxtaposition is telling: It establishes the Tibetan community as a priori separate from the membership. It also manifests an insistently spatial idea. As Hage (2000) writes, “concepts such as ‘too many’ are meaningless unless they assume the existence of a specific territorial space against which the evaluation ‘too many’ is arrived at” – as such, they function to manage rather than describe space. (p. 38).

Here, we see resonance between the Tibetan community at PARC and the intolerable poor in Parkdale. While their specific identities differ – in the greater Parkdale neighbourhood, for example, mythical Tibetan-ness functions as a commodity rather than a threat – the sense of invasion and, perhaps more importantly, the silencing of its racial character are common to both the agency and the neighbourhood. My interviews with PARC staff reveal further investments in racial neoliberalism and the civility of the enlightened bourgeois. This is particularly notable in the fear of being perceived as racist, even while making tacitly racist remarks. For example, one staff person recalls that the true scope of the Tibetan problem was revealed to her when she noticed the members “acting racist”: “The members were seriously pissed off – ‘those fucking Tibetans are taking all of our jobs!’ right? You know how it goes. And then it became about race. And all those other things, then, started really heating up for people.”

Staff involved at the time remember the “Tibetan period” ending with a sort of cultural reconciliation, wherein representatives from PARC and Tibetan “elders” came together to determine a solution: “We asked [the Tibetan Community Centre] if we should show them what we were doing [with the volunteer program] or did they want people to keep coming to PARC?” “Actually,” one staff continues, “they said, if you could show us how you do the forms, how you
do the scheduling, and who to contact at the City, we’ll do it ourselves. And we will work with our community, because we want to do that anyway.” And thus the problem was solved: “So the elders were all about the same thing – Tibetans rebuilding their own lives in a new homeland, so they’re the same principles that PARC had.” A staff concludes: “This is how you solve issues. You deal with them. You engage. You don’t start racializing, and all the thing that go with that.”

The attribution of the “racializing” process to a handful of ignorant PARC members, and the insistence that a de-racinated solution was found conceals the fact PARC’s so-called “Tibetan period” was resolved by racial segregation. The Tibetan community, deemed culturally incongruous with the tacitly white member body politic, was expelled. This dynamic is not named as racialized. In order to remain civil, it cannot be. There is a subtle insinuation that to mention race at all is to be racist. This follows Goldberg’s (1993) astute encapsulation of the racial neoliberal mode: “Race is irrelevant, but all is race” (p. 6). PARC has come to perpetuate what Goldberg (2009) calls “antiracialism,” wherein race to come to represent identity in excess and whiteness to represent unmarkedness, freedom from labels, universality (p. 10).

3.5.5. Flexibility as Racial Neoliberalism

According to Bourdieu (1998), neoliberalism represents “the absolute reign of flexibility” (para. 8). PARC has adapted to the flexible times by cultivating organizational adaptability, growing and shrinking programs to fit the changing needs of the free market. Shifts in agency structure and governance allowed PARC to preserve many life-saving resources for the poor. Further, by chasing new funding streams, PARC was able to include much-needed case management, outreach and social housing programs to its list of services. Yet PARC also shuttered its Indigenous and sex worker-specific programming and was patently unable to adapt to the needs of Tibetan newcomers. In this way, I argue, PARC has become flexible along unspoken but strictly delineated gendered and racial lines, which go unnoticed as a result of PARC’s foundational whiteness and masculinity. As a result, while racism and sexism are “prevailing, pernicious, persistent and destructively productive” (Goldberg, 2009, p. 100), they are also unmentioned. PARC’s organizational flexibility becomes a function of what Goldberg (2009) refers to as “born again racism,” or racism without race (p. 23).
3.6. Civil Neighbours: The PARC Ambassadors and Behavioural Branding

3.6.1. Selling Recovery

PARC has recently rebranded itself as a community resource with a relatively abstract set of values - “Belonging, community,” “Respect, dignity, integrity,” “Encouragement,” “Equity, fairness,” “Choices and opportunity,” “Freedom of expression,” “Confidentiality” and “Continual self-improvement” (PARC, 2007, p. 5). This expansion of the agency’s mission and image has been instrumental in PARC’s survival, attracting donors and advocates from a wide variety of previously foreclosed spaces. A close examination of PARC’s new image and, more accurately, its method of dissemination, shows that PARC’s increasing appeal to the local elite relied on its ability to ape established norms of social civility. As Coleman (2006) explains, “The meanings of the word ‘civility’ in the Oxford English Dictionary extend from ‘a community of citizens collectively,’ ‘good polity; orderly state,’ and ‘conformity to the principles of social order’ to ‘the state of being civilized; freedom from barbarity’ and ‘polite or liberal education…good breeding.’” (p. 10). “Taken together,” he continues, “these various meanings show that the English language’s concept of civility combines the temporal notion of civilization as progress….with the moral-ethical concept of a (relatively) peaceful order” (Coleman, 2006, p. 10). I argue that the PARC Ambassadors functionally tied the ideas of mental health recovery to upholding of the behavioural norms of the status quo. This simultaneously expanded PARC’s reach, opening up new and important lines of communication with the local elite, and narrowed its service scope, establishing preferential treatment for those who could adequately perform civility.

The PARC Ambassadors both exemplified and propagated PARC’s new brand. Not only did they quash what many of my interviewees believe was a nascent NIMBY resurgence; they also seem to have created an unprecedented groundswell of support for Edmond Place and PARC. Since the Ambassadors, a staff explains, “you see the community come out and support us.” A manager agrees: “I’ve seen businesses and neighbours who at one point had wanted to do nothing with us, to, you know, now they’re okay us….and now all of a sudden we have, like, random businesses give random donations, ‘hey, we heard what you’re doing, we love it!’” This,
he tells me, is a direct result of “reaching out and educating folks about mental health and the power of membership.” The educational model of the PARC Ambassadors is important here: Outreach was conducted door-to-door, forcing local homeowners and business proprietors to meet PARC members face-to-face.

Personal contact was key to the Ambassadors’ success. As Brule (2010) puts it, “The question that PARC tested with the ambassador program was: Is it harder to voice discriminatory opinions when ‘those’ people are in the room, at your door, and part of the debate instead of having professionals and proxies representing them as clients?” (p. 12). The answer, it seems, was yes. The PARC Ambassadors proved that social housing tenants could be “good neighbours” by showing the local elite how pleasant they could be. As one Ambassador tells me:

When we started, most people will willing to listen, but some people got really angry. So we were careful. We didn’t put flyers in the mailboxes that said “no flyers,” but if we knocked on the door and people answered, we gave them the flyers and asked them to look and said, “We’ll be back.” We were very nice.

Slowly but surely, the PARC Ambassadors gained the trust of business proprietors and homeowners all over Parkdale:

And the more we went out and went back, we were educating and informing people – and a lot of us, we didn’t have to do it, but we disclosed our own history with either mental health issues, addiction, emotional issues, poverty, you know, getting social assistance – so people found out a lot about that, which they didn’t know. It was all voluntary, so we didn’t actually do it at first, but once we got more familiar with the people, we did. And I think they were very impressed with that – they were really impressed with the fact that we were working for PARC, that it was our centre, and the building was for us, people like us.

As this participant explains, the PARC Ambassadors were seen as representatives of the entire PARC community. The program, however, was quite small: Only eight of the approximately 60 members who initially applied were chosen. The 2012 PARC Census notes that only 3% of drop-in members have participated in the program (p. 9). It also prioritized a particular kind of member: those who were seen as outgoing and intelligent. As one staff puts it, “PARC has a lot of people at PARC, a lot of members, a lot of them were quite talented and skilled and educated and we thought, well, why not use some of them to go out and talk to people in the neighbourhood?” The PARC Ambassadors were hired for their ability to perform what Goldberg
(2009) calls “bourgeois control and direction, refinement, urbanity, sociability and courtesy – in short, civility” (p. 41).

An interesting counterpoint to the civil comportment required of the PARC Ambassadors was the emphasis on their relationship to “mental illness” and “recovery.” As one Ambassador tells me, all participants in the program had “a story of recovery,” and telling it was seen as a crucial method of “combatting the stigma in the neighbourhood.” Another PARC Ambassador tells me that disclosing his own story of recovery was a tried and true tactic for gaining support:

I remember when we had a meeting for the community about Edmond Place and the blueprints, what it’s gonna be like, and so on and so forth, and there was a gentleman that started talking bad about it and about PARC and I said, “how could you? That place has helped me out so much,” and I told him about my recovery from mental illness…I just let him have it, and he seemed to have changed his mind. He was 100% for that building after that.

“Recovery” stories appear to have been incredibly useful in galvanizing Parkdale’s bourgeois to support PARC. As a long-time member tells me, “I think that many community members have had mental health touch their life close enough so that they are, like, ‘oh, that could happen to me!’ and they’re less likely to be NIMBYs.” The PARC Ambassadors representation of recovery may have been uniquely appealing to the elite because of its connection to civility. The Ambassadors marketed Edmond Place as a place for people “on the way to recovery, on the way to the mainstream of life” (Hatfield, 2008, para. 18). This establishes recovery as a linear path towards behavioural normalcy. Such a narrow notion made it difficult to become or remain an Ambassador. As one long-time Ambassador tells me, “When they find someone better, they utilize that person and push you aside.” He tells me that after two years, he lost his position as an Ambassador with “no warning, no notice, nothing.” When asked why, he shrugs: “They found someone they liked better,” he tells me. “They wanted his story.”

3.6.2. Entrenching White Civility

The PARC Ambassador Program was designed to market Edmond Place as an asset to the Parkdale neighbourhood. As PARC’s Executive Director explains to a local journalist, the Ambassadors hoped to turn “people who have been looked at as pariahs” into “viable neighbours” (Hatfield, 2008, para. 12). The audience was explicitly elite: the BIA, the PRA and
individual business proprietors and homeowners. This turn towards the bourgeois was calcified in PARC’s new motto. In 2007, the agency introduced a revamped mission statement: “Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre: A Community Where People Rebuild Their Lives” (PARC, 2007, p. 2). This would appear in the PARC Ambassador’s outreach material in a slightly altered form as “PARC – re:Building Lives” (PARC, 2011, p. 4). The shift is subtle, but significant. The “re:” here changes the address from a potentially broad audience to a much narrower one – those who might be interested in discourse on the subject of “rebuilding lives.” When asked to summarize the goal of the PARC Ambassadors, members and staff alike said the following: “turning NIMBYs,” that is, Not-In-My-Backyard-ers, “into YIMBYs” or Yes-In-My-Backyard-ers. This phrase reveals the shared sense that the local elite have long been and would remain the subjects, the “my” of Parkdale. The best the Ambassadors could hope for, it seems, would be to offer something to the local elite and benefit from their charity. PARC Ambassadors gave the formerly hostile local elite an opportunity to see themselves not only as benevolent and charitable but, indeed, as cutting edge.

The image of civility as progress is “deeply informed by a central value of whiteness that Richard Dyer calls ‘spirit’ or ‘enterprise’” (Coleman, 2006, p. 12). Coleman (2006) writes:

According to Dyer, enterprise is often presented as the sign of White spirit – that is, to a valuation of energy, will, discovery, science, progress, the building of nations, the organization of labour, and especially leadership. ‘The idea of leadership,’ he writes, ‘suggests both a narrative of human progress and the peculiar quality required to effect it. Thus white people [are understood naturally to] lead humanity forward because of the temperamental qualities of leadership: will power, far-sightedness, energy’ (Dyer, as cited in Coleman, 2006, p. 12).

The PARC Ambassadors sold Edmond Place as an innovative project, and offered local elite the opportunity to see themselves as leaders in social integration and inclusive planning. The project was marketed as “a better place to live,” “an innovative and accessible model of housing,” that is fundamentally “unique” (“About,” 2011, paras. 1 – 3). A few weeks before it opened, students of sustainable architecture and inclusive urban development from Denmark and Sweden came to take a tour of the facility, an event which was proudly covered in the Bloor West Villager (Hatfield, 2010, para. 8). Edmond Place opened in 2010 with a great deal of support from local artists, homeowners and business people. It had successfully sold the idea of PARC has a good neighbour to the elite.
3.6.3. Evicting Excess

The PARC Ambassadors marketed PARC as a site of recovery and renewal. Their pleasant personal comportment functioned to sell Edmond Place tenants as pleasant, civil subjects who would make a desirable addition to Parkdale’s growing social mix. But Edmond Place 29-units were not earmarked for the PARC Ambassadors. To the contrary, they were designed to house people with significant and ongoing “mental health and substance use issues” (Edmond Place, 2015, para. 4). According to my interviewees, Edmond Place tenants were intended to be those referred to in the colloquial language of institutional social work as “the hardest to house.” The actual Edmond Place are people whose involvement in street-based economies takes them well outside the realm of civility and, indeed, of legibility to the local elite. This dissonance would prove deadly for some.

The Bloor West Villager describes Edmond Place as a beautiful and harmonious community site where tenants “successfully, independently, and with dignity” (Hatfield, 2010, para. 8). Yet many who live inside the building find it a difficult environment at best. There have been numerous instances of violence, including an attempted murder. Multiple tenants have died of overdoses. Further, since the building opened in 2010, at least four tenants have faced eviction orders from the Edmond Place administration. All of these tenants have been specifically involved in the street drug trade. In 2011, eviction proceedings began against a woman who lived at the building. Her addiction issues and “mental health”-related behaviour were cited by the agency as too disruptive to manage. In 2012, while her case was before the landlord and tenant board, she came home extremely intoxicated, unable to find her key. She interacted with a few of her neighbours, but they were unable to help her enter her apartment. She laid down in the hallway, seized, and died. Her body remained there until it was discovered by a weekend staff in the morning, who reported to me during my fieldwork that she “will never get over it.” “Her body was gray,” she says with visible emotion. An Edmond Place staff person recalls being asked to watch the surveillance tapes her final hours with the police. “How could PARC have just let this happen?” another staff asks.

These awful incidents described above are the result of the systemic underfunding and subsequent understaffing of Edmond Place. Oddly, despite ongoing media coverage of Edmond
Place, neither the evictions, nor the deaths, nor the lack of resources receive any press. Further, my interviewees note that such issues are rarely discussed openly at PARC. This resonates with my recollection of working there. I remember a strong feeling at the agency that death and eviction at Edmond Place were simply unavoidable, a sad inevitability of being a social housing provider. Notably, however, I also remember feeling that they were unspeakable – there was a tacit understanding that we could discuss them as individual tragedies amongst ourselves, but it would be destabilizing and inappropriate to ask what they said about the agency at large. It’s important to note that in a climate of over-reporting, underfunding and generalized oppression, such deaths are indeed bound to happen. I do not hold PARC uniquely responsible. What I am interested in, rather, is how the culture of silence contributes to these situations; and, further, how it becomes normalized. Certainly, this silence ensures a dissonance between the idealized image of PARC and the actualities of member lives. In so doing, it establishes violence, addiction and so-called criminality as inherently outside of appropriate member subjectivity. The Ambassadors functioned to brand Edmond Place as a site of neighborly integration that would appeal to the local elite. This may have created a situation where Edmond Place tenants involved in criminalized economies, incongruous with the new PARC brand, became difficult to deal with, anomalies in institutional arrangements that were not designed to accommodate them.

3.6.4. Branding as Racial Neoliberalism

Goldberg (2009), following Mbembe, notes that civility is considered “a key condition of citizenship, of belonging to (and being at ease with and within) a society, formally and informally” (p. 35). In Canada, civil comportment and, indeed, civil citizenship, is always borne of whiteness. It becomes, Coleman (2006) notes, borrowing a phrase from Jennifer Henderson, “a means by which ‘race has been attached not just to bodies, but also to forms of conduct’ (18)” (as cited in Coleman, 2006, p. 12). The whiteness of the Edmond Place vision of civility is perhaps most apparent when contrasted with the racialization of Edmond Yu himself. The coroner’s inquest acknowledged the role that racism played in Yu’s death. Recommendation two reads as follows: “The Ministry of Health should…be encouraged to ensure that ethno-specific psychiatric services and community based non-medical outreach programs are funded” (NFB/ONF, n.d., p. 9). Yet PARC’s persistent reference to Edmond’s story is completely de-
racinated. PARC Ambassadors tell me that “mental illness” was to blame for his death. The PARC Annual Report cites “the war on poor people”:

On February 20, 1997, Edmond Yu was shot dead by the police. Edmond’s death and story shocked Toronto. It was a graphic portrait of violence, homelessness and the search for hope against crushing odds. For PARC and other similar communities, Edmond’s tragedy represented what happens when the world chooses to make war on poor people instead of making war on poverty (PARC, 1997, p. 10)

The emphasis on class is echoed by PARC’s partners. As one tells me, “I think class – I think class is a big deal. And the PARC Ambassador program I think did a great job consciousness-raising and breaking down peoples’ assumptions about class.” This overwriting of racial dynamics – and, indeed, pathologizing stigma – with a class-only explanation echoes the tacitly white vision of social mix in Parkdale at large.

3.7. Conclusion

Over the past 20 years, PARC has prioritized adaptability and change, reorganizing its governance and employment structure, diversifying its funding base and disinvesting from identity-specific services in order to pursue new directions as the opportunities arose. By the early 2000s, PARC had shifted its focus from psychiatric survivor service provision to broader neighbourhood integration, generating a salable image for itself as a keystone of Parkdale’s social mix. The decision to adopt these neoliberal models has allowed PARC to remain a life-sustaining support to many of the neighbourhood’s poor, marginalized or street-involved residents. It has also turned PARC further towards whiteness, masculinity and the performance of civility. In so doing, PARC has become paradoxically entrenched as both an essential, and essentially politicized, advocate and an exemplary site of racial neoliberalism. This, in turn, has had both material and discursive consequences for Parkdale’s most marginalized, especially those who experience systemic sexism, racialized poverty, colonial violence, or are marked with a visible madness that cannot be civilized.

The consequences of racial neoliberalism at PARC are rather extreme: Programs have been shut down, whole communities have been ejected, and, indeed, people have died. Yet they emerge not from malice or ignorance but, instead, from good intention and the belief that there was no other way. PARC’s development shows that without explicit and consistent attention to the subsumed
racist, sexist and re-colonizing elements of neoliberalization, even those sites which are
genuinely defiant will rely on the subtle machinations of white supremacy and heteropatriarchal
power to survive.

Given the pervasive, totalizing nature of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy and the colonial
mandate, PARC’s development opens up questions that I am unsure how to answer. What would
have changed if PARC had focused more energy on maintaining programs for women, sex
workers or Indigenous people? How would PARC be now if it had turned towards the mental
and emotional needs of the Tibetan newcomer community? Perhaps most importantly, why were
we unable to look at the racial and gendered dimensions of our neoliberalization? I hope to take
these questions with me as I move forward in this work.
Chapter 3

Building a Paradox:
Property Ownership and the Gentrification of Agency Space

4.1. Introduction

PARC’s mandate, mission and scope have changed dramatically over the past 36 years. Some elements of the agency, however, seem permanently fixed. The racial and gendered demographics of the membership, for example, are nearly as homogeneous in 2016 as they were in the 1980s. Further, agency discourse remains focused on the ideas of collectivity and community participation, distilled in the narrative of PARC as a “home.” This rhetoric persists despite increasing feelings of alienation voiced by both the membership and the staff. Many of my interviewees express feeling “awkward,” “different,” even sometimes “unwelcome” in the current PARC space. This begs the question: Which community is the subject of PARC’s communitarian story? For whom is PARC a home?

A careful examination of both continuity and change at PARC reveals a dissonance between the agency’s ongoing discursive commitment to the members and its increasing material focus on the local elite. This dissonance emerges from an unacknowledged but foundational paradox: PARC strives to remain unequivocally of and for the poor, by seeking to meet the changing needs and desires of the state and private market. This paradox is apparent in the neoliberalization of organizational governance explored in the previous chapter: PARC attempted to survive as a relevant service for Parkdale’s most marginalized by following whatever funding stream was made available by the increasingly restrictive government and private market. At some level, PARC – or at least many members, staff and managers at PARC – understand that the needs of the marginalized are fundamentally at odds with those of the profit-driven market and the neoliberal state. This creates an uncomfortable ambivalence at the heart of the agency, which it attempts to reconcile through various narrative practices. The story of unfortunate but necessary neoliberalism explored in the previous chapter is one. The story of building ownership as a stalwart against gentrification is another.
This chapter retells PARC’s history through its two built environments – 1499 Queen Street West and 194 Dowling. I show how these physical sites function as an archive of the agency’s paradoxical desires. These desires – and, perhaps more specifically, this ambivalence – ultimately entrench the primary consciousness of PARC as that of the enlightened bourgeois. In order to fully understand this subject at PARC, I must once again map his landscape of emergence. Just as Parkdale gives PARC its identity, so do PARC’s buildings give its primary subjects theirs. Indeed, for almost all of my interviewees – from managers to members, external partners to Executive Directors – PARC is first and foremost a place. “PARC is Parkdale’s living room,” one person tells me. “PARC is a place to go when you have nowhere else to turn,” says another. A survey of PARC’s Annual Reports confirms that its buildings have long been used metonymically to stand in for the agency at large.

In an interesting reversal of the structural neoliberalization explored in the previous chapter, PARC’s spatial discourse has been relatively consistent throughout its history even as its material space has dramatically changed. When PARC first opened, it ran a small program out of a rented storefront space at 1499 Queen Street. Through the years, it expanded. PARC now owns and operates not only the entirety of 1499 Queen but also the adjacent property at 194 Dowling. The transition from tenant to landlord to major property owner has been rhetorically figured as a deepening of PARC’s community commitments. Functionally, however, it has forced the agency to align with the legal, political and social strictures of the gentrified neighbourhood.

This chapter argues that PARC’s built environment has gentrified in much the same way that that Parkdale: through eviction, restriction and, perhaps most importantly, silence. Like the enlightened bourgeois of Parkdale, PARC has ardently and genuinely opposed revanchist gentrification, attempting to preserve a kind of community spirit and social mix. Simultaneously, however, it has aestheticized, securitized and privatized its internal and external spaces in accordance with the demands of neoliberal embourgeoisement. The history of spatial decision making at PARC reveals that the agency was slowly but surely pushed towards harmony with the larger neighbourhood by reactive (rather than proactive) planning governed by paradoxical unspoken desires.
In what follows, I use Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) three interlocking modalities of space – perceived, conceived and lived – in order to apprehend gentrification at its more local level. In Lefebvre’s (1991) work, perceived space refers to a given material place and its attendant physical attributes. Conceived space refers to a set of normatively sanctioned representations of place as such – blueprints, drawings, legal documents and any conceptual renderings of space without people. Finally, lived space refers to space as it is experienced (and narrated) individually and socially – that is, “space as directly lived through associated images and symbols” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39, emphasis in the original). While I do not mobilize these terms specifically, this chapter pulls from data at all three levels of Lefebvre’s triad and draws heavily from his ideas if not his work. For example, I explore perceived space through my own ethnographic observations of spatial arrangement within PARC and my interviewees’ accounts of their daily spatial practices. I interrogate conceived space via documents and discourse concerning land – City memos, heritage designations, zoning regulation and so forth. I primarily focus, however, on how space is lived. For this, I turn to narrative data from my interviews with staff, members and external partners, as well as official PARC discourse production from Annual Reports, the PARC and Edmond Place websites and the media.

In the Canadian settler-colony all space is produced in complicity with, defiance of or relation to white supremacy, heteropatriarchy and colonial domination. These forms of power are organized in land and law through the logic of property. Property – or the “ownership model” – “shapes understandings of the possibilities of social life, the ethics of human relations, and the ordering of economic life” in Canada (Blomley, 2004, p. 3). As a nexus of power, it not only dictates the perceived, conceived and lived orders of spatial arrangement; it also anticipates bodies, delimits movement and inaugurates subjects. Property logic undergirds the production of individuated settler citizen subject against whom all others are compared; the “unitary, solitary and identifiable owner, separated from others by boundaries that protect him or her from non-owners” (Blomley, 2004, p. 2). This chapter looks at how property ownership has functioned to both consolidate and obfuscate white, masculine, bourgeois power at PARC.

In the analysis below, I call upon the work of spatial theorists Blomley (2004), Jacobs (1996), Massey (2005) and Puwar (2004) to track how access is organized and bodies and identities are emplaced at PARC’s two sites: 1499 Queen Street West and 194 Dowling. Drawing from
gentrification theorists Deutsche (1998), and Shaw (2007), I further connect PARC’s built environments to changes in the surrounding neighbourhood. This use of gentrification relies on the belief that the process is multi-scalar; it occurs in a neighbourhood simultaneous to and, indeed, in and through its manifestation at the level of the street or the building. As Neil Smith (1992) writes, the “production of scale can begin to provide the language that makes possible a more substantive and tangible spatialized politics,” but only insomuch as various geographical scales are understood as “nested rather than hierarchical” (p. 66). The flows of power that invent and enforce the subject, the body, the community, the city, the region and the nation interlock.

This chapter is organized as follows: First, I explore the dissonance between agency rhetoric about the built environment and the material landscape itself. I note how this dynamic is echoed in the chasm between external partners’ and the local elites’ idea of PARC, and the lived experience of the membership. Next, I ask: How did an agency that so openly opposes embourgeoisement come to assimilate its spatial practice? I examine the history of spatial decision making at PARC in order to understand the incremental processes that brought the agency to today. Finally, I show how PARC’s 1499 Queen Street West and 194 Dowling buildings can be seen as gentrified spaces.

4.2. Siting Dissonance: PARC and Edmond Place

4.2.1. PARC: Materiality and Discourse

There is a wide chasm between the ways that PARC talks about its space, and the ways that same space is organized and experienced. Discursively, PARC is figured as accessible, welcoming, and open. Structurally, however, increasing surveillance and enclosure have led to feelings of displacement and alienation amongst the membership and staff. In order to understand the dissonance between the rhetorical and felt experiences of PARC space, it is first necessary to describe the space itself. PARC occupies 1499 Queen Street, a three-story building on the south side of Queen Street at Parkdale’s western edge. Its red brick façade is in the neo-Georgian style, with columns, high arched windows, and decorative accents. The custom-made bike racks out front and the curving burnished metal “welcome” sign lend the building a contemporary feel that blends with the increasingly upscale neighbourhood.
Two entranceways are visible from Queen Street. On the eastern end, beneath the welcome sign and a small surveillance camera, a glass door with an automatic push-button opener leads to the PARC drop-in. Seven days a week, from mid-morning through mid-afternoon, the doors swing wide and the sidewalk bustles as people in various emotional and behavioural states come in and out or linger in its frame, smoking, talking, or gazing at the street. Sometimes, an ambulance pulls up in a hurry and several uniformed EMTs rush in with their equipment; other times, a police car will sit, parked and idling, out front. Around 1:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 4:30 p.m. on Friday and 3:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, this part of the sidewalk clears, leaving a small clot of regulars who drag huge garbage bins out for collection, or lean on their walkers waiting for transit. There is a subtle but concerted effort on the part of PARC staff to ensure that no one loiters outside too long after the drop-in closes.

The western entrance is far less busy. This small glass door is marked by a clean-lined, sans-serif metal sign that reads “PARC.” It leads to a small foyer with locked mailboxes, a stairwell and an elevator. On weekdays, this door is open during regular drop-in hours. On Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Tuesday and Thursdays from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., a sandwich board sign reading “Parkdale Tool Library” appears outside and the doors are propped open, inviting a trickle of local homeowners and artists into the lobby and down the stairs.

Through the main drop-in door, visitors are greeted by a giant television screen called a “wayfinder” hanging from the ceiling, cycling through messages about the agency, program schedules and other important announcements. To the right is a small receptionist desk and, just behind it, a large room, separated by a wall of windows and lined with individual computer stations. The drop-in has multiple private offices: two on the left hand side, one of which contains the digital alarm system keypad, and two on the right. All of the offices lock with newly digitized “fob” keys. Aside from the offices, the drop-in is extremely open; the foyer gives way to a large room with Pergo floors, folding tables and brightly coloured plastic chairs. Depending on the day, this space can be relatively empty or filled almost to bursting. At the back, near the coffee bar, is a large industrial kitchen with windows and doors that can be closed off completely to separate cooking duties from the activities on the main floor. Beside the kitchen are trays for dirty cups and plates and a large blackboard that details the day’s menu. Occasionally, there are small posted signs reminding drop-in participants “one meal only” or “no seconds.”
kitchen, a door leads to a hallway with two single-stall washrooms with showers, one of which is physically accessible, featuring an automatic door and barrier-free bathing space. Another door separates the hallway which leads to the kitchen coordinator’s office, a second entrance to the kitchen, the garbage room, and storage rooms. Another door leads to the basement, which hosts a weekly food bank run by another agency, the offices of the Silver Brush social enterprise, more storage, and the Parkdale Tool Library.

The stairs in the main drop-in are lined with colourful paintings. They lead to the second floor foyer, a small space with a bench, telephone, a cork board with multiple announcements, a locked office and the elevator. This foyer is separated from the rest of the floor by an enclosed administrative area with windows that can be closed by corrugated metal shades and a locked door. Behind the windows, which are open during drop-in hours, receptionists make copies and faxes, distribute referral information and screen clients. Those with confirmed appointments are given access to a secondary open space, with its own digital security system. In this space, there are large photo displays of PARC’s past and seven locked doors – one leads to tiny, private meeting room; one to the staff kitchen; one to the volunteer coordinator’s office and “archive room”; one to the peer workers’ office, with its multiple cubicles; one to the communication director’s office; one to the financial manager’s office; one to the program director’s office and finally, one to the POP office. The POP office has four desks for individual workers and a small, communal meeting space; another door leads to the private office of the POP manager.

Past the administrative area is a set of branching hallways each with multiple locked doors. Following the hallways straight leads to two gender-segregated, multi-stall washrooms, the shared “Healing Centre” program space, with its lavender walls, long table and view of Queen Street, and commercial tenant areas. West Neighbourhood House (formerly St. Christopher House) rents a large office down this hall; Working for Change (formerly OCAB) rents two. Another office further on hosts a rotating cast of partner agencies. Following the hallways to the left leads to another set of doors with a small electronic pad to update the fobs. Beyond this is a locked server closet for the agency’s computer needs, the office of the Executive Director and facilities manager and two matte-gray meeting rooms – “meeting room 1” with a clear-glass windows, a large table, sink, coffee pot and cabinets; and “meeting room 2,” with fogged
windows, a small table and a potted plant. Between them, on the wall, is a second large “wayfinder” television screen. Beyond meeting room 2 is a stairwell that leads to the third floor.

The third floor is only accessible to those with a key – the elevator requires fob access and a locked door at the top of the stairs ensures that only staff, tenants and their guests can enter. A long, pink, green and blue painted hallway with a large abstract painting connects the large laundry room and ten large, wood-floored, geared-to-income apartments; eight studios, two of which are barrier free, and two one-bedroom apartments designed for couples.

PARC is colourful, open, large and bright. It is also extremely regulated and controlled. Services are restricted by a variety of gatekeeping measures, including physical barriers, digitally programmed keys, surveillance cameras, and paper signs. Opening and closing hours dictate who goes where, and staff practice assists in ensuring that the physical space functions much like other agencies: Specific services are meted out in specific ways by specific people to specific people.

PARC’s rhetoric about its space tells only one side of this story. The 2014 Annual Report characterizes PARC as an “animated and accessible community hub,” (PARC, 2014, p. 2) or, as the Executive Director puts it, “a commons.” He writes:

Communitas (in Latin) or Commons: the idea that neighbours and the community have a shared equality and, in my mind, shared wealth through what is built together….It is within these ideas that PARC develops its reason to be, the reach and grasp of a community who dreams of a better place for all (PARC, 2014, p. 1)

PARC’s space is figured here as welcoming and warm, a collaboratively-generated neighbourhood “commons.” The “open doors” – that is, the policy of leaving the front doors unlocked during drop-in hours – functions as a metaphor for PARC’s inclusive accessibility. The “Mission / Vision / Values” page on the PARC website notes the first “PARC value” is to “welcome people: PARC is a safe community with open doors” (“Mission, Vision, Values,” 2015). As a manager explains:

It’s a totally open space. Anybody can walk through the door. I love the fact that we have that philosophy, people can just walk through the door and get any service… it’s a low-barrier environment where people can just come and be, really. People can come here and be in all different stages of their personal recovery, wherever they’re at, and find a place.
An administrator agrees, “It’s a living room. That’s what PARC is. It’s a community-building mechanism, a portal, a space where people can gather.” The 2014 Annual Report notes that PARC’s physical space provides all who come in with “sense of belonging” (PARC, 2014, p. 1).

As a general rule, those outside the agency seem to experience PARC as described in its official rhetoric. An agency partner tells me how unique PARC’s “home environment” is, with “sunlight and plants and open space”: “There aren’t a lot of the boundaries and restrictions of typical services. People are welcome to just be in the space.” A member of the Parkdale Residents Association tells me that PARC is “very open,” and “very visible”: “People spill out onto the street.” Another resident tells me he has a strong sense that members own the agency: “They know it’s their space. And that’s a good thing.” This sense of member-ownership is cited by many as both a reason that Parkdale has not yet gentrified and a bulwark against the current threat of encroachment. As an agency partner tells me, PARC has worked within Parkdale to “ensure inclusion”: “It has been a driving force in ensuring that gentrification doesn’t completely taken over Parkdale,” she tells me, “and so far it has more or less succeeded.”

Many within the agency, however, experience PARC as increasingly “boundaried” and “controlled.” Members tell me that they no longer have any “decision making power” in how the space operates. A long-term member tells me:

> This used to be wide open, people used to be able to sit down, talk to the clients, this and that – now you come up here, and it’s like a medical centre. You’ve got that glass up here, you have to ask for staff, you have to wait or go back downstairs and be buzzed in. They put up a boundary.

This feeling of restriction is echoed by many of the members I spoke to. It is also common amongst staff. Many front-line employees feel as if something significant has been lost in the past few decades. A long-term worker tells me that the agency used to be “chaotic”: “It was havoc. There was a pool table and there were fights around the pool table. There was the coffee bar, but not in the way they have it now.” He continues, “but one thing struck me really well that I couldn’t compare to other agencies at that time: Decisions were made by members and staff sitting around the table, talking about what needs to happen, what should happen.” “Over time,” he concludes, “that has totally vanished. There is no longer experience-based co-design going on, which there used to be.” Here, the chaos of physical space, exemplified by the pool table,
becomes synonymous with open, accessible, member-driven practice. Both, he tells me, have been lost.

The sense of spatial foreclosure has created an atmosphere of fear amongst members and staff. While external partners believe the agency will continue to stave off gentrification, others see the changing environment as an indication that embourgeoisement has already occurred. One staff tells me that the agency is “starting to look like the Ikea cafeteria” – that is, “corporate and closed off.” “Who are we redesigning for, anyway?” she asks. Another goes so far as to say, “There’s no sense of community anymore.” A member tells me, sadly but with great certainty, “They’re gonna shut it down. The government is gonna say it’s a waste of money and shut it down.” Another agrees: “Parkdale’s gonna be a rich area soon. You’re gonna have to have money to live in Parkdale…Sooner or later, PARC won’t be here either. People are gonna offer you guys billions and billions of dollars for this property, and it’s gonna be pushed out.” Another tells me with certainty, “In 10 years, PARC won’t be here anymore.”

4.2.2. Edmond Place: Materiality and Discourse

A similar dissonance is apparent at PARC’s second site at 194 Dowling. Much like 1499 Queen Street West, Edmond Place is discursively constructed as an open, accessible space, a force against displacement. When it opened in 2010, it was understood as a manifestation of Parkdale’s commitment to social mix, and a barrier to increasing embourgeoisement (Findlay-Shirras, n.d.; Groen, 2011; Lastman, 2012; Peeksker, 2013; Schofield, 2013). The current PARC website explains:

Edmond Place is about people, community and a better place to live…for people with lived experience of mental health and substance use issues…. Edmond Place was named after Edmond Yu, a gentle man who lived in the building before its transformation. Today’s Edmond Place is the kind of place he could have called home (“Supportive Housing,” 2015, paras. 7 – 9).

Many of PARC’s external partners feel strongly connected to Edmond Place. As a representative from the PRA tells me, “Edmond Place is a good thing. It was resolved locally, and it was inside the community’s interest.” An external partner agrees: “PARC has a degree of passionate commitment to enacting a vision. You can see it so clearly in the story of Edmond Place, of Edmond Yu’s experience, his relationship with PARC, his death and the response from PARC
is…it’s amazing.” She continues, “That in a really short number of years, 29 beautiful, accessible units of housing could be built and a building owned – it’s incredible.”

The physical space of Edmond Place is quite beautiful. From the outside, the building shares some attributes with PARC’s headquarters next door. Like 1499 Queen Street, 194 Dowling fits into the burgeoning local style of heritage conservation with modern amenities. Unlike PARC, however, its Georgian façade on Queen Street West is a registered heritage site. A large, commemorative stone plaque facing Queen Street reads, “1912,” the year of its construction. A partial fourth floor has been added to the otherwise meticulously restored building. Between 2009 and 2010, while Edmond Place was under construction, the scaffolding was along Queen was decorated with a large, orange sign that read “Home.” The original Queen Street entrance, with a true arch window flanked by columns, is not currently in use – workers, tenants, and guests enter through the new doorway, a replica of the old, past the new flagstones at 194 Dowling Street around the corner.

Inside Edmond Place are many large pieces of art. The foyer features a chandelier made of retro sunglasses. A second chandelier made of bronze tubing was donated by artist Dennis Lin. A charcoal drawing of Edmond Yu bent reverently over a tea candle, hangs in the entranceway. A small, windowed staff office with two workstations, a bar fridge and filing cabinets faces the front door. Just down the hall is a corkboard with announcements, a locked single-stall accessible washroom, and multiple individual apartments which come furnished with Ikea tables, chairs and mattresses, a television, and multiple implements for the small kitchen, complete with a fridge, sink, oven with a stovetop and microwave. The building features 29 of these self-contained units of affordable housing over its four floors, a mix of bachelors and one-bedrooms, a handful of which were completely barrier free, each with its own bathroom with tub and shower. All of the hallways in the building have large pieces of art

In addition to the apartments, each of Edmond Place’s four floors has a community space. The ground floor’s community room has a long couch, coffee table, flat-screen television, and a working antique electric organ. There is also an artist-designed table with matching stools and a small kitchen nook with black cherry and glass kitchen cupboards. The common room on the second floor features a small, bright kitchen with a low table made of reclaimed wood. The third
floor has a kitchen and program space, both of which also house pieces of custom-made furniture. The fourth floor has a large community room and a kitchen island with built-in stools and a stone slab countertop. The community room opens out to the patio garden space designed by local marketing firm Digital Cement.

Much like the 1499 Queen Street West building, however, space at Edmond Place is highly regulated. A metal box and keypad to the right of the door gives visitors the ability to communicate with tenants or the front desk and request entry. The security camera pointed at the door is occasionally supplemented by a security guard in uniform, working overnights when staff aren’t in the building. The foyer leads to a second set of doors and more security cameras. All these security measures have been increased since an attempted murder in 2011, when a gunman fired nine shots into the front door and hallway as his target escaped through the back. For nearly a year, the walls were still pockmarked.

Paper signs throughout the building warn of the surveillance. Once inside, a large posted list indicates the new curfew for guests and provides the full names and aliases of those barred from the premises, and multiple surveillance cameras. Locked stairwells and an elevator which functions by fob separate the floors and the basement, which contains a large storage area, computer server room, and janitorial closet.

Increased security has not, unfortunately, translated into a sense of safety. Four Edmond Place tenants told me that they still feel “unsafe” or “at risk” in their housing. One told me that he felt he had to move due to the “dangerous activity” in the building. Simultaneously, some feel that the rules and regulations in place are inappropriate and punitive: “Why am I being punished for someone else’s crime? I didn’t shoot anybody. But I am always watched and I can’t have guests in my room. They treat me like a child.” Further, many feel that the “beauty” of the space is undercut by the lack of utility: “They cheaped out on everything,” one tells me. “It looks good to the people outside the building,” says another, “but its crap for us.”

How did such a dissonance come to be? I argue that the gap between PARC’s rhetoric and material environment – and, further, between the experiences of the local elite and the membership – emerges from an attempt to resolve the agency’s fundamental paradox in and through space. Reactive planning, lack of foresight and an inability or unwillingness to engage
with the true nature of agency ambivalence have resulted in a slow but steady repetition of the
gentrifying environment of Parkdale in the built spaces of PARC. Importantly, historical analysis
of this process shows that the building purchase and all the subsequent decisions may have been
the best available options. Certainly, land ownership has proved to be essential in PARC’s
longevity. What is most interesting in what follows is not *that* the spaces participate in colonial
logic or gentrifying practice, but *how* they do so and, perhaps even more importantly, *why* these
dynamics remain unspoken in an otherwise conscious, thoughtful organization. This chapter lays
the groundwork for understanding how both internal gentrification and silence about it entrench
enlightened bourgeois subjectivity in a way that undercuts PARC’s actual desires to attend to the
needs of the poor.

4.3. Growing the Paradox: A History of Spatial Decisions

Land in the Canadian settler-colony is always already a site of contestation. The land that 1499
Queen Street stands on, like all of Toronto, is the shared traditional territory of the Huron-
Wendat, Haudenosaunee and the Mississauga’s of the New Credit. Legally, Parkdale is governed
by the 1787 Toronto Purchase, which identified the Mississaugas of the New Credit as the only
legitimate title holders. The construction of 1499 Queen Street West in the early 1920s was thus
already an imposition on traditional forms of stewardship, governed by an illegitimate colonial
legal system. PARC remains implicated in the originary theft and ongoing oppression of the
property model. This has become inadvertently entrenched in the history of PARC’s decision
making around its primary spaces.

4.3.1. From Tenant to Landlord

Though PARC was formally incorporated in 1977, the agency didn’t officially open until 1980,
when the Ministry of Health secured a space at 1499 Queen. The building had long been an
institution in Parkdale. In 1925, owner James M. Walsh sold the property to Lakeside Recreation
Club. In 1927, the Lakeside Bowling and Recreation Centre opened on its main floor. Though
the building changed hands multiple times over its first 50 years, and its upper two floors were
renovated to host a variety of businesses and apartments, the bowling alley remained in operation
until 1979.
For the first 10 years of its existence, PARC leased a large ground-floor storefront area and a small windowless “wedge” with program space and offices on the second floor of 1499 Queen Street. The Ministry of Health provided the agency approximately $45,000 per year for rent, hydro and taxes and an additional $5,000 - $10,000 for maintenance, repairs and cleaning (PARC, 1984; PARC, 1986; PARC, 1988; PARC, 1990). PARC was not the building’s only tenant; it shared the ground-floor with Mopaba restaurant and the second floor with a handful of renters. The remainder of the second floor and third floor was divided into apartments, many of which stood vacant. In 1981, the building was purchased by Copper Crow Management Limited, whom many of my interviewees describe as “infamous Parkdale slumlords.”

From the beginning, PARC’s physical environs stood in for agency politics. Well before PARC owned the building, 1499 Queen Street was articulated as “home” for the members. My interviewees tell me that the “dive” feeling of the place was cherished as a site solidarity between staff and members; “in some ways, it really looked like the rooming houses that members lived in,” one tells me, “so it was pretty awful, but it also felt like home.”

Though the early Annual Reports stress the comfort, safety and security of the PARC, many staff were concerned that new Parkdale residents would threaten the agency’s collective “home.” As a former staff Board member shares, one staff was “really adamant that gentrifiers were coming in, the whole neighbourhood was gonna gentrify really quickly” and PARC would be “in jeopardy of losing our space.” This fear, initially limited to a single employee, was shared by staff and members alike by the mid-1980s. During this period, the building changed hands a number of times, but one thing remained the same: Landlords and property managers refused to make repairs. In 1988, the long-neglected boiler in the basement of 1499 exploded, turning the lower level into “a subterranean Venice” and full of “terrifying debris” (PARC, 1989, p. 3). After this point, a worker explains, “we went to our Ministry guy and said, ‘the building is already falling apart, the furnace is broken, winter is coming, and the place is getting cold.’” “We called on the city to enact its capacity to intervene,” he says, “and it did.” A few months later, the Ministry of Health had bought and installed a new furnace.

The 1989 Annual Report celebrates a return to normalcy after the “upheaval” of the basement flood: “Our lease has been renewed (after substantial delay)...The downstairs washrooms have
been renovated to the delight of the members and dismay of the cockroaches…. Let’s move on. Let’s renovate the upstairs! Let’s build a garden at PARC. Yes! Let’s build a garden” (pp. 3 – 4). Yet despite the triumphant rhetoric, staff remember this as a time of uncertainty: “When we went to the Ministry about the furnace, that was the signal to the owner that, like, you gotta get out of here, which was worrying, because what would happen to us?” This prediction would prove accurate; in 1990, the owners declared bankruptcy. In accordance with the 1985 Ontario Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, 1499 Queen Street West went into receivership – the building was removed from its owners and held temporarily by a company called First City Trust. Seeing an opportunity, two of the members of PARC’s staff collective wrote a letter to the Ministry of Health requesting that it free up funds to purchase the building for PARC. The request was approved in 1991.

A PARC manager recalls feeling baffled at the success of the proposal: “It was surprising that the Ministry said yes. It was an all-out buy, a power of sale or something. The total funding, in the end, was about $4 million; I think the original funding was $2.7, with the initial sale being about $1.5. They just gave it to us.” The purchase was particularly surprising because it was unprecedented; as a long-time staff reminds me, PARC was “the very first community agency to ever make the transition to landowner.” None of my interviewees could answer why the Ministry bought PARC the building. One muses: “Why did the Ministry do it? It’s a good question. Maybe the price? Maybe someone just had foresight in the Ministry that it would be a good way to go? I honestly could not tell you.”

Whatever the reason, by the time the 1991 Annual Report was released, PARC was the new owner of 1499 Queen Street West: “1991 has been an exciting year….PARC has…been able to purchase the building which will ensure our continuing existence in the same location for many more years….Next year will be an exciting one as we now have to decide what to do with the building” (PARC, 1991, p. 3). This quotation reveals two essential and contradictory elements of the building purchase narrative. One, it establishes the belief that property will ensure PARC’s longevity in the Parkdale neighbourhood. Two, it reveals the notion that ownership increases autonomy. This second sense – the belief that building ownership would give PARC the freedom to “decide what to do” – led the agency to undertake a fulsome visioning process for 1499 Queen. Over the course of the early 1990s, PARC articulated a beautiful future for the building,
imagining it as a site of member-driven economic and social opportunity, and a guarantor of the agency’s collaborative ideals. In the mid-1990s, however, PARC was forced to comply with legal, economic and social mandates inherent to land ownership. Throughout this process, the discourse of “home” as established in the 1980s endured. PARC continued to articulate its space as inherently political even as it abandoned the more explicitly defiant or member-led elements of its initial vision.

The 1991 Annual Report expresses palpable excitement and relief. It also establishes a sense of the building as a shared asset. The Report begins, “Special thanks go to our Community Program Consultant….and to the Director of the Community Mental Health Branch of the Ministry of Health, for all their work in the making of the members’ dream of owning the building become a reality” (PARC, 1991, p. 3). The implication here is that the Ministry of Health purchase gave the building to the membership as much as to PARC’s administration. It continues, “The building, which so often plagued us and distracted us from the program is now a part of the program. For the first time in PARC’s history we own our own house and it is a very big house” (PARC, 1991, p. 8). The “we” here is a common PARC gesture, designed to draw members and staff into one unified community. Members and staff present at the time confirm a strong sense of solidarity generated through shared visioning process.

In the early days of building ownership, PARC members participated in planning meetings, committees and conversations. Member interviewees report feeling like their voices were heard and respected. Staff note the “collaborative” feeling of the time. By 1992, members and staff had identified a development direction – the building space would be used to create stable employment opportunities for psychiatric survivors in renovation, maintenance and consumer-run business. In the first years of the 1990s, it appeared that this plan would come to fruition: In 1992, more than 100 members worked in the maintenance program. The Annual Report recounts, “Crews of various members helped us renovate the front reception area, kitchen, T.V. lounge, and the main hallway. Other members were employed in clean-up and construction work in other areas of the building” (PARC, 1992, p. 7). Vacant units in the building were designated for survivor-run businesses. As the 1992 Report proudly explains, “we already have a clothing store run by PARC’s members and we are leasing space to the Consumer/Survivor Information Centre…Our hope is to have many more creative projects like this” (PARC, 1992, p. 3)
The big plans of 1991 and 1992 proved more complex than initially anticipated. The member-run clothing store folded quietly in 1993 and was never mentioned again. PARC’s desire to create a member employment program was not grounded in a long-term plan; money came in dribs and drabs and some workers found themselves going long stretches between paycheques. The Finance section of the 1992 Annual Report reads:

We must apologize to all the hard workers out there who have experienced the “Who’s Paying Me? Syndrome…Or you might ask “How Much Do I Get Payed?” [sic] Is it regular reception wages, reception relief wages, afternoon maintenance wages, morning maintenance wages, volunteer, honorarium, flat rate, PARC’s Special Project’s wages or building wages?...Guess what – as long as there is still a lot of work in all areas, there is no cure…As the building is developed there will probably be more…The confusion runs all the way through the number crunching system folks, so let’s try to enjoy it (p. 15, emphasis in the original).

The sudden proliferation of work opportunities and budget lines clearly overwhelmed PARC’s small staff team. The confusion is treated here with levity. Staff and members present at the time, however, remember significant frustration as well. Notably, “who’s paying me syndrome” only applied to member employees; staff salaries were allocated directly from the Ministry of Health, and remained reliable throughout the early 1990s. It seems reasonable to imagine that staff wage insecurity would not have been tolerated for so long, nor referred to so casually. Speculation aside, though pay was consistent for staff, their roles were beginning to change.

The building was persistently articulated as a way to maintain collective and collaborative practice. Materially, however, the added responsibilities opened up new areas of specialization. As a former Board member explains, “The structure of PARC changed because they bought the building.” He continues, “One of the workers had a construction background, so he knew how to do all that, so it made sense that he would be in charge, but…” he trails off. “One you get a million dollars from the Ministry,” he concludes, “It just brings in another dynamic.”

As this Board member explains, in early 1991 a member of the PARC staff collective began to advocate for a new position in the agency. By July, PARC had created a role for him as “building manager.” After three years, the governance changed again with the reintroduction of the Executive Director position and a three-tier staff hierarchy. Many of my interviewees remember this as the result of the building manager’s personal ambition – as one recalls, “He lobbied for
the position.” Others, however, insist that the change was a “Ministry requirement.” As a long-term staff explains, “we were told by the government, ‘you either organize a hierarchy, so we can hold one person accountable, or you’re not getting the money to renovate.’ It was kind of a heart-wrenching moment for PARC as an organization.”

The acquisition of 1499 Queen Street West not only changed PARC’s internal structure; it also put the agency in a position of new power relative to building tenants. As a landlord, PARC was charged with rent collection, upkeep and, when necessary, evictions. Over the course of the 1990s, PARC slowly took over the entire building. A staff tells me:

We kicked them [all the commercial tenants] out eventually. They were not vulnerable folks. There were artists – one died of AIDS….some might have voluntarily moved out, there was one who was a pain in the ass who, because the building was in bad shape, stopped paying rent and held us for ransom…they took advantage of us, they wanted all these things done, but they knew we were a social service and we just didn’t have the money….but there was no de-housing or anything…

There is significant ambivalence in this quote. This staff doubles back on her assertions: “We kicked them out,” she begins, “they were not vulnerable folks.” Almost immediately, however, she adds, “one died of AIDS” and then, as if to reassure me, “there was no de-housing.” She resolves the palpable tension by expressing it as an inevitability: PARC’s decisions were limited. It acted as it had to act. “We were a social service,” she says, “and we just didn’t have the money.” What this interviewee grapples with, I argue, is one of the paradoxes at the heart of PARC’s building ownership. In acquiring 1499 Queen Street West, PARC became contradictory: an advocate for tenants’ rights, but also a landlord; a collaborative “home” space for members, but also a government-funded social service.

Property is a conceptual matrix which governs subjects and objects in relation to one another. The property model not only establishes land as ownable, it also identifies certain subjects or corporations as potential owners. In the settler state, property functions to exalt and/or dispossess subjects along colonial, racial and heteropatriarchal lines. As a tenant at 1499 Queen Street, PARC was subject to the whims of property by proxy. As an owner, the agency was vested with a new kind of power in the landscape of colonial urbanity.
In 1991, the title of 1499 Queen Street was transferred to PARC. Despite the persistent narrative of member-driven programming and collective ownership, members retained no legally guaranteed property right. As Nicholas Blomley (2004) writes, “the ownership model...assumes a unitary, solitary and identifiable owner, separated from others by boundaries that protect him or her from non-owners and grant the owner the power to exclude” (p. 2). Indeed, the building purchase entrenched PARC as a social service separate from, rather than run by, its membership. Of course, PARC was never truly member-run; funding always depended on its status as a non-profit with professional (if not professionalized) staff. The addition of the building asset, however, multiplied the legal sites requiring PARC to remain such an agency.

The transition from tenant to landowner granted PARC exclusionary power along multiple vectors. First and foremost, it guaranteed that collective ownership would remain a narrative rather than a legally sanctioned reality. Secondly, and of equal importance, it also catalyzed a hierarchical structure that many at the agency cite as the root of professionalization, bureaucratization and, ultimately, alienation from the membership. While some staff remember this as the result of individual ambition, others insist that role specialization was an unfortunate Ministry requirement.

Whatever happened to reinstate the hierarchy, the role of the Ministry cannot be overstated. PARC has always been a government agency. The funds allocated by the Ministry for the purchase of the building merely cemented that relationship. The Ministry remains PARC’s primary funder; for the majority of the 1990s, it provided PARC with the entirety of its operating budget. Every change to PARC’s building between the purchase in 1991 and the renovation in 1999 required Ministry approval and oversight. The narrative, however of land ownership as freedom from the state persisted. This dissonance manifests in the Annual Reports.

In 1991, PARC embarked on a planning process for the building renovations. By 1992, the agency promised the membership that these changes would begin shortly. In 1994, however, renovations still had not begun. The Annual Report explains the delay as follows:

On the surface, it seems little has changed over the past year in terms of PARC’s development plans and progress….[but] we have not been inactive…The Ministry of Health, our funder, has required PARC to develop a Functional Plan which is a complete description of our building and everything that is PARC….as many Members know, there
are more than a few complicated problems which must be solved if we are to have the kind of building and programs Members want. We are well on the road to finishing with this part of our project….Soon after that, we can begin construction. (PARC, 1994, p. 14)

The frustrated, chiding tone here does not successfully conceal the clear lack of foresight. PARC clearly did not anticipate the number of bureaucratic hoops required to undertake such an activity, especially when it was Ministry-funded. This Annual Report marks the first of what would be five years’ worth of PARC promises that building renovations were about to begin. By the time they did, the agency had changed dramatically.

Premier Mike Harris permanently rearranged Ontario’s social service landscape. The proliferation of new needs in the neighbourhood and simultaneous fear of cutbacks caused PARC to seek out new funding streams. In so doing, it shuffled its priorities. A discourse of pragmatism arose; small programs, collaborative decision making and member-run content took a back seat to survival services. The building, which had just a few years prior been a repository for members’ dreams, by 1996 was primarily viewed as a site of “shelter from the cold and weather” (PARC, 1996, p. 3). Staff remember this as the time when drop-in services were reduced to “managing chaos” and “feeding people.” Indeed, the food program became central. As the Annual Report notes, food bank lines in the late 1990s regularly extended “from our front door all the way down to the corner and sometimes even south on Beatty Avenue,” and “Friday meal line-up” meandered “from the kitchen at the back of PARC all the way to the reception area and sometimes to the entrance door, in a room where one is sometimes lucky to find a place to stand, let alone sit…” (PARC, 1997, p. 4).

As a small mental health agency in the early 1980s, PARC had been mostly invisible to the surrounding neighbourhood. As a tenant, it was always potentially subject to rental increases or eviction. The agency’s relatively low-profile, especially in the revanchist climate of the 1980s, meant that it had very little negotiating power. By the late 1990s, however, PARC had become extremely visible. Food bank lines spilled out onto Queen Street and around Beatty Avenue, and people were always crowded in the foyer, by the front door, or on the sidewalk outside. As the owner of a large property on Queen Street, PARC also wielded power. It could not easily be intimidated or displaced.
4.3.2. Renovations, Renewal and Social Housing

The addition of the building to PARC’s portfolio in 1991 added a major expense. By the mid-1990s, financial panic had set in. As explored previously, in the late 1990s, PARC identified partnership and expansion into the private market as essential to resolve such uncertainty. Between 1999 and 2000, PARC built these new priorities into its material space. The building renovation changed 1499 Queen Street into a multi-use social service site. PARC was now landlord to 10 units of supportive social housing and various commercial tenants, all of which were charitable agencies. These changes were designed to ensure PARC’s independence from the rapidly shrinking government. Functionally, however, the addition of residential and commercial tenants increased the sites of state intervention. PARC was thus caught in the irony of neoliberal governance, which draws its power from self-obfuscation. As the state downsizes, it offloads disciplinary power to the supposedly politically-neutral mechanism of the “free” market. Yet the market economy is borne of the racial, heteropatriarchal capitalist settler-state; it follows and functions to reinforce pre-established flows of power. Downloaded state power persists even as it seems to disappear.

PARC began preparing for its renovations in 1998 by warning the membership of changes to come. During the construction period, PARC programs were moved into the self-contained storefront areas in the east end of the building. The Annual Report notes that the temporary relocation would bring “changes to the program”: “We probably will not be able to do everything we are used to doing…it will be a trying time for everyone no doubt, and we will all be called upon to be patient, tolerant and gracious (we always are anyway, aren’t we?)” (PARC, 1998, p. 3). The aside – “we always are anyway, aren’t we?” – serves as a reminder that by 1998, “changes to the program” had become the norm. Indeed, since the election of Premier Mike Harris, PARC had been massively refigured. The renovation merely entrenched new agency directions in space.

PARC members’ ideas were prioritized in the renovation process, albeit in an unpaid capacity. As the 2000 Annual Report notes, the members’ caucus put in approximately 17,000 volunteer hours with business relating to the building development (PARC, 2000, p. 6). Members were also employed: “While the contractor was directing work, eighty plus members moved things,
painted, patched and scrubbed” (PARC, 2000, p. 1). The renovated space itself, however, was more reflective of new funding priorities than member input.

The Executive Director’s introduction to the 2000 Annual Report establishes a persona for the new PARC space as “new, fresh and somewhat vain with its bright colours, natural light and improved mechanics” (PARC, 2000, p. 1). It concludes, “The physical improvements are remarkable” (PARC, 2000, p. 1). Yet members seem somewhat hesitant about the changes. The members’ caucus summary from the 2000 Annual Report describes the renovated building as “too clinical”:

What comes up [for members] is when they walk into the door they see the desk right there. Another thing is they have to get buzzed in during off hours, no one coming to the door for you. So they think it’s a little too clinical. Other than that, they love it. (PARC, 2000, p. 3)

Former staff, too, remember feeling like PARC lost something in 1999:

I think the space changed dramatically when they did the renovation. It took away a lot of the flexibility. It used to be an open space, you know, and you could put a kitchen anywhere you wanted, but now the kitchen takes up a large portion of it, there’s that small art room at the back, so the space has shrunk a bit, in terms of openness.

The 1999 – 2000 renovations would mark the beginning of nostalgia for PARC’s old space. The “openness” that this interviewee so fondly recalls was reduced and rearranged by the introduction of new building occupants. By the end of the 1990s, PARC was alone at 1499 Queen Street. When the site reopened in 2000, however, PARC had numerous commercial tenants. This was not a departure from previous vision; commercial tenants had long been a priority. In 1993, the member-run Steering Committee undertook a referendum on the use of the second and third floor space. The majority of members polled agreed that the building should be used for “commercial (non-residential) purposes,” with a priority on survivor-run businesses (PARC, 1993, p. 2). Throughout the early 1990s, PARC attempted to make good on this plan. However, by 1999, the need for income outweighed the desire for member-run business. In direct contravention of the 1993 prohibition, PARC planned a renovation that included 10 market-rent units on the third floor of the building. These, the agency hoped, would provide a sustainable extra-governmental source of funding. Around the time the renovation began, however, PARC applied to a new Provincial Mental Health Homelessness Initiative fund
designed to support the development of housing for psychiatric survivors. Halfway through the construction phase, PARC was awarded $345,845 to “upgrade the 3rd floor apartments” from “market rate studios” to ten supportive housing units, two of which contained accessible bathrooms/showers, for “PARC members who are psychiatric survivors with a history of homelessness” (PARC, 2000, pp. 30, 32). It was further granted an $116,058 increase to the annualized budget to support the tenants, as well as “a subsidy for each person on a monthly basis to keep the rents affordable” (PARC, 2000, p. 32). The addition of social housing units to PARC’s renovation was unexpected. It increased construction work by “at least 30%,” and extended the timeframe of the renovations (PARC, 2000, p. 7).

The creation of social housing on the third floor of 1499 Queen Street was an amazing boon to Parkdale’s most marginalized. It also, however, entrenched PARC’s complicated status as a property owner. Now, not only did the agency run the building that housed PARC programs; it was literally a landlord to PARC members. Further, it removed a secure non-governmental funding stream. PARC could no longer expect market rent for the upstairs apartments, and prices would be fixed. The agency turned to commercial tenants to fill the gap. “Until a couple of years ago,” the Annual Report from 2000 explains, “we received most of our funding from the Ministry of Health...Now we are counting on the continuation of several different funding sources with different spending periods to keep our programs running.” Thus, it explains, PARC has developed “a number of relationships…with organizations that run programs with PARC.” “All of them enrich our Centre,” it concludes (PARC, 2000, p. 31).

Though PARC felt a pressing need to secure financially stable commercial tenants, it remained committed to its mission. The first three commercial tenants were all social agencies with mandates to serve Parkdale’s most marginalized. Creating Together, a parent-child drop-in, rented the eastern-most storefront space. The non-profit housing agency Houselink and psychiatric survivor social enterprise incubator OCAB (now Working for Change) rented space on the second floor. Notably, all three of these commercial tenants – and most that would follow in subsequent years – are government funded agencies. Creating Together, for example, began with a grant from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Since the late 1980s, it has received the majority of its funding from The Ministry of Community, Family and Children’s Services (“Home,” n.d.). In 1999, Houselink – previously funded by Federal and Provincial
housing initiatives – partnered with a variety of mental health programs, including CAMH, to apply for funds from the Mental Health Homelessness Initiative. It has since been primarily funded by the Ontario government as well as the City of Toronto (“Our History,” 2015). OCAB, too, began with Ministry of Health funding. It has since added the City of Toronto, Toronto Enterprise Fund and Status of Women Canada to its funding portfolio (“Working for Change,” 2015).

In the early years following PARC’s renovation, the significance of government-funded partner agencies seems purely symbolic. While it undercut the rhetoric of government independence, it did not impact spatial governance. Creating Together has remained separate from PARC programs for its entire tenure in the building – the eastern storefront space is completely self-contained. Houselink and OCAB initially had few requirements for their second floor spaces. As the 2000s wore on, however, the Federal and Provincial governments began to introduce new laws and regulations professionalizing, privatizing and securitizing the social service sector. In 2004, for example, Ontario implemented the Ontario Healthcare Reporting Standards / Management Information Systems and the Personal Health Information Protection Act. Both created new systems and rules for the collection, use, and storage of health information. These acts had a substantial spatial component, requiring new securitized computer systems and private meeting spaces. Houselink, OCAB and later commercial tenants like the youth drop-in run by St. Christopher House (now West Neighbourhood House), and the Hostel Outreach Program of the Mental Health Helpline, as well as PARC itself, were increasingly required to change their spatial relations to meet provincial mandates. The addition of commercial tenants was designed to shield PARC from government disinvestment. Functionally, however, PARC’s commercial tenants paid their rent with government grants. Thus, PARC can be seen to have retained or even increased its Ministry funding as mediated through other agencies.

Again, it is worth noting that this may have been PARC’s best option. What is interesting here is how little discussion it appears to have warranted. The same is true for PARC’s next major spatial change: a turn towards the private market of the now enlightened local elite.

In 2001, OCAB struck a deal with the Parkdale Business Improvement Association to create “Green Thumb,” a psychiatric survivor-run landscaping enterprise. As employees of Green
Thumb, PARC members began maintaining flower baskets and planters for the BIA, “beautifying the streets, improving safety and increasing neighbourhood pride” (PARC, 2001, p. 31). By the mid-2000s, the agency had deepened its commitment to BIA “beautification” by participating in neighbourhood-wide art shows, and creating sculptural “alternative bike racks” for the Parkdale streets (PARC, 2006, p. 13).

The 2003 Annual Report reveals both the primacy of private partnership and the brewing tension between the desires of its members and the requirements of fundraising. The introductory remarks read:

One area that PARC needs to see adjustment in is the funding environment. Unfortunately, it has not changed...PARC must now plan in an improved manner...this means that PARC will be asking for funds from new sources and alternate funding bodies while balancing our mandate with our fiscal needs. This is a new direction for PARC (PARC, 2003, p. 4).

The promise that PARC will achieve harmony herein contains the threat of disharmony, and the acknowledgement that funding demands had begun to conflict with agency mandate. By 2003, PARC had been seeking private money for over five years. The “new direction” identified in the above quotation does not, then, refer solely to the pursuit of extra-governmental funds. Rather, it seems to be the recognition and subsequent work of balancing contradictory demands. A first gesture towards this balancing act occurs a few paragraphs later. The Report continues, “PARC can be many things, but most importantly it is an idea of partnership and ownership” (PARC, 2003, p. 4). Here, we see the addition of a new idea – “partnership,” presumably with the external community, granting bodies and private funders – to the old narrative of “ownership.”

The 2004 Annual Report makes this balance manifest in a kind of nostalgic futurity grounded in the building itself. It reads:

Although we opened our doors on March 17th, 1980...PARC actually began as an idea three years prior to the humble beginnings of what twenty-four years later is now a fixture on Queen Street West in Parkdale....PARC is a gathering of parts, a collection of individuals who have walked through the doors, worn a path on our floor with their daily pilgrimage and so it is each individual, each member, each survivor, in fact each and every person who gave to PARC, has left gifts: art, words, their mark. Fingerprints brightly showing on the walls, the door, the ceiling and the floors (PARC, 2004, p. 6)
Here, PARC’s material space functions metaphorically. “The walls, the door, the ceiling and the floors” form a bridge between PARC’s “humble” past as an insular drop-in and its bright future as a “fixture” on a transformed Queen Street West. In 2004, this vision of an integrated – and, perhaps, neighbourhood-funded – PARC was still somewhat aspirational. The austerity policies of Mike Harris’ government continued with vigor throughout the mid-2000s. Despite its multiplying funding streams, post-renovation PARC struggled to keep afloat. In 2003, it lost funding for its weekend drop-in program, and was forced to close on Saturdays for the first time in its history. This made it clear, the Annual Report notes, “that PARC would need to appeal to its supporters while developing new advocates who could champion the great things happening here….so the PARC fundraising strategy was born.” (PARC, 2004, p. 7). The newly-christened PARC fundraising strategy prioritized “foundations, trusts and private donors,” with a particular emphasis on securing supporters in Parkdale (PARC, 2004, p. 7). When 194 Dowling was expropriated in 2006, this financially-loaded form of neighbourhood integration would become a central component of PARC’s shifting mandate.

4.3.3. Neighbourhood Expansion

In the mid-1990s, PARC established the growth model as a strategic direction in the face of government disinvestment. By the mid-2000s, PARC was struggling to keep its core programming afloat. Rather than reduce its portfolio, however, PARC expanded flexibly into new markets. The much-desired but unanticipated acquisition and redevelopment of Edmond Place would prove a site of synthesis, drawing PARC into close communion with new agency partners and the gentrifying Parkdale neighbourhood.

The building currently registered as 194 Dowling has had a long and complex history. It was erected in 1912 as an apartment building. In 1981, as PARC was finding its footing, 194 Dowling was purchased by Copper Crow Management LTD and converted into a 51-unit unlicensed rooming house (Wachsmuth, 2008, p. 37). As PARC’s Executive Director recalls, the situation there as “desperate” – “there were few working washrooms, and the rooms were tiny, cold and depressing” (as cited in Wachsmuth, 2008, p. 37). Most of the tenants at the building were psychiatric survivors. Many used PARC’s services and considered themselves members. Edmond Yu was among them. Yu was evicted in 1996, one year before he was fatally shot by the
Toronto Police. In 1998, the overcrowded and under-maintained building caught fire, killing two residents and displacing dozens more. The owners abandoned it after the fire, and the building stood derelict for years.

In the years after the fire, local homeowners, business proprietors and residents decried the state of the building. In 2003, Parkdale elected a new City Councillor in Sylvia Watson, an erstwhile participant in the Parkdale Pilot Project. Streetscape and housing issues were crucial to her campaign. Simultaneously, PARC was developing the Edmond Yu Safe House Project (EYSHP). In 2004, the EYSHP applied for funds from the Federal government’s homelessness response program Supporting Communities Partnerships and Initiatives (SCPI) – one for core program funding and the other from a program called SCPI capital funds to purchase and renovate 194 Dowling. Both proposals were rejected, forcing the EYSHP put “place all further development work ‘on hold’” (PARC, 2004, p. 35). This same year, PARC was also forced to shut its Saturday program down, and, in fear of further cutbacks, began to pursue its new fundraising direction.

In 2005, PARC began to notice the quickening pace of change in the surrounding neighbourhood. The Annual Report reads plaintively: “For fifty years Parkdale was home to some of Toronto’s poorest citizens. But what happens when the affordable housing that neighbours have depended on for years, decades even, is bought and converted to…a condominium development?” In response, the Board of Directors passed the following motion, “That the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre explore opportunities to develop housing within a reasonable radius of the centre” (PARC, 2006, p. 3).

By the mid-2000s Parkdale wasn’t just under threat of gentrification – it had already gentrified. This dynamic, however, could not be named. Gentrification was seen as an uncivil ideology, the purview of intolerant revanchists rather than the enlightened bourgeois. By 2005, Parkdale’s elite had adopted the belief that the neighbourhood was, rather, “multicultural” and “socially mixed.” It did not, therefore, jeopardize PARC’s strategy of integration to identify gentrification as a threat. To the contrary, it brought PARC into the neighbourhood-wide conversation.

Another important event occurred in 2005: City Council passed a motion on housing and homelessness, and struck a working group to identify unused or derelict buildings suitable for
development or conversion to affordable housing use (City of Toronto, 2005). Almost immediately, Parkdale Councillor Sylvia Watson brought forward 194 Dowling as a potential site, initiating expropriation proceedings. Staff present at the time remember Watson as a centrist political, whose concern was mostly with aesthetics: As one tells me, “what made the expropriation compelling to Watson was that the property was an eyesore, on a main thoroughfare.”

In September of 2006, City Council supported the expropriation of 194 Dowling. The City then opened up a bidding process to non-profit and charitable organizations. That December, PARC called a meeting with local leaders to announce its intentions to make a bid. In January of 2007, PARC submitted its proposal. In a last ditch effort to actualize the Edmond Yu Safe House, the agency resubmitted EYSHP funding proposal to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, then in the midst of a transition to the Local Health Integration Networks. In April, PARC was awarded the development of the building. The City of Toronto retained legal ownership, granting PARC a 50-year lease. In July, the Ministry rejected the EYSHP funding proposal. Soon after, Habitat Services became a program partner.

PARC tried valiantly to integrate the ethos of the EYSHP into efforts with Habitat. The 29 units of housing that PARC proposed for Edmond Place were designed as “dignified, secure, affordable and supportive housing for people with mental health histories,” characterized by “commitment to the community” and “efficient use of public funds” (PARC, 2007, p. 27). The Annual Report reads: “Unlike the former units, these will be clean, light, secure and durable apartments that will engender a pride of possession we believe will reflect the hope and respect that people with multiple barriers so desperately require” (PARC, 2007, p. 28) While Edmond Place is described with a great deal of optimism, PARC also made it clear that the development of a new social housing site would require unprecedented investment from and in the wider Parkdale community:

One of the tasks which has continuously been identified is the need to become a more integrated part of the community…We plan to move ahead full speed in this direction…Fund raising is a task we must take on with gusto…This has to be a huge priority for us in the new fiscal year (PARC, 2007, p. 4)
PARC expected to reach a balance between the Edmond Place mandate and the desires of potential donors. The pursuit of such equilibrium had already been identified as a PARC direction by the 2004 Annual Report. It would prove difficult to achieve.

In June 2007, 194 Dowling was suggested to the City as a potential heritage site by Sylvia Watson's successor, Ward-14 Councillor Gord Perks. A subsequent investigation by the City of Toronto Planning Division found both 194 Dowling and the other property adjacent to the PARC building, 1501 Queen, to meet the criteria for heritage designation. In October, the Director of Policy and Research at the City Planning Division released an “intention to designate” report to the Toronto Preservation Board and East York Community Council. This report recommended that City Council include the properties at 194 Dowling and 1501 Queen on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties “for their cultural heritage value” (City of Toronto, 2007, para. 10 – 11) In December, the City of Toronto accepted the recommendations of the Planning Division and designated 194 Dowling and 1501 Queen. This would be a turning point in the development of Edmond Place.

Councillor Perks is widely understood as a voice of social mix in changing Parkdale, an anti-development leftist concerned with preserving affordable housing stock. Yet as Jacobs (1996) writes, heritage designation draws elite investment into a neighbourhood, supporting embourgeoisement by promoting an aestheticized, salable “local character” (p. 55). This, she notes, makes heritage preservation “an attraction to growth rather than a deterrent.” “Heritage,” she concludes, “correctly preserved and enhanced,” has become a primary technology for cities to brand themselves as unique in the “new global market” (Jacobs, 1996, p. 55). PARC’s Executive Director offers Perks’ action as an attempt, however misguided, to “stave off development,” reminding me, “he was new at the time.” He adds that a consultant involved the Edmond Place project told him “you'd be better off with asbestos than heritage.”

PARC’s long-established anti-gentrification sensibilities were immediately challenged by what Wendy Shaw (2007) identifies as “the interdependence of culture and capital…performed, and re-performed, through ‘heritage’” (p. 82). The ED’s tone reveals an awareness of the potential development implications of a heritage designation. What may have been less apparent is the work such designation does to consolidate what Shaw (2007) calls “the (neo-)colonial in the
gentrifying heritage of the residential city” (p. 82). Heritage sites invent “local character” via highly selective protectionism. The preservationist paradigm vests certain architectural attributes, most often building facades, with nostalgic and aesthetic power that, as Shaw (2007) notes, is “far from neutral, or innocent” (p. 88). What Shaw (2007) calls “the escalation of interest things historic” is, in fact, an investment in the preservation of “neo-colonial whiteness” not unlike the tacitly white investments of social mix (p. 80).

If heritage designation were to recall or reactivate Indigenous title and/or treaty relations, the cost to settlers would be immense. In order to maintain the primacy and power of the settler-state, heritage preservation asserts colonial settlement as the beginning of history. All time before settlement is deemed primitive and therefore unworthy of preservation. This is especially true in the urban environment. Indigenous people, constructed as “in other times or out of time,” remain unthinkable in Canadian urbanity (Banivanua Mar and Edmonds, 2010, p. 3). By establishing the industrial era as the origin point for urban history, heritage designation evicts Indigeneity from the legal and psychological landscape. “In this context,” Banivanua Mar and Edmonds (2010) write, “Indigenous peoples [come] to be treated as legally and socially anomalous in their own lands” (p. 3).

Shaw (2007) notes that heritage strategies yearn for “old Englishness” untainted by Indigeneity and, indeed, by race (p. 80). In Toronto, heritage buildings tend to be of Victorian and Edwardian eras, the time after the initial violence of colonial settlement but before the arrival of most racialized immigrants. The building at 194 Dowling fits neatly into this memory-scape, recalling a time when Parkdale was not only overwhelmingly white but, further, almost entirely “British” (Whitzman, 2009, p. 154). Constructed in 1912, it predates the first significant wave of immigrants into the neighbourhood and the subsequent xenophobic panic which culminated in the 1925 founding of the KKK. As Whitzman (2009) notes, the early 1920s were marked by the aggressive efforts of real estate agents and local alderman to sell Parkdale as a “garden suburb” under threat. The building at 194 Dowling may have been subject to white nostalgia since its earliest days.

Aesthetically memory became Parkdale’s main identity with the 1978 founding of the Parkdale Village BIA. By the mid-2000s, the neighbourhood had mostly been cleared of those bodies and
behaviours most threatening to the newly contrived “Parkdale Village.” The BIA and other local actors reinvested in the vision of an historical continuity with pre-amalgamation Parkdale enhanced, rather than undermined, by modern additions. The work of the PARC Ambassadors was aided greatly by the shifting climate; indeed, PARC’s community outreach functioned to entrench rather than uproot the notion of a cleaner, kinder, more neighborly Parkdale Village. Despite the fears of the Executive Director at the time, Brule (2010) notes that the PRA and other local bodies insist that the Dowling expropriation was well-supported by the community. The former coordinator of the EYSHP speculates that the lack of local derision was likely because the derelict building was “an eyesore on a main thoroughfare.” The heritage designation of 194 Dowling increased already budding local interest in the development of Edmond Place exponentially. Notably, however, the interest was always in the space rather than the people. Local journalists penned a barrage of articles with titles like “The Past Comes to Life at Historic Queen West Building” (Hatfield, 2009) and “Parkdale Rooming House Restored to Georgian Glory” (Balkissoon, 2010). Staff writer Denise Balkissoon begins her 2010 Toronto Star article with the line, “it was a grand building at first, 194 Dowling Avenue. There were 12 luxury apartments…” (para. 1). She continues, “The burnt-out shell is now being transformed from a hopeless pit stop into a home… From a humiliating hovel to real apartments for real people: Yu’s tragic death has brought dignity back to 194 Dowling Ave” (Balkissoon, 2010, para. 8, 17).

Heritage designation not only had symbolic power – returning “dignity” to the aesthetic landscape comes at a price. The original plan for Edmond Place involved the total demolition of the 194 Dowling building at a cost of approximately $5 million. However, Section 34 (1) of Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act prohibits the demolition, removal or change to the designated heritage attributes of a building or structure without the written consent of municipal council. Section 35.3 (1) further allows the municipality to prescribe minimum standards for the maintenance of heritage attributes. As a lessee of the property, PARC had little option but to retain the heritage façade. This added an initial $1.5 million to the project. Ultimately, it would cost the organization much more.

In August 2008, the Toronto City Council Committee of Adjustment passed Edmond Place as proposed. Remediation and consolidation began soon after, followed by the preparation of architectural drawings by Hilditch, the firm that oversaw the 2000 renovation of 1499 Queen. In
the spring of 2009, PARC’s equity portion was due and Edmond Place went to tender. Construction began in the summer. As the year wore on, PARC found itself struggling to keep ahead of the mounting costs. An October 2009 from the Bloor West Villager describes the situation as follows:

Scaffolding surrounds the building while workers…busily work away at the facade. It has to be done to heritage specifications. "It is like creating a museum," [PARC’s Executive Director] said. "…people can walk by and see what that building would have been like…”

For [the] facade work PARC received a $24,000 grant from the 2009 Toronto Heritage Grant Program. The money will go toward masonry and cast stone conservation for the property…

"We got pretty much the maximum allowable," [PARC’s Executive Director] said. "Which is great, because every little cent counts…There is lots to be done to make this the kind of heritage showpiece that I think the city would like."

PARC is about one-third of the way in meeting its fundraising goal for the creation of Edmond Place….“We have a remarkable team that are going to try to keep our costs controlled, but because it is a rehab project you never know," [The ED] said. "But, if we had to make a choice between having a solid building or having furnishings we would have to choose the solid building.” (Hatfield, 2009, paras. 5, 8, 9, 11 – 17).

There are a number of notable points in this excerpt. First, the Executive Director’s comments reiterate the financial strain of heritage designation. Also of interest is the tacit distinction the ED makes between those who might view Edmond Place as a “museum” and future tenants. Heritage preservationists are seen as distinct from recipients of social housing; they “walk by” rather than live at Edmond Place. The article concludes with an ambiguous and loaded statement from the Executive Director: “If we had to make a choice between having a solid building or having furnishings, we would have to choose the solid building” (Hatfield, 2009, para. 17). It is unclear whether this comment outlines an agency decision or a governmental mandate: The prioritization of a “solid building” is either a manifestation of PARC’s commitments or an acknowledgement that its options were severely limited. Regardless, this statement makes an interesting spatial move, translating the pre-established difference between conservators and tenants into a dialectic of building and furniture, or outside and inside.

While a solid framework is necessary for any and all building projects, the preservation of masonry and cast stone on the Edmond Place façade was never a structural necessity. Neither,
the Executive Director seems to be saying here, is furniture. The notion that furniture might become expendable by choice or by force in the Edmond Place development speaks to the change in the funding environment. The search for external funders drew PARC closer and closer to the aesthetic priorities of the changing neighbourhood, pushing them further and further from the initial service mandate of the Edmond Place apartments.

Since the 2000 renovation, PARC had been moving towards further community integration. In 2008, PARC added a Resource Director position, found a new Board member with fundraising experience and developed a Public Relations Committee charged with developing a PARC website and brochure. The Annual Report explains these positions as key sites of community connection: “Reaching out to the community to make PARC and Edmond Place known as been a priority” (PARC, 2008, p. 3). In the changing Parkdale community, however, only certain kinds of support proved available. The mid-2000s brought an artistic renaissance to Parkdale. By 2006, the neighbourhood was known as “having one of the largest concentrations of artists in all of Canada,” and had received city-sponsored street posts naming it the “art and design district” (Porter & Shaw, 2013, p. 149). Throughout this period, PARC tried and failed to secure ongoing investments from the private market in agency survival services. Fittingly, however, the Edmond Place development campaign was able to generate interest from the so-called “creative class.”

In 2009, an organization called Design Hope Toronto began supporting Edmond Place. Design Hope “promotes local artists and designers, recognizing the role they play in a healthy society” (About Us, n.d., para. 2 – 3). Between 2009 and 2012, Design Hope raised approximately $40,000 for Edmond Place through arts auctions. Much of this money went to covering the costs of the façade renovation – very little to personal supports. Supported by Design Hope, a group of local artists also developed a project called Public Displays of Affection (PDA) to fabricate custom furniture and statement pieces for inclusion in the Edmond Place building. According to their website, PDA brought together “Local designers, businesses and community members have come together to design and build over 60 pieces of furniture and accessories to be donated to the [Edmond Place] project.” (PDA for Edmond Place, 2015, para. 1). Prominent artists donated pieces to Edmond Place, prompting even more interest from the creative community.
Construction was completed for Edmond Place in November of 2010. Tenants began moving in soon after. In early 2011, Toronto Star journalist Alexandra Shimo (2011) gave curious readers a rare guided tour of the “esthetic wonder” of Edmond Place as a part of her coverage on what she calls “designer homeless shelters” (paras. 7, 1) In an article entitled “Homeless Chic,” Shimo (2011) claims Edmond Place as part of a “new trend” sweeping “at risk communities”: housing sites where “homeless people” are surrounded with “luxury custom-made furniture, designed by some of Toronto’s high-end designers and beyond the reach of regular folk” (para. 1).

Acknowledging the “backlash” against such “extravagant” facilities, Shimo (2011) is quick to reassure her audience that her “good design can have unforeseen social benefits” (para. 12). She writes, “homelessness is expensive….and a nice-looking shelter can gentrify a neighbourhood” (Shimo, 2011, para. 14 – 15). The article concludes with quote from an editor at the high-end architectural magazine Azure: “It isn’t about architects giving these people nice places to live. Good design can change the whole aura and feeling of being in the neighbourhood. Now there are Bixi bikes outside. There’s no loitering. There are actually long-term benefits that permeate everything” (Shimo, 2011, para. 18).

Art has long been a strategy of social clearance. As Deutsche (1998) uncovered in her pivotal study of New York City, ideas of urban “beauty and utility” generally accompany “intensified talk of ‘the public,’…accelerating privatization and bureaucratization of land use decisions” (p. 56). Edmond Place repeats this pattern. While the façade on Queen remains what Jacobs (1996) might call a “spectacle of restoration” (p. 81), the entrance at 194 Dowling leads tenants to an internal landscape marked by simultaneous neglect and control. Despite the genuine camaraderie and comfort that many tenants report feeling when the first moved into the building, every one of my interviewees recalls the immediate sense that the aesthetics of the place belied a lack of functionality. As a staff there notes, “nothing worked! How many people got stuck in the elevator? Countless!”

The heritage designation of Edmond Place changed the financial environment entirely. Funding that had been initially earmarked for staffing had to be reallocated, at least initially, to the restoration. While the Executive Director of PARC noted to the Toronto Star that Edmond Place 2010 would have “a support worker on site 24/7,” the program never recovered from the cost of the heritage designation (Balkissoon, 2010, para. 13). As a result, all of my interviewees
experience the facility as massively understaffed. According to tenants, when the building opened, two full-time staff worked staggered shifts ending in the early evening. After the first year, however, a significant issue with one staff arose and he was asked to leave the position. Rather than engaging in a hiring process, the role was removed from the staff complement. Since then, Edmond Place has had a single full-time staff who does not work nights. Since the 2013 shooting, a security guard with no experience providing housing support to tenants has been added on overnights. A staff tells me, “Everyone at PARC knows we’re understaffed – they just always say there’s no funding.”

Just as local enthusiasm for the Edmond Place look did not yield funds for its social service supports, the community investment in the Edmond Place space did not translate into acceptance of its people. An Edmond Place staff reports to me that “all these fancy shops” are actually “extremely hostile to our tenants”:

I saw a tenant go into a bar and get the shit kicked out of him by someone he didn’t know. He was on the floor and the guy was kicking him. And then another one of our tenants went into [the high end bar and venue across the street from PARC] – he was high at the time – and they asked him to leave, and the bouncer kicked him out and then beat the crap out of him. They broke him arm, his face was all bruised. And another tenant got beat up by cops… and people just walked by. Even PARC staff. We did absolutely nothing about it. Nothing. I think there were seven cops beating him. Where’s PARC’s indignation and let’s fight for our members?

This question – “where’s PARC’s indignation?” – is echoed in many of my interviews. There is a general sense that the agency has changed dramatically, that it is no longer committed to the members. This has become particularly apparent in the reaction to the recent changes at the 1499 Queen Street building.

4.3.4. Community Integration

While PARC identified private market investment as a key strategy beginning in the early 2000s, it was the acquisition and refurbishment of the Edmond Place building that gave the agency broad appeal. The local elite, having shed the last vestiges of revanchism for enlightened bourgeois consciousness, were suddenly eager to support the agency that had simultaneously turned an eyesore into a heritage site and sold the community on the neighborly appeal of social housing. Support from local artists and other wealthy benefactors, however, also meant allowing
the elite unprecedented access to agency space. This, coupled with the changing needs of commercial tenants, would lead to the material entrenchment of the “hub” narrative and the recent renovation.

In its explanation of the upcoming renovations, PARC’s 2012 Annual Report articulates the agency for the first time as a “sustainable hub” rather than a social service agency, a “headquarters to various agencies, enterprises and partners who strive to create lasting social change in Parkdale and beyond” rather than a site of collective ownership by the members (p. 19). It continues:

This past year, a joint partnership of five organizations operating out of the building would take the vision many steps further by launching Open Up Parkdale – a multi-year renovation project at 1499 Queen Street West. Open Up Parkdale is aimed at creating a barrier-free and safer community environment for the 100,000+ visitors to this well-used facility every year. Improvements included installing keyless doors, automated door openers, and intercoms. (PARC, 2012, p. 19)

The “Open Up Parkdale” renovation was “kick-started by a generous grant of $226,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.” “Moving forward,” it concludes, “Open Up Parkdale is reaching out to the larger community beyond the walls of 1499 Queen Street West to help make this hub and meeting place a reality” (PARC, 2012, p. 19).

PARC has used the language of “business” to describe its relationship with commercial tenants since the 2000 renovation. Indeed, the Annual Report from that year informs the membership that “physical changes to the building” would give way to new “community” connection in the “other businesses” (PARC, 2000, pp. 2 – 6). A manager articulates the 2012 – 2013 renovation as the first step towards making the “hub” as “a business model” to ensure PARC’s future:

Let’s say we’re going to build this environment that’s gonna be a “hub” model, that’s gonna service everybody in the West End. But at the end of the day, we’ve only got a couple strong partnerships….we need to get some of our other partners here. For the government to invest in it, we need everybody to buy on board.

And so this all [points to the second floor] was created for long-term growth, in a business-model for the second floor that creates revenue. More money, more of us. More things get done, right? We have to adopt a profit-model driven. No one’s gonna fund it. No one’s gonna pay.

In order to survive an increasingly competitive future, this manager suggests:
We need more rental space. Less tenants with luxurious spaces – more tenants in tiny cubicles. That’s the model. That’s the way it works, right? Given the opportunity, I’d have restructured the 3rd floor - there’s too few apartments with too few tenants! From a monetary point of view, we need to be little bit more exploitative of our space. We’re too generous. This is great in a social justice universe, but in a business model, to thrive, we’re screwing ourselves right, left and centre.

Acknowledging the departure from earlier, member-focused initiatives, the manager concludes, “We can’t just pay attention to the desires of people, the ideas of, hey, we’d love to have this and this. We have to think, from a business model today, how do we pay for something tomorrow?”

This manager articulates with great clarity the new outward-looking, business-oriented direction of the agency, part and parcel of what Woolford and Curran (2011) call “the neoliberal restructuring of the non-profit field” (p. 583). Under neoliberal governance, Woolford and Curran (2011) explain, “social service organizations previously oriented to their task by a commitment to social justice or individual welfare, are now asked to embrace the entrepreneurial and managerial sensibilities of the neoliberal business” (p. 583). In PARC’s case, property ownership functioned as a key technology of neoliberalization. The acquisition and management of two large buildings pulled the agency into the private market and ultimately shifted its focus towards the local elite. This, in turn, brought the agency in line with the downsizing and privatizing mandates of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves’ austerity governments that it so vehemently opposed. Property ownership also, however, remained a primary site of obfuscation, hiding the machinations of state power in the narrative of independence or autonomy. This, I offer, is the cruel, shared irony of neoliberalism and land ownership.

Neoliberalism governs without the appearance of government. Property contains a similar fallacy. The ownership model, Blomley (2004) writes, dispossesses Indigenous people of the land, thereby creating and maintaining the settler state. Simultaneously, however, “property promises a decentralization and dispersal of power: Power allocated through property appears to have an independent, nonstatelike quality” (Blomley, 2004, p. 4). Individuals and organizations are conscripted into the national work of land theft and settlement through the apparently “private” economy of ownership; options are foreclosed even as they appear to multiply. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that PARC articulated the government-funded funded building purchase and renovation “a step towards independence supported by the Ministry of Health,” or
the City of Toronto lease for 194 Dowling as a site of ownership and home (PARC, 2000, p. 1). The power of these regimes lies in their invisibility.

Property, of course, not only conscripts institutions and individuals into relationships of domination. It also is granted along pre-existing flows of power. Quoting consummate capitalist John Adams, Blomley (2004) writes that “the balance of power in a society…accompanies the balance of property and land” (p. 38). He continues, “Access to property, including land, is an important predictor of one’s position within a social hierarchy, affecting class, race, and gender relations” (Blomley, 2004, p. 38). There is certainly a question as to whether PARC would have gotten money from the Ministry to purchase the building, let alone have been taken seriously as a landowner, if the agency spokespeople had not always been white men; the “master narrative of property,” Blomley (2004) notes, “is deeply gendered,” and white men are seen as natural heirs of the colonized land (p. 145).

4.4. Rhetorical Collectivity, Material Enclosure: PARC as a Gentrified Space

PARC came by its current dissonance slowly, decision by decision, piece by piece. While the agency’s intention was always to stand in the way of gentrification, I suggest that its neoliberalization via property makes it an exemplary site of unspoken spatial embourgeoisement. While gentrification generally refers to this process on a neighbourhood level, such change is always comprised of various smaller sites – the demolition or renovation of individual buildings, the removal of benches where homeless people sleep, the policing of a single street corner, and so on. In the case of PARC, the built environment manifests gentrification both materially and metaphorically as aestheticization, securitization, and accessibility for the elite. What makes these changes acts of gentrification is not only how they align with neighbourhood norms, but, more to the point, the forms of displacement they engender. Not only has PARC space upgraded to appeal to a broader Parkdale community; these spatial changes have been alienating to members and front-line staff.
4.4.1 Aestheticization

Over the past 10 years, PARC has upgraded the look of its space, but not its function. As a member tells me, “the drop-in looks nicer, but it’s not getting any better”: “It’s the little things, like putting a jug of water out – some days I come and that’s not even put out! I mean, I’ve got to ask, ‘do we have any water today?’” “That seems pretty childish,” he continues, “but it’s not. Why should someone who as soon as they come through the door is now a member, why should they have to look for a cup and take it to the washroom when you’re supposed to have a jug here, that’s what is provided for?” Another interviewee concurs: “The new look makes PARC seem more efficient – but what it seems to mean is that means more people at the bottom will be told ‘we can’t do this, it’s not in the budget’ for the little things that really matter.” “Simple things like toilet paper,” he continues, “Or it was icy outside the step there and I said, ‘something’s got to be done,’ and they said ‘not in the budget.’ Weather stripping? ‘Not in the budget.’” Another member asks: “Why are no rags in the containers anymore? Why are there no paper towels? Aren’t we funded?” He ends with a powerful question: “Why are you telling us things are going uphill when they’re actually going down?”

The shared characterization of essential accessibility and safety requirements – weather stripping, toilet paper, paper towels, and water – as “little things” is odd given agency rhetoric, which insists that PARC’s main contribution to its membership is the safe, comfortable, accessible space. External partners and local residents that I interviewed insist that the recent renovations have not changed the “homey” feel of the drop-in; members, however, feel that PARC views their material needs as unimportant. Those who live in PARC housing are most affected by this dissonance. A third-floor tenant calls this “boasting about supportive housing when you do almost no basic upkeep”: “It’s not okay. A list of things to check yearly would include vents, drains, preventive chalking for bedbugs and so on.” The disconnect between aesthetic improvement and frustration from the internal community is most stark at Edmond Place, where tenants feel the emphasis on aesthetics has come at the cost of functionality. As one tenant tells me:

I got none of the amenities that they said that I was supposed to have. The fridges were crap. I had an air conditioning but it didn’t work for two and a half seasons. I was using a fan with the windows and stuff, Styrofoam coolers, making my own makeshift air
conditioners. The same with the heat, it didn’t work for two seasons. Nobody ever gave me a rebate check for the amenities that I was missing out on for those two years.

It is in the remarkable discord between aesthetics and functionality that PARC’s built environments repeat gentrification. In *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, Rosalyn Deutsche (1998) tracks “the mutually supportive relationship that developed in the 1980s between aesthetic ideologies and an oppressive program of urban restructuring” (p. xxii). She notes that the gentrifying project is often driven by an “urban-aesthetic interdisciplinary…structured by exclusions” (Deutsche, 1998, p. xiii). New public art, Deutsche (1998) contends, is often touted as “‘socially responsible,’ ‘site-specific,’ and ‘functional’” insomuch as it contributes to the “beauty” and “utility” of “newly redeveloped urban sites” for “late-capitalist urbanism,” “private profit” and the elite (pp. xiv – xv). At PARC, modernization and aesthetic upgrade are touted as “part of a long-term vision that will ensure 1499 Queen Street West remains a vibrant and important community asset well into the future” (PARC, 2013, p. 20). My data, however, shows that as this “asset” spatially rearranges, it becomes more and more appealing to those outside of PARC’s traditional member base and less and less usable to those inside of it.

### 4.4.2. Securitization

As PARC has moved closer to the private market, it has also begun to proscribe pathways through its space. Prior to 2012, all of PARC’s doors were opened by a single master key, which was given to all managers and staff, some member employees and a handful of volunteers. These keys could be borrowed, lost or stolen – and, as my interviewees tell me, they often were. Further, until 2013, PARC’s second floor space – which houses the POP workers and most of the agency’s managers and community partners – consisted of two program rooms (“the blue room,” named for its blue walls, and the “Edmond Yu room”) and a large open space with a wooden reception desk in the middle, and benches to wait on. The open space of the second floor was accessible by the elevator and two stairwells – one leading up from the tenants lobby entrance on the western side of the building and another leading from the drop-in. A single door separated this secondary reception area from the drop-in. It was often open during drop-in hours; otherwise, it could be entered by way of the master key. Staff and members remember this area as busy with people – some waiting to see their POP worker, others using the phone or fax machines, others just looking for some respite from the hustle and bustle of the drop-in. The
proximity to offices allowed the Executive Director and other managers to have frequent, unplanned encounters with members. The 2012 – 2013 renovation shifted this dynamic dramatically.

As a part of the 2012 “upgrades,” the “blue room” at the top of the stairs was demolished to make way for a large administrative area separated from both the small foyer and the offices by a wall, large sliding locked door and windows that can be shuttered. This area replaced the reception area, leaving a large empty space between the managerial, peer team and POP offices on the second floor. The telephone in this space was moved out to the small foyer in front of the administrative area. Two new meeting room spaces were carved from the Edmond Yu room; these are primarily used by commercial tenants and external partners. New doors were installed at various points throughout the hallways leading from the main second floor space to the Executive Director’s office on the left and commercial tenant spaces on the right. Over the course of a year, all of the building’s 90 doors were outfitted with new digital locks which can only be opened by “fobs,” digital keys that can be programmed to determine what doors they open and when. My interviewees recount the adjustment period, when they discovered that there were areas of the building – the downstairs storage rooms, for example – that they no longer had access to, or times of the day when they were no longer allowed to in certain spaces. As a part of this upgrade process, staff, member employees and volunteers were instructed to tap their fob on a new “hotspot” in the second floor hallway once a week to upload all of its information – what doors were opened and when – to the main system.

These changes create new paths through the building. Anyone coming from the drop-in by stairs or elevator is barred from accessing the second floor space until they are first screened by a receptionist, who checks member appointments and meetings against a digitally tracked schedule, or makes a phone call to ensure that a POP worker is ready to see their client. This rearrangement of space creates a new orientation to practice – the second floor becomes a highly professionalized environment, where contact between workers and members occurs primarily by way of booked appointments. Members are no longer able to access the second floor open area, meaning that unplanned encounters between staff and members are extremely rare; my interviewees tell me that where they used to meet managers frequently on the second floor space, they now only see them when they come down to the drop-in for events.
As Nirmal Puwar (2004) writes, “bodies do not simply move through spaces but constitute and are constituted by them” (p. 32). The new barriers and proscribed pathways through the building make what this staff calls “a strong statement”: They erect and police professional boundaries between members and staff, ensuring that service-users remain subordinate to the gatekeepers of service.

Movement and enclosure are further enforced via the somewhat less noticeable securitization of the space in the form of surveillance cameras, small signs in front of the kitchen in the PARC building, and new rules for access at Edmond Place. It is these elements, above all, that repeat what Blomley (2004) calls the “moral project” of “neoliberal…spatial cleansing” which removes or strictly controls the movements of “undesirable” bodies through active and passive means (p. 76).

Many find this “baffling,” given “PARC’s history as a survivor agency”: “What the hell the nursing station is doing on the second floor? I do not understand the purpose of that, or the point. When you put in Plexiglas like that, it’s a strong statement. It’s the ultimate gate-keeping.” A former employee tells me: “It’s more sanitized, but it’s… but I don’t know where all that chaos went, right? I don’t know where people went. People used to hang out and sleep on those benches. I don’t think people can sleep there now.” A current staff confides that she finds some of the spatial rules “insulting”: “Members have to ask for access to the barrier free washrooms, they have to ask for towels – it’s dehumanizing.” Another shares her sense that the proliferation of directive signs and the generation of new internal discourse validating service restrictions indicates PARC’s ironic de-prioritization of the survival supports it claims to centre: “The rules, the little signs around – “one meal each” – it makes me incredibly sad. I mean, what is PARC now? Like, “we open our doors to the needy, disenfranchised, the…” – well, okay, you open your doors and then you do what?” Members echo this sentiment almost verbatim, with particular focus on the kitchen:

The people I see at PARC, they’re not surviving. I had an experience Saturday, where somebody asked for another egg, and staff said, “We can’t do that, management decided we cannot give another egg.” But that egg, to that person, would’ve made the day for them. It’s inhumane. That egg doesn’t have to do with keeping the bottom line, making ends meet.
The space has also been rearranged to allow external partners and commercial tenants new forms of access. Those wishing to access the two new meeting rooms can do so by coming up the stairs from the secondary tenants lobby entrance, bypassing member-used spaces entirely. They can also access the Executive Director’s office, separated from the POP, peer and other managers’ offices by three doors.

Securitization has led to a striation within the agency that repeats its neoliberalized hierarchical structure. When asked “do members have power at PARC?” a long-time member responds: “No. Not anymore. They try to make people feel that they do have power, but when the case comes for power to get something changed and done, we really don’t have a say…only the higher up people do.” Discussing the failed project of room naming, wherein members were asked for suggestions on what to call meeting room 1 and meeting room 2, a participant in multiple PARC committees tells me:

Well, I want to be honest with you – the higher people here, they seem to listen but they don’t seem to do. You know, you tell them something and they’re like, “great, but we’re gonna do something else.” Like with the room naming, we were working on that for more than six months, asking the clients “would you like to name a room?” and then they just called them “meeting room 1” and “meeting room 2.”

The spatial metaphor of “higher” and “lower” agency spaces with “higher” and “lower” people is reiterated by other members:

It’s like…it’s like the staff, the people in the offices up there, from upstairs, they’re just involved with doing their work and the people are just downstairs hanging out. And it’s like there’s…I don’t know how to explain it, there’s one level of people on the first floor and the people on the second floor in the offices and all that, and the two don’t come together. It’s separate. I don’t like it.

The 2012 – 2013 renovation appears to have spatially and discursively consolidated power in certain areas on the second floor. One member succinctly articulates how that power is maintained: “Upstairs, there’s more government, the doors are locked, more security.” Both member and staff feel disturbed by what they point to as the micromanagement of material services via spatial reconfiguration at the behest of “upstairs.”
4.4.3. Bourgeois Accessibility

All the recent changes to PARC’s built structure combine to create an agency that is increasingly accessible to the enlightened bourgeois. The inadvertent impact of this is a decreasing feeling of accessibility for PARC members. The façade of the 1499 Queen Street building and the stretch of sidewalk out front constitute PARC’s primary interface with the surrounding neighbourhood. For the first 30 years of PARC’s existence, this form of community visibility was explained by official signage indicating the role of PARC, albeit in various forms. Most recently, between 2005 and 2010, PARC was marked by large, somewhat text-heavy banner hanging above its door celebrating 25 years of “serving Parkdale.” During that time, visitors to PARC were immediately greeted by a member employee – often a long-term member with a gregarious personality – seated during open hours at a large, front-facing reception desk, visible from the street. In 2012, however, PARC embarked on series of “building upgrades,” beginning with “improvements to the building’s façade,” including the replacement of the banner with two sleek, and oblique, metal signs – “PARC” in stylized, nearly unreadable script over the storefront window and the word “welcome” in curved and arcing letters over the front door (PARC, 2013, p. 20). The reception area at the front was removed. A smaller reception desk now sits tucked into a nook by the computer right to the right of the door, not visible from the street. Visitors to PARC are now greeted by a large digital display called a “wayfinding monitor” designed to improve “interior navigation” of the buildings many program areas (PARC, 2013, p. 20).

Both these additions are oriented away from the drop-in facing Queen Street, they are visible not only to guests but to passersby and hawkeyed streetcar passengers. They do not, however, target just anyone on the street. Rather than appealing to potential new service users, these changes obscure PARC’s role as a social agency, replacing more explicit identification of the agency with its survival programs with a broader vision of fostering social mix. The sign welcomes everyone and anyone to PARC; the wayfinding screen cycles through announcements ranging from the drop-in schedule to the Tool Library poster to photos from a recent art event. PARC’s 2013 Annual Report indicates these “upgrades” as improvements to “building navigation” – but for whom? In my 30+ interviews with service users – many of which revolved primarily around changes to the physical space – not a single one mentioned the new signs. Further, only one member, who works as a PARC receptionist, mentioned the wayfinder screens
unprompted. Explaining his ambivalence about recent changes to the space, he muses: “I don’t think people look at it. Members, I mean. I think they look at it as a novelty, maybe, but they don’t use it.” When I asked members directly what they thought of either change, most shrugged – those who had noticed them simply brushed off my question; a handful of others, however, couldn’t even remember having seen them at all. Staff had a somewhat more vehement reaction. One rages: “I think that one thing…the screen, the TV screen? Of all the things that people need?! That makes me mental!”

While organizational discourse frames these changes as improvements for the PARC community, it also includes a tacit acknowledgement of the primacy of external players. A page in the 2013 Annual Report titled “Engaging neighbours, partners and possibility” explains the upgrades as follows:

The first phase of upgrades was focused on increasing accessibility and safety around the building, not only for the PARC community but also for the communities of our commercial tenant agencies who share the space and the larger neighbourhood beyond our doors (PARC, 2013, p. 20).

The construction of this phrase is misleading: The Annual Report states that these “upgrades” are “not only for the PARC community, but also for…commercial tenant agencies… and the larger neighbourhood” (PARC, 2013, p. 20, emphasis mine). This implies that the priority placed on PARC’s internal community is a foregone conclusion. Yet my research clearly shows that members’ lives are not improved by these changes. The dissonance between agency rhetoric and material practice is perhaps most apparent in the use here of the term “accessibility.”

The 2005 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act stipulates that public amenities must meet a minimum standard of accessibility by 2025. This has catalyzed changes in the public sector, including the addition of new funding streams for infrastructural projects. PARC’s recent upgrade process was made possible by a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s Community Capital Fund, designed to make Ontario’s not-for-profit organizations more physically and financially accessible (Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2015). The 2012 renovation also included the installation of an updated automatic door opener. Yet my member interviewees tell me that while the door opener creates a visible indicator of accessibility, it does not actually function. As one member explains:
Realistically, they have a button-open door, okay? It’s an electronic door. They make cheap repairs – they spend $20, $20, $20 a million times – why not just spend $100? It can be fixed so it *stays* fixed, but they don’t invest the proper parts in it. They only care that it *looks* okay; they don’t care if it works.

Other members complain that the appearance of accessibility *outside* obscures the materiality of inaccessibility *inside* the building. Six of my interviewees recount a three-week period in 2014 when the elevator at 1499 Queen Street West was broken, stranding multiple third floor tenants with limited mobility their apartments and cutting off access for physically disabled people to the second floor program space. Indeed, beautification projects are often seen by service users and front-line staff as a distraction from other issues.

4.5. Conclusion

Property, as a regime of power and a relationship to land, is enacted not solely through material occupation but also through narrative. “To make sense of the world,” Blomley (2004) writes, “we tell stories” (p. 51). The stories that settlers tell to understand, justify and maintain property logic exist within the matrix of colonial domination; they are, as Blomley (2004) puts it, “far from innocent” (p. 51). What makes these narratives powerful is their generative quality: They exert power “not because they serve as a framework imposed upon social processes, but because they constitute that which they narrate” (Blomley, 2004, p. 51). In so doing, property narratives create material conditions – and, indeed, foreclosures and exclusions. “The very coherence of narrative,” Blomley (2004) concludes, “the emplotting of people and processes, can render dominant stories persuasive and preordained, making alternative stories hard to tell” (p. 51).

The generative power of spatial narrative is palpable at PARC. Our identity is grounded in a story of the organization. This story contains and conceals a fundamental paradox: the attempt to remain led by member-needs through adapting to the private market and changing state mandates. This paradox is rarely dealt with head on; rather, it is resolved via a variety of defensive strategies manifest in agency stories. The spatial narrative is a crucial coping strategy for PARC. It is distilled in and amplified by another story – that of the drop-in as the sole remaining site of freedom and true collectivity. As I explore in the next chapter, many of the changes made over the past 36 years have been narrated as an attempt to preserve the drop-in as a “living room,” a “home” and the “beating heart” of the agency. Both PARC’s Annual Reports
and my interviewees maintain that the drop-in represents the last remaining site of collective ownership and member power. I argue, however, that this site is also the agency’s most exclusionary in terms of race and gender. In discourse and material space, the drop-in is exemplary of the racial neoliberalism at play in Parkdale’s prescribed multiculturalism and controlled social mix. Exploring these dynamics and their subject-corollary, the activist staff, will begin to reveal why, exactly, it has been so difficult for us to think and speak clearly about the flows of power within the agency.
Chapter 4

Resolving the Paradox:

Race, Place and the PARC Drop-In

5.1. Introduction

PARC’s built environments are fraught: While the agency’s public discourse celebrates the freedom and autonomy granted by property ownership and spatial expansion, legally mandated and/or socially enforced practices of securitization and privatization reorient the agency away from the marginalized and towards the enlightened bourgeois. My interviewees experience this dissonance as an ambivalent emotional relationship to the space itself – members and staff alike report feeling at once “at home in” and “alienated by” PARC’s buildings. The previous chapter explored the emergence of the tension between rhetoric and materiality. This chapter addresses one of the primary ways in which that tension is discursively and spatially resolved: through the drop-in.

At PARC, “the drop-in” refers to both to the physical environment of the 1499 Queen Street ground floor, and the program that operates daily within it. If the 1499 Queen Street and 194 Dowling buildings form PARC’s body, the drop-in is its heart. As the PARC website explains, the drop-in is the “starting point for everything members and staff do together to help rebuild lives” (“Drop-In Centre,” 2015, para. 3 – 4). It is characterized by those inside and outside the agency as a space of collaboration, collectivity and a joy derived from truly member-driven practice; it is, as one interviewee puts it, PARC’s “enduring soul.” Revisiting the narrative of unfortunate but necessary neoliberalization told in the Annual Reports, it becomes clear that many of PARC’s neoliberal concessions are seen not to have shaken the drop-in, the agency’s core. Many of my most frustrated or angry interviewees would temper their comments with a variation on the following expression: “At least we still have the drop-in.” This is interesting given the ambivalence that characterizes all of PARC’s space. Indeed, it seems that the drop-in works, at least in part, to reconcile ambivalence – the “at least” implies that despite all the changes, there is a site where PARC is still open, accessible, and member-driven.
Like the agency at large, the drop-in has stayed relatively stable in its practice and daily operation. This means not only has it continued to be a life-saving and essential resource for many of Parkdale’s marginalized, but also that it has long been a white, masculine space. As such, it is only welcoming and collaborative for some. The story of the drop-in as open, like the story of building ownership as collective or Parkdale as gentrification-resistant, is situated, aligned, and, perhaps most importantly, instrumental. It is not only produced by but works to serve the enlightened bourgeois subject. This is neither particularly surprising nor particularly new; the dynamics at PARC do not speak to bad intention or bad practice, but rather the compelling and self-obfuscating power of whiteness and heteropatriarchy under racial neoliberalism.

This chapter juxtaposes the narrative of the drop-in with its actual spatial configuration. In it, I expose the drop-in as a site of comfort and continuity for the PARC community, as well as a microcosmic manifestation the highly controlled forms of multiculturalism and social mix that characterize gentrifying Parkdale. In order for the agency to resolve its internal ambivalence, race, gender and the more “disruptive” forms of madness must be both ejected and forgotten. The exploration of this dynamic at the spatial and discursive level will pave the way for an interrogation of how reconciliation works on a more personal level – that is, through the self-making practices of the PARC staff.

5.1.1. Race in Place

Following Razack (2002, 2004), I argue that within the Canadian settler-colony, spaces large and small are organized in and through racial logics, just as race is articulated in and through spatial arrangements. As Nast and McIntyre (2011) write, “colonization and imperialism worked from the outset through racially ontologized hierarchies of space, which permitted the hyper-exploitation of certain (colonized) bodies and lands, but not others” (p. 1466). The racialization of colonized space has resulted in a number of as metonymic links between “bodies, landscape and nation” (Mohanram, 1999, p. 5), wherein the settler becomes linked to mobility, rights, and the appropriate space of citizenship while the Indigenous (and, later, racialized) body comes to be seen as immobile, disappearing or dead (Mohanram, 1999, p. 15). The racialization of space and spatialization of race occur at every scale – these dynamics of power can be seen in the
spatial arrangements of the nation, the city, the neighbourhood, or the building. This chapter excavates how race and space interlock in a single room: the PARC drop-in.

While my focus here is on PARC’s drop-in space, it is important to note that it cannot be separated from the larger building, or the people who use it. As I argue, PARC’s drop-in space is both governed by and makes room for certain kinds of subjects, most of whom are white men. In this way, PARC’s spatial norm is also what Puwar (2001, 2004) would call a “somatic” or bodily norm. Following Puwar (2001), I begin an exploration of how “the corporeal imagination of power as naturalized in the body of white, male…. bodies” (Puwar, 2001, p. 652). This applies both to those members allowed to become part of the accepted body politic and to the staff who inadvertently rely on and reinforce such a norm. My exploration of the white, masculine somatic norm is cursory; it functions as a bridge to the next chapter, which concerns the making of the staff subject.

In order to understand both the stories of space and the space itself, I draw upon multiple sites of data. I look at material arrangements within the drop-in gleaned from ethnographic observation and the reported experiences of my interviewees. I supplement this with thoughts, feelings and opinions provided to me by external partners, managers, staff and members at PARC. Finally, I explore official discourse produced by the agency in its Annual Reports, website and publications such as the monthly newsletter *PARC Beat*. I proceed as follows: First, I explore the drop-in model of social service. Then, I examine PARC’s drop-in, explaining both its practice and its metaphoric role within the agency. I excavate the various ways in which the drop-in functions to resolve agency ambivalence over neoliberalization, looking at the narratives of necessity and preservation. In the second half of the chapter, I look at the material arrangement of drop-in space, showing the conditionality of such concepts as freedom and inclusion. The drop-in, I argue, depends on the strict emplacement of racialized bodies, the prioritization of masculinity and a highly controlled, culturalized madness. In this way, it repeats the dynamics of multiculturalism and social mix at play in the broader Parkdale neighbourhood.
5.2. Living Room, Autonomous Zone

5.2.1. Drop-Ins as Social Service Sites

A drop-in is a social or community service program that provides relatively low-barrier access to a physical space and a range of services. Drop-in programs vary immensely in their organizing philosophy, operations and goals, as well as their relationship to social work: They can be volunteer-run community programs; informal gathering spaces operated by faith-based or spiritual communities or regulated clinical sites. The term is used to refer to such a wide range of programs that it is difficult to define. One organization has devoted itself to generating operational guides and best practice materials for drop-ins: the Toronto Drop-In Network (TDIN).

The Toronto Drop-In Network describes itself as “an active coalition of over 50 drop-in centres throughout the City of Toronto, working with people who are homeless, marginally housed or socially isolated” (Who We Are, 2015, para. 1) which “works to increase the capacity of Toronto’s drop-ins to serve their participants” through trainings, advocacy, and capacity-building measures (“Who We Are,” 2015, para. 2). It is the only organization of its kind in Canada. As a result, its discourse can be understood as relatively definitive.

In 2007, TDIN released its Good Practices Toolkit, a 377-page document containing definitions of the drop-in model, resources for building or growing a drop-in and evaluation tools. This toolkit is extremely widely read and well-used within Toronto. It defines drop-ins as “basic needs” services, which may include access to transit tokens, showers, clothing and meals, “support for well-being,” which may include help with “housing, debt problems, rent arrears, physical and mental health concerns, social assistance issues and substance use problems,” and “the opportunity for change” with such programs as “life skills training, meaningful activities, education and work training programs” (TDIN, 2007, pp. 1A-4 – 5). The target population of Toronto’s drop-ins is “socially marginalized people who are housed as well as those who are living on the streets” (TDIN, 2007, p. 1A-5). Individual drop-ins may have a variety of funding streams which, in turn, may or may not put demographic or geographic limits on their services.
For the Toronto Drop-In Network (2007), drop-ins are governed by three common philosophies: “responsiveness and flexibility,” defined as the ability to react to the changing needs of their target community; “respect for autonomy,” defined as the prioritization of the personal integrity and choice of a member or client, and a “holistic approach,” defined as the emphasis on a wide range of available services (p. 1A-2). “These three attributes locate drop-ins within the landscape of social services,” the Toolkit (2007) continues, “drop-ins are generalists in a landscape of ever more specialized institutions” (p. 1A-3).

As generalist sites, drop-ins practice “intentional informality” (TDIN, 2007, p. 1A-3). For TDIN, they work as a social antidote to more privatized, bureaucratized and, indeed, neoliberalized social services. According to a TDIN representative, drop-ins are places of “solidarity and mutual aid,” where “institutional hierarchies break down.” The inherently political nature of the drop-in model is apparent in the Good Practices Toolkit’s (2007) section on “conceptual tools” crucial to building and sustaining a drop-in, which include “social justice,” “health promotion,” “harm reduction” and “community development” (p. 1B-1). The tacit positioning against formalized social work is fleshed out by a TDIN staff, who explains that drop-ins should be “autonomous zones,” “anarchist” spaces where “people are just welcome to be.” The model, my interviewee tells me, “supports lasting and meaningful change, for individuals, communities and the planet, because you create a place where people can operate in their own way. And then there are things around identity, personal identities, liberating identities, which can happen from the inside out.”

PARC is not only a valued member of the TDIN; it was instrumental in creating the organization. TDIN emerged in the early 2000s as a merger of two pre-existing drop-in networks: the East End Drop-In Network, founded in the late 1990s by a small coalition of local service programs, and the West End Drop-In Network, founded a few years earlier by PARC employees. As the TDIN representative explains:

The TDIN wouldn’t exist without PARC. It was workers from PARC who really saw the value and the…not only to enhance the capacity of drop-ins, to meet the needs of people who come to drop-ins, but also to be a political force and a voice for a sector that was not understood. Because bureaucrats don’t understand things that aren’t numbers.
As an architect of the Toronto Drop-In Network, which provides the most widely circulated and fulsome definition of the work, the PARC drop-in is definitive; it is a model drop-in. In this way, it is not just exemplary, but also rare. In a neoliberalizing sector, this interviewee explains, PARC is able to hold onto its “heart”: “There are organizations that accomplish things and grow and survive the changing environment. But a lot of that comes from an empire-building mindset. Whereas at PARC, it comes from a heart.”

For this interviewee, PARC represents “the best” of the drop-in model. Drop-ins, she tells me, are meant to be places where “really committed, critical workers work to challenge the status quo and give a voice to people on the margins.” This, however, is less and less the case. Now, “a lot of drop-ins are happy to give someone a meal, and they say, ‘the only thing we change is that we feed someone.’” PARC, on the other hand, not only provides survival services, but community development: “It’s PARC who do a lot of creative work about unmet needs, about working in the changing context, embracing some of the new ideas and finding a place for joy and hope.” “Feast in the face of famine,” she tells me, “is what PARC does. It’s like…okay, we take this situation. How can we work with what we’ve got and make it good and joyful and maybe catalyze something, maybe leverage something? That’s the sense that I have of the kind of thinking that happens at PARC.”

PARC’s drop-in is not only seen as unique by this interviewee; it is understood as such within the agency itself. For many of my interviewees, the drop-in represents a powerful unchanging essence in the midst of unfortunate neoliberal demands. This, it is worth noting, is how I experience the drop-in. I remain deeply committed to the model, both at PARC and elsewhere. However, there are elements of the discourse both buried and constitutive that warrant investigation.

5.2.2. PARC’s Enduring Soul

The PARC drop-in has undergone three major shifts in its development. First, it changed from a clubhouse model to an informal site of activism and community building. Then, it refocused its energies on direct service provision. Now, it attempts to balance its community building and activist work with direct service, while simultaneously providing opportunities for broader neighbourhood engagement. Throughout this time, however, the role and rhetoric of the drop-in
within the agency has remained the same: It has always been and continues to be a site where the physical openness of the space stands in for accessible, collaborative and inclusive practice. Crucially, it also has always been articulated as a place where members drive practice.

PARC’s drop-in began as a social recreation clubhouse. In the first year, it offered semi-structured activities for deinstitutionalized people. Within 14 months or so, however, it began to shift to a more informal site of conversation, engagement and advocacy. At first, the space was extremely run-down. The electricity was constantly going out; it was “blue with smoke” and “full of vermin” - but, as many members and staff note, it was “full of love.”

In the early years, PARC’s daily activities were driven mostly by member desire. There were regularly scheduled weekly activities – the Saturday night dance, for example, and the Friday afternoon meal – but for the most part, programs and services were provided by staff on an as-needed basis. There were impromptu cooking classes, sewing workshops and sing-alongs. As one worker explains, “it was a funky, grassroots-y kind of place.” Another notes, “there could be anything happening in the space: a dance, a fight, anything.” In keeping with the TDIN’s definition of the drop-in model, PARC understood itself as a generalist space, staffed by flexible, responsive community members rather than specialized social workers. A staff tells me:

I came to describe the drop-in as a place where you could participate together with other people in a slice of life every day. And if that entails sitting down and playing cards, or doing dishes, preparing a meal, or plunging a toilet, or sitting with someone and listening, or creating a sing-along in the drop-in, singing with others, or making music, or just hanging out and making a contribution to a vibe, that’s what you did.

The small cadre of staff charged with “contributing to the vibe” rather than, for example, performing casework or gatekeeping resources, and the general chaos of the space made the drop-in feel as if it were member-run. As one former staff puts it: “In those days, the members – because there was so few staff in such a big room – the members had a lot more control over what happened.” There was a widely-held notion that member power flowed from and existed within the spatial arrangements of the drop-in – the size of the room and the staff to member ratio, rather than any formalized system of governance, ensured members had power.

Even before PARC was explicitly politicized, the drop-in was imbued with an activist sensibility. The physical conditions themselves created a sense of solidarity between staff and members. As
one staff puts it: “You know, the fact that it was pretty dive-y back then…it was not a comfortable place to sort of work with, you were forced to use what you got and you could empathize more with some of the housing conditions that members have to live in.” Another recounts:

We used the space a lot. We’d do something like invite the deputy to come and put him in the sweltering drop-in. And I mean sweltering. And smoke-filled. And that’s how we got air-conditioning. He was sweating so bad, when he went into his car, he said, “you’ve got it.” It was really good. We didn’t pick people for him to speak to or anything like that. It was like, here, throw him in and let him see.

As this interviewee implies, the space of PARC seemed to carry a political power that PARC’s people could not wield. This advocacy proved remarkably successful: By subjecting Ministry representatives and politicians to the drop-in space, PARC was able to secure a funding to purchase new furniture and kitchen equipment as well as undertake small-scale renovations. As the layout of the space began to change, one thing remained consistent; PARC was articulated as the members’ “home.” The 1986 Annual Report begins “Walk through the front door – what greets your eyes?….you’ll notice our new furniture….how comforting these sight [sic] are to a fatigued PARC member – so good to be home.” (PARC, 1986, p. 3). As one long-term staff recalls, “It was a living room – you came in the front door and there were chairs sitting around, plants, and there was an area that was carpeted and had a nice TV, couches…everything.” The 1991 building purchase solidified this sense.

The “Common Sense Revolution” changed everything. As a worker tells me, “The drop-in totally shifted in the mid-1990s. Suddenly there was this massive amount of homelessness on the streets and we needed to provide services for the homeless.” PARC’s schedule was rearranged to accommodate people coming out of homeless shelters. Staff remember feeling the drop-in become “more like a soup kitchen, or a place where people got ‘service.’” One muses, “I think it really damaged the place. And I think we struggled with the issue of….this is not who we are, but this is what people need, you know?” This staff continues, “I think all the services that are there are helpful. For PARC to be able to provide some- be it transportation or food or clothes, a shower, medical services – it matters, it’s positive. But for me, that’s not where the soul of PARC is.” He concludes:
For me, what matters more is the sense of this place where it’s possible to be creative, even in conversation, in playing games, but also in other art forms, you know? So that people can come into contact with whatever it is within themselves which can blossom. And for PARC to be – as much as it can, and of course it’s gonna be imperfect – supportive of that in people.

While this employee notes that the “service” period “damaged” PARC, it is important to add that it did not ruin its “spirit.” As an addendum, he tells me that even if PARC had been limited to service provision, the spirit would remain in “the way we provided services.”

Since the 2000 renovation and subsequent decision to reach out to the private market and local neighbourhood for funding and support, PARC’s drop-in has shifted again. It now attempts to balance the increased need for direct services with community activism and the “spirit” that this interviewee describes. In keeping with the surrounding neighbourhood, arts have become crucial. In the past 15 years, there has been increasing attention on arts and cultural production both as a social recreation or semi-therapeutic activity and as a commercial endeavour.

The PARC drop-in has long provided space and resources for the varied artistic undertakings of its memberships; since the early 1990s, it has also championed members’ artistic production to the rest of the world. It has professionally published two books of collected writing from PARC’s weekly writing group – *Kiss Me You Mad Fool* (1991) and *Let’s Face It* (2011) – and taken both on wide ranging book release tours. PARC has also promoted the performances and exhibitions of its internally-facilitated drum group and art group. More recently, however, the agency has started to devote significantly more resources to profit-yielding arts and cultural production. In the process, it has also shifted much of the delivery of community arts programming from staff and members to professional artists.

Since 2008, Making Room, “a radically inclusive, inter-disciplinary arts company” designed to put those “living in the margins” in “the centre of the story” has been “in residence” at PARC. (“About Us,” 2015, para. 1). They currently offer four weekly workshops and host a variety of community events, including parades, parties, exhibitions and group meals designed to bring a sense of “celebration” into the drop-in space. As the coordinator of Making Room tells me, these events conjure up memories of “old PARC” for members and staff: “There’s a feeling of spontaneity, fun, and wildness in our celebrations. People – members, staff – come up to me and
say, ‘wow, this is a wild party, it reminds me of the old PARC.’” Many of these events – the “Parkdale Pageant and Boat Launch,” for example, with its community parade and lakeside festival, or the “Feast of Flags” book launch – receive significant press coverage (Hatfield, 2011, 2012, 2014; Iwanek, 2014; Lissner, 2012; Turpin, 2013). Similarly, PARC invites arts organizations like “Painting Our Stories,” a group that brings together “local artists, community associations, residents, businesses, parents, youth and children in the production of…murals” to “build community” and a shared feeling of neighbourhood “pride” into the drop-in (“About,” n.d., para. 2). Like Making Room, Painting Our Stories features art designed exclusively by paid professionals, with a consistent aesthetic that has proven to be attractive to the local elite.

According to the 2011 Annual Report, “what makes PARC so remarkable is that it has become a hub of astonishing creative energy and an incubator of literary and artistic talent” (PARC, 2011, p. 10). Arts have become PARC’s primary interface with the local Parkdale community. Almost all of PARC’s artistic undertakings now occur in the space of the drop-in and, further, work to open it up to members of the broader community. This has succeeded: In my ethnographic research, I attended a number of Making Room public events which were almost 50% non-PARC members. The Making Room Friday workshops in the drop-in often include between four and eight professional artists from outside the member community. The drop-in is, indeed, diversifying – at least in one way.

Throughout the various phases of PARC’s development, the drop-in has remained the metaphoric and material centre of the agency – its “living room,” its “heart,” its “soul.” The image of the drop-in as a place of emotional and spiritual connection is consistent throughout the agency’s history. In the late 1980s, the drop-in “a room full of dreams, holding back life’s bitter taste with grace and kindness…hinting that there must be something more to come…a mysterious and curious mixture, rising from the ideas will and love of members and staff shaping a common PARC destiny” (PARC, 1989, p. 3). These images continued throughout the 1990s. In 1992, the drop-in was described as a place of “searchers”: “Sometimes the main room fills up like a gigantic treasure hunt site…folks just come as they are. The only thing you’re supposed to bring is yourself” (PARC, 1992, p. 17). Even in the early 2000s, drop-in was described as “a place of potential. Possibilities fill the drop-in, opportunities are evident every time we open our doors” (PARC, 2003, p. 3). Throughout PARC’s history, drop-in has been a placeholder for all
that is collaborative, collective and member-driven at the agency. As the 2003 Annual Report reads: “The drop-in is much more than any image of the space could describe. The PARC drop-in is a living extension of all the lives that intermingle in its confines. If you walk into the drop-in, close your eyes and listen, you can hear it breathing and sighing, laughing and weeping” (PARC, 2003, p. 8). The 2004 Annual Report calls it “a community based on tolerance, inclusion and respect for the shared needs and hopes of the many people using it….based on a covenant that pledges shared responsibility for the welfare of every brother and sister” (PARC, 2004, p. 12).

5.3. Preserving the Drop-In

For many at PARC – including the agency’s primary discourse producers – the drop-in represents an unchanging core, a set of principles and philosophies that have remained intact. Many staff tell me that maintaining such ideals in the drop-in hasn’t been easy. Some of my interviewees share a sense that PARC almost “lost its heart” at various points. For example, an interviewee remembers the early 1990s as “a shaky time,” when “PARC almost lost it.” Another tells me that the renovations in 2000 were quite difficult: “PARC really struggled with being a landlord to members…it seemed a little surprised at finding itself coming into conflict with trying to play all the different roles, of, like, advocate, fight for your rights and, like, comply with the system.” Many staff also indicate the current period as one of peril: As one staff tells me, there’s now a lot of “weird corporate bullshit” happening in “the new management” layer. He notes that the “soul” or PARC is once again threatened by neoliberalism. He explains:

Some of it is just basic economics of how funding shifts. What gets measured gets done. Some of it might be new staff – I mean, do new staff take on small groups? That was probably one of the most defining things, that whole history of creativity and arts. I think that beyond meeting basic needs, that history around creativity speaks to the kind of spiritual recovery and expression that is…so crucial. And it’s really…the building blocks. If you’re not having that sort of spiritual recovery, it’s never a home. It’s just a place you live.

He concludes with a hope that the drop-in will endure: “PARC without its soul is a sad thought,” he says wistfully, “But it’s also a soul that attracts kindred spirits. So, fingers crossed that this has been a weird corporate phase that PARC will again recover from.”
This interviewee tacitly calls upon the feeling of the drop-in and the program that it runs as antithetical to the “weird corporate bullshit” of neoliberalization. A survey of my interviewees confirms this sense: Many feel that fundraising strategies, specialized hierarchical roles and/or relationships with the business and homeowner community represent a turn towards the “corporate.” For members and front-line staff, such a shift betrays the agency’s originary ideals. For managers, it is understood somewhat differently – the “corporate” move is treated as a sad inevitability. As one manager tells me, “we had to play the game. It doesn’t mean we liked it.” Another exclaims, “what else were we going to do? We had to keep the doors open.” This phrase – “keep the doors open” – appeared in 10 of my interviews. It first came into use, it seems, in the 2000 Annual Report, which reads:

Transition came flying at us from all directions…through every change or addition to PARC’s profile, the drop-in has shown its true heart and dedication by “…keeping the doors open…” In all of the turbulence PARC experienced during the last year, the drop-in doors were closed due to construction only once….the drop-in continued to be a safe place for people to gather and celebrate, organize, communicate, relax, create, work and participate even when it was turned into a construction zone (PARC, 2000, p. 11).

This idea appears again, albeit without explicit reference to “the doors,” in 2003:

This past year has been one of enormous change. Some of the changes have been contemplated, planned and implemented with the idea that through a thoughtful process PARC will be better able to respond to the challenges on the road ahead. Over the past five years, change has been the word of the moment, so much so that modification, and adaptation are becoming the norm. Although alterations can be transforming they can also be disruptive, destructive and chaotic. The changes that PARC has planned and anticipated have been smooth whereas the changes forced upon our agency due to fiscal constraints have been difficult. None of the changes that we have encountered and navigated could have happened as well as they did without the dedication of the staff, volunteers and members all joining hands to keep PARC open (PARC, 2003, p. 1).

“Keeping the doors open” or “keeping PARC open” appears to represent the act of preserving agency integrity in the face of change. It implies that while compromise and sacrifice may be necessary in order to survive, the agency will remain intact so long as the drop-in stays open, both literally and metaphorically.

The 2004 Annual Report provides an overview of the agency as anchored in the flexible yet fundamentally unchanged site of its drop-in. It reads:
When PARC first opened its doors 24 years ago it was a tiny and intimate place...The drop-in opened at 1:00 p.m.... the main space held a TV lounge, a pool table and a main seating area...There was no laundry facility or access to TTC...the monthly dances used a small, beat-up portable stereo with the volume cranked up...the toilets were forever breaking down.....everything in PARC was tattered. PARC was a rough and ready place. The place, the members and the staff were gritty and determined. They had to be, just to survive (PARC, 2004, p. 11)

It continues:

24 years have flown by...some of the original group of members and staff are still here...against great odds PARC has survived and flourished. Thousands of members have walked through our doors and have been affected by their experience here. Over all that time one thing has remained constant and true. The spiritual force of courage embodied in the PARC community remains unchanged (PARC, 2004, pp. 11 – 12)

In 2013, the metaphoric use of PARC’s open doors became an official part of agency “Values.” The Annual Report from that year reads “being a safe community with open doors is the first PARC value....Welcoming people to a place where they can feel at home and free to be their own person is at the core of what PARC does” (PARC, 2013, p. 6).

Despite various critiques levelled against agency change, most of my interviewees appear to agree that PARC’s core openness has remained intact. A member tells me that, “nothing much has changed...you can’t smoke in the drop-in anymore, and there’s no pool table. But otherwise it’s the same. The feeling is the same, the people are the same. It’s the same.” Another says, “It hasn’t changed, no. And I hope it never does.” Three separate members told me that the drop-in is “my second home”; one adds, “always has been, always will be.” A long-term staff assures me that no matter what “new services” are added or “hard decisions” the agency must make, the drop-in continues to “provide a sense of place, so that people can come into contact with what it is within themselves that can blossom.”

When front-line staff tell me that PARC is becoming “more of a business,” or when member employees call the space “more antiseptic,” they often make a strong distinction between, for example, the “psychiatric nursing station” on the second floor of 1499 Queen and the “open” space of the drop-in. Even Edmond Place is figured in relief. As a Board member explains, “Now we have....business-units, operating units. Edmond Place is a thing we run. It has a distinct interface with the rest of the world from the PARC drop-in.” For these interviewees and many others, the business-models manifest in the commercial tenant units or supportive housing
site are seen as separate from, perhaps antithetical to, the drop-in. Fears of neoliberalization are tempered or quelled by reference to the “soul.”

5.4. Restricted Access

PARC thus appears to resolve its inherent ambivalence over neoliberalization in and through the narrative of an intact drop-in. This story relies on spatial metaphor anchored in material relations – the open doors represent both emotional warmth and physical accessibility; the colourful paintings on the walls represent collaboration and celebration. These physical and metaphorical spaces allow the agency to feel as if it has preserved something essential. As Doreen Massey (2005) writes, however, “open space” is “a dubious concept”: “All spaces are socially regulated in some way, if not by explicit rules…then by the potentially more competitive…regulation which exists in the absence of explicit…controls” (p.152). The critique of open space I present below is not intended to devalue the essential role that the drop-in plays in the survival of Parkdale’s poor, or to cast doubt on the genuine experiences of community many of us have within it.. It is, rather, to acknowledge that nothing can be fully open, and ask what we mean when we talk about accessible and collaborative space. What enclosures must be forgotten? What rules cannot be named? Such erasures occur along racial and gendered lines.

5.4.1. Linguistic Inaccessibility

PARC’s drop-in is described as “Parkdale community’s living room.” (Daugherty, 2014, para. 9). According to my initial interviewees, it is experienced as such. It is worth noting, however, that my interviewees, at least those who spoke to me without the help of an interpreter, only represent a particular slice of the community; namely, English-speaking Parkdale. Indeed, PARC is only identifiable as a social service site to those who speak English. The signage out front, which now no longer explicitly advertises PARC as a social service, is in English. All of the content on the wayfinding screens is in English, as are all of the signs advertising programs and opportunities hung around the walls. Further, PARC’s the full-time drop-in staff speak English exclusively. This is alarming, given Parkdale’s linguistic diversity – many in the neighbourhood speak so-called “non-official” languages at home and a large proportion of the population do not speak English. Further, many non-English-speakers in Parkdale are psychiatrically pathologized
and/or living in poverty, making them prime candidates for PARC’s services. No PARC drop-in staff, full-time or part-time, speak Parkdale Tagalog, Hungarian, Vietnamese or Tamil, which are amongst Parkdale’s most widely-spoken languages (Social Policy, Analysis & Research, 2011, p. 2).

While an overwhelming majority of PARC’s drop-in members speak English either primarily or exclusively, there are a few exceptions. For example, I held a focus group with 18 Mandarin-speaking Chinese PARC members, many of whom come daily or weekly to the drop-in. They all expressed appreciation for the physical accessibility of the space and the “kindness” of the staff. They expressed frustration, however, at their inability to access any of the services the drop-in offers. They told me of their need for housing support and advocacy, TTC tokens, and assistance with such things as email, telephones, and appointments. As one tells me, with some urgency, “the absolutely most needed service at PARC is a Mandarin-speaking worker.” Another agrees: “We really feel desperately that we need Mandarin speaking staff.” He continues, “we have such a language barrier here. It’s hard for us to see a doctor, to go to the hospital, to pay our bills.”

PARC’s Roma members told me similar things. One woman recalls a horrific story of discrimination in the hospital system, and the lack of support she finds in all of Parkdale:

If you go to the hospital right here, they don’t give you an interpreter. I try to say something and they just don’t help you as they should. Wherever you go, they don’t help you. Most of the times, it was the hospital – St. Joes. If you would believe it, I had a miscarriage, I was bleeding and they let me just bleed, they didn’t even try to do an abortion of the miscarried baby…they just wouldn’t do it. I was bleeding, the ambulance took me in, I was bleeding out there in the waiting room, and no one paid attention to me.

This interviewee tells me that she has gotten help from PARC, noting that since her baby died, a drop-in worker has taken over her case. “But I can’t communicate with her fully,” she tells me, “I don’t speak English and no one speaks Hungarian.” This has dramatically limited the kinds of service she can receive. This dynamic likely exists with many other communities; indeed, the lack of interviews with other non-English-speaking PARC members says more about the limits of my lens and outreach than it does about the drop-in community.

PARC’s non-English speaking members are not only denied access to important services; they are also unable to access the sense of love, democratic participation and collectivity that many
staff identify as essential elements of the drop-in. As one non-English-speaking interviewee notes, “There are a lot of communication problems and misunderstandings. The staff here just never know what we’re talking about.” Another tells me, “we keep to ourselves, because no one understands us.” A long-time Mandarin-speaking member says that he feels comfortable with the other drop-in participants, but doesn’t think they feel comfortable with him: “Sometimes, I hear them say ‘Chinese’ so I think sometimes they are commenting on us. Probably they’re discriminating against us. I don’t know.” He follows up with, “We want to engage. It’s very good to chat with other people. If you had a Mandarin-speaking worker, you could also organize a get-together with different nationalities – a tea party, so we could get to know each other.”

5.4.2. Gender Homogeneity

PARC’s drop-in is not only linguistically homogeneous – it is also overwhelmingly male. According to the 2012 Census, 65.6% of drop-in members are men (PARC, 2012, p. 2). A long-time member employee who compiles daily statistics for the drop-in insists that the ratio is more like “two to three times more men.” “It’s always at least twice as many men as women,” he tells me, “the stats show that.”

While the linguistic inaccessibility of the drop-in is clearly attributable absence – the lack of non-English signage and/or linguistically relevant staff – the gendered homogeneity seems to be a result of presence. PARC began as a site for the recently deinstitutionalized. For the most part, its early clientele were men – as one former worker explains, “PARC has been and still is mostly guys, the same guys that had been out of hospital for years.” The overrepresentation of men self-perpetuates: The more men there are in the space, one worker tells me, the more men come.

PARC’s disproportionate number of men is described to me as “frustrating” by some of women members. More often, however, members tell me that it is “unsafe.” A long-time member tells me she “doesn’t really feel safe in the drop-in”: “I’ve been sexually harassed more times I can count.” A 2011 review of PARC’s incident reports – internally circulated documents that detail significant events in any of the agency’s program areas – confirms that women experience the majority of the incidents or harassment and violence: “A breakdown of victims by gender shows that the majority of victims identified in incident reports are women. 60 of the incident reports referred to female victims and 26 incident reports referred to male victims” (PARC, 2011, p. 1).
The danger of sexual harassment is not limited to members; it is also experienced by women on staff. As one former worker explains: “There’s a lot of machismo. It’s not that things don’t ever get addressed, but, you know…there’s a way men take up space.” Nearly every woman that I interviewed on PARC staff, current and former, recounted at least one experience of sexual harassment or violation. Some told me very intense stories about stalking and physical violence. Most surprisingly, many told me they felt unsupported by the agency in dealing with these incidents. “I’ve had to learn on my own how to deal with it,” one muses. According to the review of incident reports, “female staff were identified in 6 use of force incidents and male staff in 2.” It continues, “14 incidents regarding the threat to use force were associated with female staff and five regarding male staff, verbal abuse targeting female staff came up in 15 incident reports and in one incident report regarding male staff, and sexual harassment was reported in two incident reports regarding female staff and none regarding male staff” (PARC, 2011, p. 3).

Members and staff report a difficulty in addressing issues of sexual harassment when they arise. As one staff explains to me, “with so many frustrated, angry and depressed men, it’s hard to pay attention to everything everyone is doing all the time.” And, she adds, “there’s no training.” A former staff tells me that she always had trouble addressing such dynamics:

It’s that boundary stuff, it’s that weird thing around…this guy would smack my ass and I’d be like “don’t do that again,” and he’d be aggressive and it’s complicated because he’d be aggressive because he’s, like, a hostile, fucked up, poor guy and how am I gonna…address that?

The confusion over how – or, indeed, if – to address harassment and violence when it comes from “hostile, fucked up, poor guys” is amplified by the shared sense that where PARC used to be a “safe space for crazy people,” access is increasingly limited to people who are able to perform civility.

5.4.3. Behavioural Control

The openness and accessibility of the drop-in, as well as the lack of an intake process and the disproportionate member-to-staff ratio, are explained as a spatially guaranteed form of member-governance. Yet staff and members tell me that behavioral normativity in the drop-in is strictly controlled. A long-term member recalls, “You used to be able to be crazy in the drop-in. Now,
you can’t be as crazy. It seems right now like as soon as there’s a flare-up, you’re out the door.” A staff concurs: “I feel like PARC is getting less tolerant of people who occupy different realities. I understand some people have to be asked to leave the space, but sometimes it seems pre-emptive. Like, you’re about to be disruptive.” She continues, “We function as a drop-in, we are in drop-in hours, so why is it that if someone comes in profoundly unwell and yells something to the drop-in, they must be ejected?” “Can we not facilitate something in another room, with someone spending some time with this person?” She asks, “Where is this coming from? When did we get less tolerant of people who are, like, way out there?”

A substantial number of my interviewees made this same observation: PARC has become less open to people behaving in very non-normative ways. In particular, people noted that members used to be able to “scream” or “shout” without being barred from the drop-in. Some on staff attribute this decreasing tolerance to the overwhelming number of people in the space — “it can be like dominoes,” one tells me, “so you have to make a choice – do you want to eject one person, or do you want the whole drop-in to go haywire?” Others, however, speculate that it may have to do with the focus on artistic production, celebratory events and an increasing presence of the elite.

The work of the PARC Ambassadors succeeded in developing new partners in the neighbourhood. Among these was the Boulevard Club, an “exclusive” lakefront organization which offers “high performance sports programs...year-round social and recreation programs...fine dining, lakeside...[a] resort with outdoor pool...[and] full sports medicine and aesthetic treatment” for a one-time $19,500 entrance fee and annual dues of $2,540, with additional fees for tennis, the fitness centre, and yachting (“About the Club,” 2015; private email correspondence). By 2009, PARC was the Boulevard Club’s main charitable recipient. The “Boulevard Gives Back” committee began hosting a yearly “gala” fundraiser for the agency called “Denim and Diamonds,” with a “silent auction, raffle, and live auction where [Boulevard Club] members purchased meals for PARC members” (Hatfield, 2013g, para. 3). Between 2009 and 2013, the Boulevard Club invited one member to tell his story of recovery and receive a giant cheque on behalf of the organization. In 2013, however, the Boulevard Club decided to develop “a connection with the members of PARC”: “Instead of a classic cheque presentation,

25 Membership fees are not available online – they must be requested through the Boulevard Club website.
representatives from the Boulevard Club…came to PARC’s drop-in centre and shared a meal and cake” (Hatfield, 2013g, para. 5).

In the late 1980s, PARC staff would force local politicians and Ministry members to spend time in the drop-in, hoping that exposure to the extreme conditions of overcrowding, thick smoke and sweltering heat might secure more funds for the agency. By 2009, however, donors and partner organizations clamored to spend time in agency space. Throughout the development of Edmond Place, Public Displays of Affection ran weekly furniture design workshops in the drop-in. The Boulevard Club’s 2013 drop-in visit has become a yearly pilgrimage. The Making Room Community Arts events consistently attract professional artists and arts patrons from all over the city. PARC has also been receiving increasing coverage from the mainstream media. The Toronto Star now regularly attends PARC events and provides articles with multiple full-colour photos of the drop-in. The web version of the 2014 Toronto Star article “Social Solstice: A Short Day Makes for a Long Party” features a high-definition video of music performances, dancing and members’ mingling in PARC’s heavily decorated drop-in. Articles on PARC events in the Parkdale Villager now often note “there will be food, music and a pleasant afternoon that will bleed into the evening….all are welcome to join the event” (Hatfield, 2014, para. 27).

This is not to say that the conditions at PARC were somehow better when they were dingier. What is interesting to note here is rather that it has been upgraded in a particular way, and with particular results. For example, the increasing presence of the elite in the PARC drop-in has caused staff to tell me, with some sarcasm, that they are often expected to “perform for the cameras.” A member notes a similar dynamic: “Sometimes with the art groups they have on Wednesdays and Fridays in the drop-in, or the yoga, it feels like there are yuppies here and they’re like, ‘oh, we’re here, helping the bums.’ And we have to act grateful.” She continues, with a laugh, “I feel like the yuppies are gonna start coming down from the suburbs and they go do yoga in the drop-ins.”

5.4.4. Racial Emplacement

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26 At a 2014 event that I attended, only 50% of those present – approximately 40 of the 80 – were PARC members.
PARC’s linguistic, gendered and behavioural homogeneity sets certain limits on who can access services in the drop-in. Perhaps less straightforward, but no less impactful, are the ways in which the racial homogeneity of PARC’s drop-in staff limit the ways in which racialized members can access the space. Only one of PARC’s full-time drop-in workers is racialized; the rest are white. Racialized members that I interviewed tell me that, while they have “never experienced racism in the drop-in,” sometimes “it’s nice to be with your own community.” As a result, some tell me that they “just come for music day” - a weekly music program that is facilitated by PARC’s only Black drop-in worker.

The Wednesday “music day” program is a potent site to examine the subtle ways in which the somatic norm is maintained as white and masculine. In her book *Space Invaders*, Nirmal Puwar (2004) explores the efforts expended in everyday spaces to preserve the white make somatic norm of the nation, and control the movement of racialized bodies “out of place.” “The ontological sense of importance afforded the master masculine political subject,” she notes, “is built on a tenuous set of boundaries that are constantly under risk” (Puwar, 2004, p. 11). PARC’s member population has always been white and male – and, indeed, the flexibility the agency has practiced over the past twenty years has only served to entrench this norm, albeit unintentionally. The music program appears to threaten this homogeneity. As a result, it is treated with a complex combination of awe and derision by members and staff alike.

As a member describes it, the PARC music program is the only day when PARC is “very multicultural.” “We get a lot of Caribbean people in on a Wednesday,” he says. Another offers, “it’s all friends of [the music day facilitator].” There is a pervasive sense, it seems, among members and, indeed, some staff that the demographic of PARC’s community shifts on a Wednesday. Two interviewees even tell me that there are “more Black people than white people” in the drop-in on Wednesdays. My time as a staff person at PARC refutes this – while there are certainly more Black / Afro-Caribbean people in the drop-in on Wednesdays than any other day (and, as noted by a Roma interviewee, more Roma people and other immigrants), white men still comprise the overwhelming majority of attendees. This follows a pattern that Puwar (2004) identifies as emergent from the fear of racial invasion. She writes that even when “black bodies are still statistically small in numbers, they are perceived as bodies that disturb the normal institutional landscape. Moreover their numbers become amplified and they come to
threateningly fill the space in much larger numbers than they literally do” (p. 48). This means, she concludes, “that a sprinkling of two or three Black and Asian bodies rapidly become exaggerated to four or seven. And, interestingly, even a single body can be seen to be taking up more physical space than it actually occupies” (Puwar, 2004, p. 48 – 49).

The sense of invasion is accompanied by an occasional inability on the part of white members to see the music day facilitator as a staff. This is particularly apparent in a quote from an interview with a long-time member. When I asked my standard question about what it means to be a member of PARC, he recoiled a bit. He told me that he doesn’t identify as a member – he is just “someone who uses the drop-in.” He opposes this to the “proud members” who he speaks about with palpable discomfort. They’re the ones, he tells me, who come in for music day. He includes the facilitator amongst them:

That guy, on music day – the bouncer. The big guy. He’s very proud to say he’s a member, and very proud to say this person’s a member, and this person’s a member, and give a hand to this person who is a member – he’s proud of that [putting on a Jamaican accent]: “And here we are, so and so has been a PARC member for 25 years, give her a big hand, she’s gonna sing a song.”

This member speaks of the music day facilitator in terms that render him threatening, yet definitively non-professional. While his terms reflect an unconscious anti-Black bias, they also follow from the general invisibility of racialized staff. It is perhaps unsurprising that he would imagine PARC’s staff team to be exclusively white, as the full-time drop-in team is almost exclusively so. Most of PARC’s racialized workers are not visible within the drop-in; they work on the second floor. The POP team, which occupies a large office beyond the now-empty space which used to house second floor reception, is 50% racialized. The peer team, which occupies the office across from POP, has a similar racial make-up. The peer team also includes PARC’s only Indigenous staff person. Both the POP and Peer teams are separated from the drop-in by a flight of stairs or elevator ride, the large second floor reception area, and two digitally locked doors. Both teams also do the majority of their work either in their offices or outside of the building entirely. Interestingly, though the second floor is also seen as the seat of agency power, both the Peer and POP teams are separated from the Executive Director’s office by two additional locked doors and the commercial tenant spaces by one. Thus, the racialized teams are
separated both from the heart of the agency (the drop-in) and its head (the Executive Director and private financial interests).

5.5. A Gentrified Living Room

I argue that the drop-in appeals to both PARC’s discourse producers and the local elite because, much like the Parkdale neighbourhood, it provides the appearance of openness while functionally exerting significant power over the behaviours and movements of certain individuals and communities. In fact, it tacitly attributes the quality of openness to whiteness and masculinity. In this way, it repeats the racial neoliberalism at play in the gentrification of Parkdale. Just as the neighbourhood has rid itself abject and threatening bodies, so too does the drop-in spatially proscribe the appearance of race, gender and visible madness.

5.5.1. Multiculturalism

Since the 2000 renovation, PARC has been subtly repackaged as multicultural. It began with implication alone: The 2000 Annual Report notes that “the drop-in is more than ever an entrance into a growing and changing community” (PARC, 2000, p. 12). While the primary reference here is PARC’s new commercial tenants, there are hints throughout the Annual Report of a racially diversifying Parkdale. Blackness is obliquely referenced as perhaps a part of homelessness and housing struggles in the advocacy section, which begins with a Bob Marley quote (PARC, 2000, p. 8). PARC’s creative expression is described as “like life, jazz, man” (PARC, 2000, p. 17). The following year, a white PARC member’s poem “Dancing African Woman” was given a central spot in the Annual Report. This would mark the first and last time that African identity was mentioned in an official PARC document. It reads:

Dancing around the fire like a free spirit / chanting spiritual words to the air / with tears coming down / with fear of death around me / my body is just like a sweat box / as dancing frees me from my anger / competition is strong / my body becomes strong / like a roaring lion hunting in the jungle / as my body slows down I eat a banana / my body flares up into a butterfly / then I can smell danger in the distance (PARC, 2001, p. 17).

The inclusion of such a racially charged poem was followed by more explicit reference to local immigrants. The 2003 Annual Report notes that people are increasingly sharing cultural products “from different lands: from Nepal, China, Poland and North America” (p. 17). The 2007 Report
proudly recalls “the celebration of Tibetan New Year” with two pages of photos and the following description: “PARC has a large number of volunteers from the Tibetan cultural community…with assistance and direction in how to make Tibetan “Momos” (dumplings) and “Guthuk” (stew), PARC celebrated…it was a fabulous event that engaged all of us in learning the Tibetan culture, language, food, music, dance and spirituality” (p. 29). All PARC discourse notes that “the simple act of walking through our doors is what makes a person a PARC member,” and reminds the community that the drop-in is “the true face of Parkdale” (PARC, 2014, p. 1; “Drop-In Centre,” 2015). The agency increasingly represents this “face” quite literally, with Annual Reports and a website that feature photos of the faces of PARC members with a variety of racial identities.

The Wednesday music program and its supplement, the drum group, are the most heavily marketed of all PARC’s programs. Both are facilitated by the agency’s only Black drop-in worker. The current website, written by the communication lead, a young white man with a marketing background, reads, “To see it is to believe it! For over 20 years, members and some amazing musical guests have been bringing the house down with this almost famous weekly jam… Learning to listen as well as raise one’s voice is a healing rhythm” (Music Group, 2015). Indeed, the music group has long been referred to as a site of “spiritual” power. In an excerpt much like the “Dancing African Woman” poem, a section of the 2003 Annual Report reads:

If you walk into PARC on the right day you will hear the PARC drummers testifying to the power of the PARC drop-in community heartbeat….our drummers have learned how to find a beat, build a groove and reach beyond their personal limits until there is simply no other choice but for us to dance. Like the PARC drummers, the 2003 drop-in program supported the PARC community with spirit, endurance and dedication (PARC, 2003, p. 8).

The PARC drummers are herein used to represent authenticity, spirituality and connection. They “testify,” they “build a groove,” and they help the rest of the agency “dance” with “spirit.” These terms and ideas recall what hooks (1990), amongst others, refers to as the calcification, commoditization and exoticization of Black cultural production for white consumption. Music has long been a key site of such culturalization. Amiri Baraka’s (then LeRoi Jones) 1963 book *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* tracked the movement of Black music in the North American white consciousness from “primitive” abjection to appropriated “coolness” and “soul.”
Music scholar Daniel Stadnicki (2012) notes a similar pattern in contemporary Toronto: The culturalization of gospel and African drumming creates Blackness as a “mystifying” and exotic cultural product while simultaneously working to delegitimize Black musicians when they name and respond to racism.

Over the course of my interviews, many drop-in staff expressed discomfort at a dynamic they identify as “[the music day facilitator] being watched more closely.” I heard at least four different examples of this regarding other staff and managers. Some were quite upsetting, and involved blatant targeting. This is unsurprising: As Puwar (2004) writes, racialized bodies in normatively white spaces often “endure a burden of doubt, a burden of representation, infantalization and super-surveillance” (p. 11). “Bodies out of place” are also often seen to be lacking in the competencies of their job, regardless of their performance. As Puwar (2004) writes, they are forced “to work harder to convince people that they are capable…. [and] have to be crystal-clear perfect in their job performances, as any imperfections are easily picked up and amplified” (p. 61). In this vein, a staff reports to me having overheard management refer to this and other racialized staff members as “equity hires,” rather than “real workers”: “They don’t expect them to be able to do their jobs.”

Racial surveillance and distrust are built into both the social and spatial environments of the drop-in. This is true for most environments in Canada, as it is a fundamentally racialized national space. Yet despite PARC’s genuine desire to work towards transparency and against oppression, these racial dynamics are not acknowledged as such. Indeed, I would argue, they cannot be if the drop-in is to resolve PARC’s fundamental paradox.

In keeping with the neoliberal mode, especially in a presumably social justice oriented environment, “the relevance of the raced subject, racial identity and racism” are subsumed “under the auspices of meritocracy,” locating the problem in the racialized person’s failure to perform to supposedly universal standards (Davis, 2007, p. 350). Race, when it appears at all, can only appear as culturalized. This repeats the dynamic at play in multicultural Parkdale: Racism persists unacknowledged while music, food and art associated with racialized communities are integrated, even occasionally celebrated, on the condition that they be

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27 For example, an Idle No More mural and a large piece of Indigenous art are prominently displayed in the drop-in, even as the agency continues to sideline Indigenous members and programs.
understood as cultural. This reflects Jacobs’ (1996) vision of “multicultural planning,” which she notes is “little more than an exotic post-colonial urban reverie,” which produced regulated and sanitized ‘sensual delights’ of food and performance for [white settler] consumption” to the exclusion of racialized bodies, livelihoods and lives (p. 116).

5.5.2. Social Mix

In many ways, the PARC drop-in is Parkdale’s living room; that is, it a living room for the enlightened bourgeois vision of the neighbourhood. Like Parkdale, the drop-in controls race through spatial and social forms of power. When racialized traditions appear, they do so as de-racinated examples of culture. Madness appears similarly culturalized: While PARC was designed to be a safe haven for people with vastly differing experiences of and expressions within the world, functional limits are placed around what kind of madness can manifest and when. In the day to day operation of the agency, an emphasis is placed on positive or complacent affect and, barring that, quiet or self-contained behaviour. As PARC’s public profile grows, however, the drop-in hosts more and more community events designed to establish the agency as a “hub,” a site where the local elite can experience what Slater (2005a) calls the “liveability, freedom, tolerance, cross-class interaction….mixing and conviviality” (p. 45) of social mix. At these events, behavioural norms become more restrictive: PARC members are required not only to be tacitly white; they must also be mad only insomuch as they can supply the Parkdale residents with the endearing “kookiness” that characterizes a mixed Parkdale (Caton, 2015a, paras. 5 – 7). In a repetition of the local dynamics of social mix, PARC’s drop-in curates mad, white poverty for the aesthetic and cultural consumption of the local elite. This occurs via the filtering of particular mad identities through the lens of art. This dynamic is particularly apparent in the weekly workshops, events and public celebrations held by Making Room.

Making Room Community Arts aligns neatly with the vision of the drop-in as primarily a “soulful” resource. The Making Room website describes the program as focused on returning art “to its rightful place in everyday life as a bridge between our inner and exterior worlds” (“About Us,” 2015, para. 2). “We do this,” it continues, “by bringing together people, places and things that have been previously kept apart: noise and silence, action and contemplation, rest and
movement, artists and non-artists, the housed and under-housed – all through a process of collaborative art-making.” (“About Us,” 2015, para. 2).

According to the Making Room website, “art-making” is “as practical and necessary as food, shelter and transportation” (“About Us,” 2015, para. 4). In many ways, this sentiment is a crucial refutation of the bare survival mentality that emerged at PARC in the mid-1990s. It helpfully expands the notion that people need only food and shelter to thrive. It also, however, reinforces the unacknowledged prioritization of certain communities and the erasure of others. Further, it courts the gaze of the local bourgeois in a way that recalls the culturalization of madness in the larger Parkdale neighbourhood.

Like the PARC drop-in itself, the Making Room’s participant demographic is predominantly white psychiatrized people. Their public installations and exhibitions call upon much of the same imagery as the Mad Pride movement. The Mad Pride Toronto website, for example, calls the Mad Pride week “a celebration of madness” (About Us, 2014, para. 1). “Our lives and contributions are valuable and need celebration!” the site proclaims (About Us, 2014, para. 3). The Artistic Director of Making Room concurs: “If you spend any time at PARC you see that celebrations are important, whether it is solstice or small celebrations, even the Wednesday jam,” he says in an interview with the Parkdale Villager, “Celebrations are a big deal, but what do celebrations mean in a community of people who are often overlooked?” (Hatfield, 2014, para. 13).

For the participants in the Mad Pride movement, “celebration” means “remembering and participating in mad history, challenging discrimination, advocating for rights, affirming mad identities, developing and empowering mad communities [and] having fun!” (“About Us,” 2014, para. 2). This manifests in a “cultural festival” (“About Us,” 2014, para. 12) that, due to its overwhelming whiteness and its emphasis on arts, culture and happiness has the unintended effect of casting Othered mad people into criminality. As explored previously, Mad Pride assists in the embourgeoisement of mad identity within Parkdale. Making Room furthers this project, creating “celebrations” that call upon stereotypical representations of madness yet are designed by, for, and in the image of the local elite.
Making Room’s largest public exhibition was held on March 22nd, 2013. It was called “Under One Tent: In Celebration of PARC’s 33rd Anniversary.” Whereas in previous years, PARC staff and members would plan the events of the anniversary together, the “Under One Tent” event was entirely under the jurisdiction of Making Room. Further, whereas the anniversary was previously understood as a celebration predominantly in and for the PARC member and staff community, “Under One Tent” was widely advertised through posters, flyers and articles in the local newspapers as a “giant indoor market with performance, art and toys for all to enjoy” (Parkdale Villager Staff, 2013, para. 2). As the name implies, the intention was to bring the entire community together in PARC drop-in.

“Under One Tent” invited local Parkdale residents, business owners and artists into a PARC “transformed” to become “an exotic night-market with endless delights: knitting and knit goods, fortune telling, acetate drawings of members past, memory jars…galleries for PARC artists Robert and Elias…jewelry by PARC member Evelyn…a wisdom tree tablecloth…and more” (Our History, 2015, para. 16). The use of PARC members’ first names only infantilizes them, separating their work from the Making Room artists and PARC staff, all of whom are given full names in Making Room publications. Analyzed alongside Making Room’s stated intention to bring together “artists and non-artists” (About Us, 2015, para. 2), it seems to imply that the offerings of PARC members are perhaps more valuable for their exotic non-professional quality than for their actual artistry. In this way, it functionally erases both those PARC members who are artists and PARC’s existing arts programs.

The further characterization of PARC’s “night market” as “exotic” recalls the culturalization of madness, amplified by the photographs of the event which show a white older woman dressed as “the fortune teller” in what might be taken for an imitation of Roma clothing. The emphasis on the “wisdom” to be found in the drop-in (given out in the form of “wisdom cigarettes” by PARC staff) neutralizes the social danger of madness, recasting it as artistic and oracular. According to the blog of a self-identified “student-employee/traveller/creative thinker,” the night was “a spectacle like no other,” a real insight into a place where things are never “business-as-usual” (“Lost and Found,” 2013, para. 3). The drop-in was experienced by this blogger –and, likely, by other members of the local elite, as a place of “euphoric sensation: smells, sights and sound” (“Lost and Found,” 2013, para. 4).
The sense of the PARC drop-in as a site of “euphoric sensation” recalls my interviewees’ characterization of the Parkdale neighbourhood as “pungent” – a place of cultural enrichment and idealized mixing for the edification of the elite. Importantly, the “night market” and Making Room’s other events are conceived and carried out by Making Room – a group led by a professional artist with a small, dedicated member participant community. Yet events like “Under One Tent” conflate Making Room’s vision of PARC with PARC itself. In this way, the representation of PARC offered to the Parkdale community is extremely limited. This is equally apparent in Making Room’s more recent “celebration,” “Feast of Flags,” the third of five book launches for hand-made books written by a long-term staff about PARC members. Like the “Under One Tent” write-up on the Making Room website, the “Feast of Flags” book features art by PARC members who are identified by first name only. The PARC staff author and the Making Room Artistic Director are both given full first and last names. The two book launches I attended featured some member content, but were framed by PARC’s Executive Director, the staff author and Making Room professional artists.

Many of my PARC member interviewees express a genuine appreciation for Making Room. The participants in the program experience it as “empowering” and “fun” – indeed, sometimes, they tell me, it’s “collaborative, the way old PARC used to be.” Yet the events themselves allow PARC to be folded into the vision of madness as social mix in a neighbourhood where behavioural or psychological difference can only appear as legitimate and safe if it is white and civil. If mad white people are the quintessential marginalized members of the Parkdale community, then it follows that racialized and immigrant communities (mad or otherwise) are interlopers. This sentiment bolsters and justifies the selective policing of the Toronto PD. It is notable that Making Room has been uniquely lauded in the neighbourhood. Its events are almost always covered glowingly in the local newspapers and sponsored, at least in part, by the Parkdale Village BIA. The organization recently received $180,000 grant from the Trillium Foundation. I speculate that the reason that Making Room is so palatable is because it represents and engages primarily with a marginalized population that is non-threatening to forces of gentrification.

Madness and racialization exist in complex interrelation. Mad white people experience a different form of discrimination than the interlocking forms of oppression that racialized psychiatrized people face. Reductively, whiteness (along with economic stability, perceived
gender normativity and heterosexuality) significantly mitigates pathology and, as a result, violence. This is because, under white supremacy, the madness of white people is treated as a mental pathology, whereas the madness of racialized and indigenous people is treated as a racial pathology. While techniques of power have never been completely homogenous, mad white people, though subject to quarantine and psychological experimentation, have been spared the more genocidal modes of intervention such as sterilization and murder (Tam 2011; Ussher 2011).

This is particularly true in Parkdale. In the remaining 'ghetto' sections of the neighbourhood (both geographic and discursive), poverty, pathologization, and racialization entwine to create complex conditions of marginality. The non-normative behaviour associated with madness and the illegible character of non-so-called-Canadian cultural/language communities are often conflated in whitestream discourse, because, as Other(ed) linguistic and cultural codes, they threaten the primacy of English and unspoken social contracts of public behaviour. An elision occurs between overcrowded boarding houses and poor immigrant families forced to live together in small apartments, because the density and enforced interdependence of bodies threatens the narrative of possessive individualism. Racialized and Indigenous people bear the brunt of this weight.

5.6. Racial Reconciliation

5.6.1. Buried Stories

The primary narrative of the PARC drop-in is as a site of open access, warmth, and collectivity. This narrative runs deep, even amongst the membership: When I asked members if they had ever experienced racism, sexism, homophobia or the like in the drop-in, almost everyone said no, at least at first. Eventually, however, almost every racialized member that I interviewed eventually brought up an experience of racism. A Chinese immigrant, for example, tells me he believes that people “can’t tell Chinese people apart from each other.” “A lady,” he recalls, “I don’t think she was staff…one day, she didn’t let me have a meal. She said I already had one. She was mistaken – she thought I had a meal, but I hadn’t had a meal yet. She yelled at me. I think we all look the same to her.” Another tells me, through tears, “I thought they provided services to everyone. But there is a person who gives out food and only gives it to the white people. One day, I asked her
for some watermelon, she was giving it out to everyone, and she said no to me, because I’m Chinese. She gave it to everybody, but not me. I’m Chinese, so she discriminated.” A Caribbean immigrant tells me that she has been called “the n-word” so many times that she has “lost track.”

The 2011 review of incident reports found that racialized members were overrepresented as victims of verbal abuse, threats of violence and attack at the agency. The report reads, “Of 18 use of force descriptions racialized members were victims in almost half. There were also four incidents that referred to threats of force against racialized members and 8 reports of verbal abuse towards racialized members” (PARC, 2011, p. 3). This is “especially troubling,” the report continues, given that racialized people “form a small population within PARCs general membership” (PARC, 2011, p. 3). This report also uncovered experiences of racism amongst staff. Racialized staff were also overrepresented in incident reports as “victims of the use of force”: “Racialized staff were the victims of half the use of force incidents at PARC” (PARC, 2011, p. 4).

My staff interviewees were more immediately forthcoming with their experiences of oppression in the drop-in. I heard countless upsetting stories about interpersonal and infrastructural racism, including one issue which was resolved by relocating and entire program team to elsewhere in the building. Despite this, staff report to me that racism itself is “never openly addressed.” It is dealt with “only quietly.” Another employee muses: “We’ve never had any training or even conversations supported by the management to help us figure out how to deal with this in the drop-in.” Indeed, even the survey of incident reports described above was never given wide release; I had to obtain it from its author.

Stories of racial discrimination in the drop-in are most often told by racialized staff and members. Interestingly, however, even those white, male psychiatric survivor members who fits civil norms express confusion over some elements of the drop-in narrative. Of particular interest is the lingering ambivalence over the paradoxical narrative of collective ownership. Where PARC’s discourse producers mobilize the image of the drop-in, its spatial arrangements and associated feelings, to establish collectivity, members appear to have interpreted such narratives much more literally. Consequently, many share a sense of having been misled about their actual roles in collective ownership. As one tells me, “I think the original concept of PARC was for the
drop-in to be run by the membership. Oddly enough, it doesn’t appear to be run by the general membership. I don’t know what the reasons are.” Another says, with some indignation:

Originally, the mandate was that the members were going to be groomed, trained, taught what was needed, given the schooling and paper work to say that they were social workers, and that they were going to run the centre. It was going to be a hand off. Then somewhere down the line, staff went “oh god, we might lose our jobs,” and then the economy went fucked, and so everyone dug in. They managed to change the mandate, which I didn’t know could be done without a lot of trouble. So those of us who were planning to go through the established process, who were planning to get jobs here, we ended up more like senior volunteers. We were all extremely angry about it, but of course we were survivors, so we moved on. There were just some things we didn’t do anymore.

This narrative of PARC’s history is not relevant to the agency’s actual structure. It lines up quite neatly, however, with much of the rhetoric produced by PARC, especially in the years following the building purchase. The idea, for example, that the acquisition of 1499 Queen realized “the members’ dream of owning the building” and the ongoing insistence that PARC members can and do assert control over their home or living room space makes this members’ sense of betrayal a logical conclusion (PARC, 1991, p. 3).

Staff, too, experience the tension inherent in the narrative of collectivity, albeit somewhat differently. As one notes:

Working in the drop-in feels a little bit like babysitting, at times. I understand, like, give autonomy to a space, I’m just there if something needs some, sort of, massaging, but why does the word babysitting come up for me, then? And it does. I don’t feel right or good about that. I don’t fully know how to articulate that, but a lot of it is just sort of…it’s less active, so it’s sort of getting through the shift, putting out fires, managing a space. That’s what I feel the role is. Which was not necessarily my expectation.

This staff, like many others, report coming into the agency with a pre-established sense of what PARC did. One tells me, laughing, “You know, I had been to organizing meetings here and seen some of the newsletters and I thought it was a really political place. Like I could do revolutionary work here. It was pretty naïve.” This sensibility coalesces in the drop-in.

Many also experience the drop-in as a place where people “play favorites.” This dynamic is not explicitly named as racial or gendered, but it is apparent that the lines are drawn as such. At each level of the agency, from management to members, at least one interviewee identified that “old school members” or “capital M Members” get “preferential treatment.” When asked who these
people are, a manager tells me they are “classic psychiatric survivors.” Another manager indicates “you know, the people who participate in all the groups, were on the members’ caucus, do art in the drop-in.” Front-line staff, former and current, put it somewhat more bluntly: “Certainly not drug users,” one tells me. Another says, “White guys, survivors.” Members most often give me names of individuals, almost all of whom are white boarding home residents, though some, especially older psychiatric survivors, tell me that “the junkies” or “the users” have started to get “more attention” and “better service” than the “old school boarding home guys.”

Such sentiments abound in my interviews, yet they are rarely expressed at the agency level. Further, still, when they appear in my interviews, they are often followed by a reaffirmation of love, warmth and camaraderie, the ongoing sense of collectivity that people feel from being in the drop-in. Almost everyone I spoke to returned to the narrative of PARC as “home.”

5.6.2. Singular Narrative

Dissonance is an enduring theme at PARC. The dissonance between rhetoric and materiality explored above is rivalled by another, perhaps more foundational dissonance: the gap between peoples’ complaints about the agency and their feelings of attachment to it. This is particularly notable in the narratives of the drop-in. Many staff tell me that the drop-in is unsafe for both transgendered and cisgendered women, as well as gender-variant or non-gender-normative people. Others tell me that sexism and racism go unchecked. Some feel frustrated with the decreasing support for program infrastructure and a sense that the “soul” is under threat of neoliberalization. Yet, though many spent the majority of our interview critiquing, almost everyone I spoke to expressed deep attachment to the drop-in. After explaining the destruction of the much-loved small group programs in the Harris era, one long-time staff tells me, “I think that it’s still open and welcoming. I know the organization has shifted over time, but my sense is that the drop-in is still a welcoming space where all kinds of people can gather.” Another notes that the drop-in is the last space in the agency where there is still potential for true kinship and connection between members and staff:

Though there have been changes, in the drop-in, there can sometimes be a true removal of any kind of agenda or hierarchy. I mean, when I’m sitting with someone, and we’re joking around and we’re asking each other questions….it’s like, we can have regular
conversation with absolutely no institutional barriers. It’s a sharing of space. It’s community participation.

This sentiment often came up when I asked people why they stay at PARC. As one front-line drop-in worker tells me:

After all this time, I still buy into the work of the drop-in. The thing that got me there in the first place was that whole, like, you can be crazy here, we can talk about being crazy. That’s always been meaningful to me. And we’ve also still held onto that non-medical model. So I stay because I still love the work, and I still love the place, despite everything. I still believe in the original intention.

I too have experienced the sheer power of community connection. There is no doubt that people on staff and in the membership experience moments of genuine collaboration and true empathy. Further, PARC remains one Toronto’s very few large-scale social service sites that is expressly wary of standard social work modalities. Yet the consistent appearance of justification – the repeated “despite” and “although” – gives me pause. Why do staff return to the long-established agency of a compassionate, collaborative, accessible and non-hierarchical drop-in immediately after they have called these attributes into question?

If, as Blomley (2004) suggests, we tell stories “to make sense of the world,” then narrative is not only a descriptive act, but a creative one (p. 51). I believe that the narrative of the drop-in as enduringly open and accessible works to resolve the PARC’s contradictory desire to own the land and give it over to the members; to be landlord and tenants’ rights activist; to appeal to governmental and private funding bodies while flouting their demands. The construction of the drop-in as the “soul” of the agency – and, further, the characterization of that soul as fundamentally collective – allows the agency to imagine that the interests of business and the needs of the members can coexist. It resolves the fundamental tension that emerges from PARC’s paradoxical desires.

The narrative of the accessible drop-in is pervasive; it is everywhere in the agency. This, as Blomley (2004) remind us, is a self-perpetuating cycle. “The very coherence of narrative,” Blomley (2004) writes, “the emplotting of people and processes, can render dominant stories persuasive and preordained, making alternative stories hard to tell” (p. 51). Yet PARC has made an identity for itself in speaking back to domination, in telling the untold and buried stories of the poor. How, then, does our own story, a story shaped by the same silence as the mainstream
narrative, become so compelling? The answer, I suspect, lies in its racial and gendered dimensions.

PARC’s drop-in is an accessible, open, and collaborative site – at least for some. It has been and remains an essential resource for the agency’s core membership, which consists predominantly of white men. Control, surveillance, emplacement and eviction operate along racial and gendered lines. It may be that those in positions of power, those in the majority – indeed, perhaps most of the agency – simply cannot perceive such mechanisms of control. As Puwar (2001) writes, “the racialized nature of white spaces, structures and language is not so easily visible to white people, precisely because whiteness is defined as the norm and the standard neutral space” (Puwar, 2001, p. 656 – 657).

Further, the return to the drop-in narrative seems to indicate a desire to resolve the what is a genuinely uncomfortable ambivalence through feelings of community. It is no wonder – ambivalence is rattling. Admitting the paradox – and, further, acknowledging that we operate on the basis of specifically racial and gendered exclusions – unseats our sense of ourselves as socially progressive. It therefore becomes affectively difficult to maintain a critique of the drop-in.

5.7. Conclusion

PARC’s spatial rearrangements have tended towards surveillance, privatization and the recreating of community space for the elite. As I have argued, this is an unanticipated consequence of property ownership, as well as an ongoing, unacknowledged protection of the white, masculine somatic norm. PARC’s sincere desire to secure a home for Parkdale’s most marginalized in and through its space has been repeatedly undermined by an organization-wide failure to acknowledge and strategize against the racial, colonial and heteropatriarchal dynamics of neoliberalism and gentrification as they manifest through property and spatial dynamics. These spatial changes have been rationalized through the narrative of the “living room.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, PARC’s drop-in is both its most welcoming, accessible and open space and the most thoroughgoing site of racial and gendered exclusion. In this way, it repeats rather than defies Parkdale’s gentrification and maintains the primacy of enlightened bourgeois desires.
Again, I am left with questions – ones that are closer to the bone than I care to admit. It is important to me, to my own sense of self, that I acknowledge PARC’s staff as uniquely self-conscious and aware. Why, then, are we so plagued by silence? In what follows, I attempt to answer this question. I offer that PARC’s rhetoric gives us political and social identities – indeed, creates possibilities for subject positions – that keep us safely within white bourgeois power while feeling defiant of it.
Chapter 5
Making an Enlightened Activist:
Bourgeois Power and the Staff Subject

6.1. Introduction

The pervasive and instrumental story of the drop-in does not emerge from the ether. It is told (and retold) by people, whom, as Blomley (2004) notes, simultaneously constitute and are constituted by that which they narrate (p. 51). While the previous chapters explore how the disembodied dictates of law, bureaucracy and building code become storied in institutional history and physical space, this one takes on a much more personal, and perhaps more dangerous, focus: the subjects who do the telling, and whose identities emerge from what is told. In the case of PARC, the main narratives do not flow through and, in turn, constitute the members, but the staff. This chapter introduces the figure of the PARC staff in order to investigate how he simultaneously works for social justice and obscures his own patriarchy and whiteness. These two facets of the staff subject – his opposition to domination and implication within it – do not cancel each other out, or cast doubt on the others’ veracity. Rather, they coexist and mutually constitute. In what follows, I argue that the staff subject appears in image and story as a white, middle-class, non-psychiatrized, community activist whose distinctive qualities – and, indeed, his worth and value – silently manifest a paradox. As an activist subject, the PARC staff positions himself as fundamentally oppositional to what he understands as mainstream or traditional social work, as well as other flows of domination. Yet his very identity as an activist hinges on a quietly hierarchical relationship to Others; he finds his coherence in creating salvation for a romanticized and essentialized poor. In so doing, he both defies and repeats the power dynamics inherent to the helping professions. He is simultaneously defiant and normative; progressive and regressive.

I want to clarify at the outset that the staff subject I explore in this chapter is not, and cannot be, an individual. He is, rather, a lens through which individuals are subtly asked to view ourselves. He is a set of beliefs, a mode of comportment, and a structure of feeling which remains always aspirational rather than accomplished. He represents the boundaries of the thinkable, sayable and
be-able at PARC. Yet despite my insistence that the staff subject is a form of governance rather than a description of the governed, I began with the admission that studying him is perilous. This is because, despite my intentions, it is impossible to completely separate staff-as-form-of-subjectification from staff-as-team-of-individuals. The distinction is further complicated by my data: I rely on peoples’ stories of themselves as an access point to a broader exploration of flows of power. Excavating such a shared archive of discourse and emotion threatens the integrity of what seems most intimate; analyzing the thoughts and feelings of staff requires that we consider the ways in which our ideas, our stories and our identities lie beyond our awareness and control. I do not intend this as an undressing of any individual(s); my intention is rather to show how easily and insidiously we are conscripted into normalizing practice.

That said, it would be dishonest to claim that this process occurs completely without personal will. While the general terrain may be given, we decide, albeit to varying degrees, comply with or refute what Heron (2007) calls the “discursively established standards of conduct” (p. 10). There were moments in PARC’s history when a single person or group of people affected a significant shift in agency practice. Though I explore these points, I remain steadfast in the belief that everyone has operated and continues to operate out of the heartfelt desire to do right by the members and each other. I follow Arthur Frank (2004) in asserting that “we act as best we can at a particular time, guided by certain stories that speak for that time, and other people’s dialogical affirmation that we have chosen the right stories…the best any of us can do is tell one another out stories of how we have made choices and set priorities” (pp. 191 – 192). Further, I assert that the PARC activist subject is driven by a genuine commitment to justice, and a willingness to put himself on the line for systemic change. As such, he has made a genuine impact on PARC and Parkdale. It is, of course, in my interest to believe such things: I fit quite well into agency norms.

My exploration of the staff subject cannot be neutral. I am not a dispassionate observer. I have ongoing emotional investments both in PARC staff as co-workers, collaborators and friends and as a former PARC employee. As a white, middle-class settler who came to PARC through my “activist” affiliations and treated it as a place to live out what I thought were my revolutionary projects, I am an exemplary PARC staff subject. I still think, feel and believe in many of the narratives that I unpack; indeed, I do not feel that laying them bare means that I
think they are bankrupt. As a result, this chapter has a necessarily more personal tone. I weave my own experiences into the interview data and, whenever possible, I refer to the PARC staff team as “we” to remind the reader – and myself – that I am an inextricable part of what I analyze.

I recognize that even in acknowledging my ongoing complicity in the messy, powerful vision of the staff subject, I come off looking cleaner than I am. This is partially due to my status as writer; my words are the lens through which PARC is herein explored. This lends me an air of objectivity which I cannot shake, no matter how I try. It is also easy as a woman to imagine that I stand outside of patriarchal norms; that I am straightforwardly a victim, rather than a perpetrator, of gender-based oppression. Here, it is essential to remember that masculinity is complex form of power produced in relation. It does not always map cleanly onto our identities or even the established social narratives of sex and/or gender. For example, though I experience sexism at PARC, this research has allowed me to make my own masculine gesture, framing the agency through the rational colonial/imperial epistemological mode of academia. The academic industrial complex and its attendant modes of expression are always already implicated in normalizing both white supremacy and heteropatriarchy (Best, McLaren & Nocella, 2010).

Yeğenoğlu (1998) suggests that, when juxtaposed with colonized Others, “the Western subject…occupies not only the position of the colonial, but also a masculine subject position” (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 11). “Western women,” she continues, “as the excluded other of Western men, nevertheless occupy a masculine position in relation” (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 12). We Western women gain a foothold in power by taking up the work of civilizing the savage, seeking to assist racialized Others into modernity. While I critique the PARC staff subject’s attempt to uplift members, I must admit that I am also guilty of this. Further, positioning myself as a knower, revealing the logic of the staff subject performs a similar gesture, yearning towards the improvement of other (if not always Othered) people.

This is a complex thing to acknowledge as it is only partially within my control. As Yeğenoğlu (1998) writes, women are, to various degrees, allowed access to universal subjectivity; however, our access is mitigated by masculinity. She writes “since the universal is conceived of on the basis of one and access to it is restricted, the only possible way for women to enter into this
privileged space and enjoy its benefits is through *imitating the masculine gesture*” (p. 105, emphasis in the original). “In other words,” she continues, “they are allowed to enjoy the benefits of universality only if they assume a male position” (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 105). I am, like all PARC staff subjects, both an agent and victim of oppression. I can never be outside of that which I critique.

### 6.1.1. The (Bourgeois) Subjectification of Work

This chapter tracks a particular thread of enlightened bourgeois subjectification in the image of activist staff. This requires a return to the idea of the subject. Following Rose (1990), I assert that “our personalities, subjectivities, and ‘relationships’” are “objects of power….intensely governed…socially organized and managed in minute particulars” (Rose, 1990, p. 1). Rose (1990), Miller and Rose (1991), Heron (2005, 2007) and others, building on the foundational work of Foucault (1980, 1984), use the term “subjectivity” to refer to a form of self-perception filtered through and manifest within the notion of the self-limited individual. In this context, the social constitution of the self goes beyond the surface of the body, with its externally-mandated and/or culturally legible identities, to permeate all that we imagine as personal, discrete and hermetically-sealed: our thoughts, desires, dreams, intentions and instincts. The production and governance of such a subject operates through a diffuse set of ideas, feelings and beliefs that individuals come to imagine as self-generated. For Foucauldian scholars Burchell, Gordon and Mitchell (1991), the term “government” is best understood as “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics” which produce and delimit thought, feeling and action in the social sphere (p. 102).

The subject is generated through what Rose (1990) calls “a complex and heterogeneous assemblage of technologies” of governance, acting as “relays bringing the varied ambitions of political, scientific, philanthropic, and professional authorities into alignment with the ideals and aspirations of individuals, with the selves each of us want to be” (p. 213). In this schema, Heron (2007) writes, “subjects are constituted through discourses that *subject* individuals to discursively available positions” – that is, people come to understand themselves as selves in and through the pre-established flows of power (p. 10). For Rose (1990), the idea of the “self” is not only an effect of modern governance structures; it is also “a vital element in the networks of
power that traverse modern societies…incorporating, shaping, channeling, and enhancing subjectivity have been intrinsic to the operations of government” (213).

I have already explored the process of subjectification at a general level, in looking at how the enlightened bourgeois became the primary lens for understanding the Parkdale neighbourhood. Here, I want to track the process much more carefully by looking at one of the most common sites of subjectification – the workplace. Over the last century, employment has become a primary mode for producing selves. Rose (1990) tracks a process he calls the “subjectification of work,” a form of industrial biopolitics involving “the saturation of the working body with feelings, emotions, and wishes, the transformation of work, mental and manual, into matters of personal fulfillment and psychical identity, in which the financial exchange is significant less for the cash reward it offers than for the identity it confers upon the recipient” (p. 244). As Rose (1990) explores, in the North American and Western European context, the nineteenth century brought a new vision of the workplace as both “productive” and “humanized” (p. 56). In the post-WWII period, “new ways of thinking and acting on the group and on human resources were deployed in debates about labour productivity, and industrial unrest, and about maximizing the commitment of the worker and his or her integration into the enterprise” (Rose, 1990, p. xi). “Additionally,” he notes, “work has been given wider, non-economic significance. Employment has become construed as an essential element in individual psychological health, family stability and social tranquility” (Rose, 1990, p. xi). “Work,” he concludes, “is now seen as an imperative as much psychological as economic” (Rose, 1990, p. xi). Self-making within the workplace occurs through various relays or “technologies of the self,” which include “techniques of notation, computation and calculation; procedures of examination and assessment…the inculcation of habits; the inauguration of professional specialisms and vocabularies” (Miller & Rose, 1991, p. 8). In what follows, I look closely at some of these technologies at PARC, analyzing job postings, job descriptions, and Annual Reports.

Notably, what Rose (1990) identifies as the subjectification of work is both race and class-specific. The identity-confirming workplace – and, indeed, the expectation that employment might provide “self-fulfillment” – is limited to white collar labour (Rose, 1990, p. 103). This chapter takes on the construction of the PARC worker subject as just such a bourgeois site, using “bourgeois” to refer the “simultaneously mythical and normative identity pertaining to and
shaping…white middleclass subjects” (Heron, 2007 p. 6). This identity, Heron (2007) explains, “always connotes whiteness…. [and] implicit heteronormativity,” as well as masculinity (Heron, 2007, p. 6). It is not, however, limited to white, male individuals; bourgeois power, rather, describes a form of power consolidated in but far in excess of white men. Bourgeois logic dictates, for example, normative social structures like the nuclear family, the upstanding citizen and, as mentioned, the fulfilling workplace.

I am invested in exploring how the PARC staff subject both defies and repeats the logic of its primary foil: the traditional social worker. The social worker is a feminized figure whose professionalized compassion works to simultaneously “improve” the lives of the (deserving, tolerable) poor and secure her place as the mother of the white nation. The PARC staff subject, by comparison, presents itself as masculine activist whose political investments and community connections must be wielded to redistribute resources to the poor. Yet, as I explore, both are invested in maintaining the primacy of the enlightened bourgeois as agents of change, and social service users as its objects. Further, both gain their sense of both goodness and authenticity from proximity to marginality; their subjectivities emerge from what Yeğenoğlu (2002) might call "a detour through the other" (p. 1), what Razack (2002) refers to as the bourgeois “journey into personhood” through “degenerate space” (p. 14).

Like the activist staff subject, the social worker that I discuss in the conclusion of this chapter is not an individual. Nor, importantly, is she representative of a professional designation. Modern social work is an extremely diverse field, emergent from a complex history and implemented via a wide range of different, sometimes mutually contradictory, philosophical models (Healy, 2005, 2014). Forms of subjectification within it vary accordingly. The social work subject that I explore herein is predominantly a PARC invention; while she represents some important mainstream ideas about social work, she is primarily an invention borne of a particular time, place, and set of people. Examining her as such provides an access point to broader conversations on the helping professions rather than an encapsulation of how power always operates within them.

This chapter proceeds as follows: First, I describe the PARC staff subject as a discursive figure. I note that he appears in mainstream media, agency-produced discourse and the personal
narratives of staff as a non-professional activist with a “community” relationship to the members, someone who is definitively not a social worker. I unpack how these positions require whiteness, masculinity and bourgeois identity. Next, I examine how this staff subject came to be by analyzing institutional discourse and established norms of practice. I assert that it is an historical production emergent from a particular time early in agency history, and entrenched, like many other dynamics at PARC, in the Harris era.

In the second half of the chapter, I explore the tacit, often, inadvertent technologies of power that maintain the PARC staff team as a primarily white and overwhelmingly male. This, in turn, helps to entrench the supremacy of the staff subject as a form of white bourgeois power. I look at how a presumably merit-based hiring and promotional practice functionally prioritize those staff who can best perform bourgeois normativity. Finally, I turn to PARC’s conflicted relationship with the notion of social work, and explore how the staff subject refutes but does not undermine the form of power it rhetorically positions itself against – that of which relies on a strict separation of helper from helped, agent from object.

6.2. The PARC Staff Subject

In my six years as a front-line employee at PARC, I learned firsthand that the work is unpredictable. Over the course of a given shift, I could be a housing advocate, short-term case manager, or a supportive counselor. I remember days when I suddenly found myself as a chef to 100+ members, and more than one occasion when I facilitated impromptu workshops on topics that ranged from legal rights to scrapbooking. In fact, there was only one experience I learned that I could count on: Multiple times a shift, each and every day, someone would shout the word “staff” and I would turn to look. Whatever else I was doing, that word got my attention; I knew someone might be talking to me.

As of the 2014 Annual Report, PARC’s list of employees included 99 individuals: 21 drop-in workers (seven full-time, seven part-time, seven relief); six case-managers (five full-time, one student); one third-floor housing worker (full-time); three peer outreach workers (full-time); three Edmond Place workers (one full-time, two relief); eight managers (seven program managers, one Executive Director, all full-time); six administrative, development and project
workers (all full-time) and 51 member employees (five reception, 13 kitchen and 33 employees of the Silver Brush Social Enterprise, all part-time). While any of these 99 people are technically “staff,” only a small number of them would turn around, like I did, when they heard that call. That is to say, only some would identify with or be identified as a part of staff subjectivity. For example, 14 member-employees that I interviewed reported to me that they are never called staff. One even laughed – “no, I’m not a staff; that’s really clear.” My experience tells me that there are other employees who similarly not identify in those specific terms; and others still who might, but only at certain times or in certain places. Clearly, being “staff” is not synonymous with being on PARC’s payroll.

The “PARC staff subject” that I explore is neither a job title nor a fixed identity. Rather, it is a discursive and affective production; in turn, a narrative, a spatial descriptor and a visual image; a circulation of attitudes, feelings, beliefs and relational norms. What I experienced in that repeated moment of turning to look was what Althusser (1971) calls “interpellation,” the process through which a subject recognizes themselves as such through an ideological framework. Whether or not I was conscious of it, I was responding to and participating in an image of who and what a PARC staff is. This image appears in the media, in institutionally-produced discourse, and in the words, ideas and attitudes of staff.

6.2.1. The Staff Subject in the Media

As one of Toronto’s few surviving progressive mental health organizations and a Parkdale “community hub,” PARC receives a significant amount of press. Since the mid-1980s, whenever the agency appears in the media, it does so through the words and images of staff. That is not to say members do not appear; to the contrary, they do so more frequently than employees. However, a scan of articles from the Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, Inside Toronto and BlogTO confirms that it is personal testimony and life experience, rather than agency representation, that is solicited from PARC members. Staff, on the other hand, speak on behalf of PARC as an organization; they are its public face.

PARC is a charitable non-profit or “social service site” which employs a mix of credentialed and non-credentialed employees. Unlike other similar workers, however, when PARC staff appear in the media, they are never referred to as “social workers” or “social service workers,” or even,
indeed, when relevant, as “drop-in workers” or “case managers.” Rather, they are described as “staff” (Agrell, 2011, para. 1; Iwanek, 2014, para. 3), “PARC staffer[s]” (Fiorito, 2010, para. 10) or “neighbours,” as in the following agency origin story: “PARC was started 35 years ago by a group of neighbours who were concerned about the closure of the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital” (Hatfield, 2014, para. 5).

Though PARC was founded by nurses and social workers, images of staff in the media are insistently non-professional. PARC staff are seen as driven to their work by personal investments rather than careerist desires. This is connected to the somewhat misleading notion that staff roles and responsibilities emerge directly from the members, as in the following articulation of PARC’s solstice celebration: “Members thought it would be interesting for the space…to stay open all night, for one night. Staff took up the members’ challenge, opening at dawn and closing at dawn” (Iwanek, 2014, para. 3). The notion that PARC staff are ultimately devoted to member initiative is repeated in an article by Erin Hatfield from 2014, where she notes that staff “realized early on in PARC’s story they needed to create capacity and opportunity for members to advocate for themselves” (para. 5–6). She concludes with a quote from the Executive Director: “The long-term goal is that a member will be in my seat someday” (Hatfield, 2014, para. 20).

The Executive Director’s stated desire to be replaced by a member someday establishes two things: First, it generates the sense that PARC staff are selfless – the Executive Director articulates his ultimate goal as the removal of his own power. Second, it sets up a dividing line between members and staff. This difference is entrenched by the fact that PARC staff rarely, if ever, identify themselves as psychiatric survivors, current or former drug addicts or people with experiences of homelessness in media coverage. PARC staff are identified as conduits for rather members’ struggles rather than participants in them. As the Executive Director says, “There is a larger group out there who don’t understand the pressures and the lives, experience and existence of the folks who come to PARC….so they who say what needs to be said…we need to keep saying it because they haven’t heard us yet” (in Hatfield, 2014, para. 18).

PARC’s Executive Director and other employees often provide much needed advocacy in the form of statements to journalists on the issues affecting Parkdale’s marginalized. PARC staff

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28 The one exception to this is in the self-identification of a former PARC manager as “a survivor of mental illness” in a 2010 City News article entitled “PARC: Thirty Years of Rebuilding Lives” (Staff, 2010, para. 7)
have been quoted in the 2011 *Globe and Mail* article by Siri Agrell on a series of baseball bat beatings targeting boarding home residents, and a subsequent *Toronto Star* article on the same issue by Kate Allen and Curtis Rush (2011). Staff spoke out against the police murder of Sammy Yatim in 2013 (Hatfield, 2013e); that same year, PARC appeared in a *Toronto Star* article “Heat wave leaves vulnerable residents at risk.” Investigating the experience of boarding home residents without air conditioners in the sweltering summer heat, journalist Valerie Hauch (2013) interviews three residents of a rooming house and one resident of a subsidized bachelor apartment in South Parkdale, a member of Toronto’s Hearing Voices peer support group, the psychiatric-survivor identified Executive Director of Sound Times and the Executive Director of PARC. While the information that PARC’s ED provides is accurate and essential, the use of his quotations without appropriate context alongside those of people who identify as psychiatric survivors and/or boarding home residents contributes to the notion that PARC staff can fully embody and represent the voices, needs and desires of its member communities while remaining fundamentally outside of them.

PARC is most often solicited for comment in the media about its advocacy and activism efforts. It also, however, attracts substantial coverage for its “celebrations”: parades, installations and events hosted by Making Room Community Arts, and the annual winter and summer solstice parties. As the Artistic Director of Making Room tells the *Parkdale Villager*: “If you spend any time at PARC you see that celebrations are important, whether it is solstice or small celebrations, even the Wednesday jam….Celebrations are a big deal.” (Hatfield, 2014, para. 13). Articles on PARC’s celebrations are particularly striking for the differentiation in staff and member testimony. They hinge on members’ stories of difficulty and pain turned around by PARC’s programs: Iwanek’s (2014) *Toronto Star* article, for example, quotes a member with “mental health challenges” who came to PARC when she was feeling extremely low – “I was not myself, period” (para. 11). Hatfield’s (2015) *Parkdale Villager* article interviews a PARC Ambassador, who recounts coming to PARC as “a destroyed human being, broken...through mental health and addictions issues I had reached the bottom of the barrel and I really didn’t have a way out” (para. 10). Both articles note members’ sense of profound transformation through exposure to the drop-in: Iwanek (2014) informs us that “the people and staff made it worthwhile” for the member to come back “time and time again” (para. 12), whereas Hatfield (2015) continues the quotation: “They probably wish they hadn’t fed me because they have been feeding me for four
years now….but, it was through the programs here that I was able to build my self-esteem” (para. 12). In these articles, staff provide context and explanation for the recovery that comes with joy and celebration – Hatfield (2015) quotes Making Room Artistic Director: “From knitting to drawing, painting, singing, even the way they dress, creativity is a way of surviving on extremely low incomes” (para. 15). Iwanek (2014) quotes PARC’s Program Director:

“In the field of mental health it’s not all about doctors and nurses and social workers and case managers and physiotherapist and occupational therapists,” it’s also about creating positive relationships, says [PARC’s Program Director]. He can remember many examples of people who had difficulty co-operating with others, but through the jams learned about sharing a stage and sharing music and transferred that back into their daily lives (Iwanek, 2014, para. 10).

PARC staff are thus constructed not only as non-professional activists, but as people who might cultivate, inhabit, and explain the central role of positivity, creativity and joy in the lives of the members.

The many articles on PARC’s celebrations are accompanied by brightly coloured photographs and/or videos of members and staff. While visual representations of these celebrations often do not distinguish between the roles – staff and members are seen dancing, singing and playing instruments together, often grinning widely – the articles on advocacy and/or programming at PARC tend to feature one or two staff alone. These images function as the picture of the PARC staff as such. While celebratory photographs are often quite mixed in terms of racial and gendered representation, the photographs that focus on PARC staff generate a remarkably homogeneous image. Since 2010, at least fifteen articles have focused on the same four staff – PARC’s Executive Director, Program Director, Kitchen Coordinator and the Making Room Community Arts Program facilitator – all of whom are white men (Agrell, 2011; Allen & Rush, 2011; Bonnar, 2011a; Caton, 2014; Hauch, 2013; Hatfield, 2011, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2013e, 2014, 2015; Iwanek, 2014; Lissner, 2012; Porter, 2014). Of these articles, nine have featured pictures of one or two of these white men as representative of the staff team (Bonnar, 2011a; Hatfield, 2011, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2013e, 2014, 2015; Porter, 2014). Comparatively, during this same period, there have been only five articles with quotations from one racialized man on staff (Caton, 2014; Hatfield, 2013a, 2013b; NOW Staff, 2012; Porter, 2014) and two with white women employees (CityNews Staff, 2010; NOW Staff, 2013). Two of these articles contained
photographs of their subjects (NOW Staff, 2012; 2013). Thus, when PARC staff appear as what Mirzoeff (1998) calls “visual events” in the increasingly power-laden media environment, they do so almost exclusively as white men.

6.2.2. The Staff Subject in Agency Discourse

The visual representation of PARC staff is not quite so overwhelmingly white and male in agency-produced discourse. The photo in the “Staff Team” section of the current website, for example, is a relatively even mix of men and women, racialized and white people, implying, in fact, that is more racially diverse than it functionally is29 (“Staff Team,” 2015). A similar dynamic can be seen in the Annual Reports from the last few years, wherein the photograph of PARC staff features a small but relatively heterogeneous slice of the broader team, belying the relative homogeneity of employees (PARC 2013, 2012, 2010).

Photographs in Annual Reports and newsletters from throughout agency history establish a further form of visual mix: Daily drop-in activities and community events appear in such a way that staff are often indistinguishable from members. While the recently re-launched website features a photograph of each staff team separate from the members they serve, other agency discourse does not differentiate. Most Annual Reports contain photographs of staff and members sitting casually around a table, swimming together at camp, or marching on the front-lines of a housing rally. This is reinforced by text which has long insisted that PARC staff are participants in a community shaped and built by the members. In Annual Reports and newsletters as well as on the PARC website, the staff subject appears as something the transcends a job description or set of employment boundaries: S/he is an inextricable part of the community, who empathizes with but has not experienced marginality and works as an “activist” to represent the voices of the membership in the broader political landscape. Notably, though images of PARC staff feature racialized and white employees, as well as a relatively equal mix of men and women, staff appears in agency-produced discourse as decidedly unmarked by racial and gendered identities

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29 While the agency is employs men and women in equal numbers, only 10 of PARC’s current 48 employees (excluding member employees) are racialized and, of these, only three are racialized women and only one is Indigenous. In addition, only six of the racialized people on-staff work in full-time non-“peer”-identified roles and only one racialized person works on the management team. As I explored in the previous chapter, racialized staff are often spatially separated from the main body of the organization; further, as I will discuss in greater detail later, racialized staff are also tacitly and explicitly ejected from the psychological norm of the organization.
unless otherwise indicated. As a result, the default discursive state of the staff subject is tacitly white and masculine.

In PARC’s Annual Reports, staff are often mentioned as part of a flat or power-neutral community that also includes management, volunteers and members. The 2004 Annual Report explicitly names agency operations as “a massive and collaborative effort” wherein “members and staff…work together” (PARC, 2004, p. 13). The 2013 Annual Report describes the agency as “a collective process” (p. 14). The website and Annual Reports both liberally use the first person plural pronoun “we” to describe the work of the agency as an undertaking shared by all. PARC is run, according to the 2013 Annual Report, by the work of “staff, members and volunteers alike” (p. 14). The collaboration manifests as and results in a shared sense of engagement, encouragement and positivity, making PARC a “welcoming…place where [people] can feel at home and free” (PARC, 2013, p. 6). According to a 1991 PARC report, delivered at a conference in Baltimore, Maryland, “The meaning of PARC’s community lies in the number of smiles it can create among its members. The presence or absence of meaning in this community is marked by smiles. It is quite simple really. When members and staff smile we are doing our job well. When they don’t smile, the work is going badly” (PARC, 1991b, p. 3)

What differentiates members from staff in agency-produced discourse is not their affect or attitude – all parties are understood as contributors to and recipients of PARC’s “patient and cooperative spirit” (PARC, 2004, p. 13) – but rather their “life experience.” Member employees and “peer workers” at PARC are recruited explicitly for their “lived experience” of poverty, psychiatrization, homelessness and/or incarceration; staff, however, are positioned as unmarked by these things, and therefore outsiders to them. Their understanding of the issues of marginality is articulated as a result of “activism” rather than personal struggle.

PARC has long identified as an “activist” organization. Activism attaches differently, however, to members and staff. While members are articulated as people whose “will” and “demand for justice” emerge from their experiences of oppression and discrimination (PARC, 2004, p. 13), staff, on the other hand, are imagined as “activists” (PARC Beat, 2014, p. 1), who empathize with PARC members because of their personal commitments to “anti-oppression, resistance and social justice” (PARC, 2013, p. 18). The tacit assumption is that the PARC staff subject has not
experienced marginality themselves. This is reiterated at various sites. For example, while, as PARC Beat explains, “many members have personally experienced homelessness,” PARC staff, on the other hand, can only “bear witness to the personal suffering and health impacts of homelessness” (PARC Beat, 2014, p. 1). Their desire to listen and carry out the “demand for real housing” at a local rally responds to and is “echoed by the voices of…members” (PARC Beat, 2014, p. 1). This establishes the PARC staff as a “champion for the members needs and goals,” someone who acts as the mouthpiece for experiences they do not share (PARC, 2013, p. 5).

In the rare cases when PARC staff are mentioned as discrete individuals in PARC’s internal discourse, they are constituted as subjects outside of poverty, homelessness and psychopathologization. They are, David Theo Goldberg (1993) might put it, “divorced from the contingencies of historicity” (p. 4). Indeed, staff appear as disappearing; they seem able to transparently take on the struggles of members’ without being marked by them. Under heteropatriarchal colonial white supremacy, both whiteness and masculinity operate in the social realm as seemingly neutral, universal states. Indeed, as Donna Jeffery (2005) writes, the most remarkable feature of whiteness – and, I would add, masculinity – is its “unmarked, apparently content-free quality” (p. 411). The tacit whiteness and masculinity of the PARC staff subject, as it appears in internal discourse, is apparent as much in what is not said as what is. Though PARC has run various men’s groups over the course of its 36 year history, there is never a mention of “male staff.” Yet the 1990 Annual Report notes: “The art and craft group, initially run by volunteers, has uncovered a great deal of interest and talent, and with the addition of new female staff, we now have a flourishing women’s group” (p. 7). Indeed, gender seems to only appear in the Annual Reports in relation to feminized activities; in 1993, PARC bemoaned the “staffing mayhem” in “the year of the Parkdalian mother-baby-to-be,” recalling how one pregnant staff left the drop-in because “her motherly instinct somehow told her that high decibels, oceans of coffee and hazy blue smoke weren’t the best environment for her and her still very little one” (p. 2). It further jokes: “In September, it was [another staff’s] turn to leave the world of PARC for the world of motherhood…finally, it looks very much like [another staff] is going to be leaving us in November. No, folks – she’s not pregnant, unless it is with her theatre career” (PARC, 1993, p. 2). In 36 years of Annual Reports, staff racial identities are never mentioned.
The work of a PARC staff is also unmarked in relation to social work. The job is sometimes described as “community activism” (PARC, 2004, p. 23) or “community mobilization” (PARC, 2013, p. 8); it is never, however, articulated as “social work” or “social service work.” Rather, the staff subject is seen as someone who actively defies the strictures of traditional social work.

In a rare moment of autobiography within the Annual Reports, the Program Director recalls his arrival at PARC:

I remember coming to PARC many years ago; a disgruntled community activist working within the mental health system. It was clear to me then that many of the so-called treatments…being provided to people were not working very well. I found myself…tired of asking the well-intentioned but ultimately negative questions, “what is wrong with you? Can I help?” When I began to work in the drop-in my questions changed. “What can you do? What do you want to do? What support do you need?”…these questions produce very different types of conversation and very different expectations. The PARC conversation is affirmative and positive…it makes inquiry beginning in a hopeful place…it is respectful…for many people, the experience of personal acceptance, and its promotion by staff and members can have a life altering impact (PARC, 2007, p. 7).

The implication here is that when the Program Director was working “within the mental health system,” he had to sublimate his “community activist” identity. He became “disgruntled,” tired of “asking the well-intentioned but ultimately negative questions” required by institutional social work. This changed when he arrived at PARC; free of professional obligations, he could find a place for affirmation, positivity and hope. This narrative is repeated by many the staff that I interviewed.

6.2.3. The Staff Subject in Personal Narratives

Each of the more than 30 PARC workers I spoke to articulated their arrival at the agency as at least somewhat motivated by pre-existing political or ethical sensibilities: 23% came to the agency through what they call “organizing” or “activism.” The majority of these interviewees had experience with anti-poverty organizing through a populist, socialist and/or anarchist lens and affiliation with either the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) or the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC). The term “grassroots” appeared frequently in my interviews: A POP worker notes, “I really wanted to work with grassroots instead of organizations.” A drop-in worker recalls, “When I came, PARC was very encouraging of involvement in social justice. Managers were at the forefront of encouraging that kind of organizing and the whole history was
grassroots.” The collective model is cited by many as a particular draw. The drop-in worker continues: “I had heard it was a place where voices, everybody’s voice was very much heard. It was structurally unique, with the collective history – I just knew it was one of the few progressive agencies in Toronto. It wasn’t just full of social workers” Another staff tells me:

Staff at PARC come from social advocacy rather than social work. It’s an inherently political perspective. If folks working in the drop-in are trying to help people who face such huge systemic oppression, if they weren’t political advocates, I would argue that they shouldn’t be there, you know? And I think that PARC has traditionally has done a good job of hiring people that are, like, in the family and on side…meaning politically you’re left of centre [and] an ally with members.

Those staff I interviewed who did not explicitly identify as “activists” came through a combination of personal connection and/or curiosity rather than straightforward professional aspiration. Some recall arriving with one idea about how the work could or should be done and being, as one of my interviewees puts it, “schooled” by the members. Others remember assuming that they could not work in a drop-in environment because they lacked social work credentials and discovering that the agency “hated social workers.” As a long-time manager tells me, “we never hired social workers.” Another says, “When I first came, I could see that there was a casual-ness about the staff group. I liked that. It didn’t feel like a normal place of employment. It didn’t feel professional.” Another notes: “I fell in love with this place when I first came. I fell in love with the people who come here and…its anti-authoritarianism.” The use of such politicized terms is frequent. A drop-in worker tells me:

What really struck me about it was, you know, this is kind of what the anarchists talk about, the autonomists in some sense, you know, in a way – people that are – if you don’t feel comfortable or don’t fit in in mainstream society, their own place, where they can be themselves, but it’s not….kind of like in a patronizing, sort of a social work-y, “let’s let the children play” sort of sense that other agencies have. And that’s what stuck me. There really was this little community here that was sort of working. And I was like, wow, that’s amazing.

Many interviewees note the striking lack of differentiation between members and staff. A POP worker recalls: “The dynamic between members and staff grabbed my attention. Because it was, like, oh, there’s some kind of decency here. They don’t see each other like separate, or, like, with social workers, boundaries, boundaries. It had a good feeling.” A drop-in worker remembers, “it used to be that if you came in right away off the street, you couldn’t immediately pick out the
staff, you know, right off the bat. “That allowed a lot of people to sort of experiment with letting their guard down,” he continues, “and getting to build some relationships with people and trust people.” This is reiterated by an administrator, who notes that PARC’s openness to “an uncensored exchange of ideas” allows relationships to be based on “honest displays of personality.” A long-term drop-in worker articulates this as PARC’s investment in “being real. People are themselves and they are allowed to be themselves. And there’s a kindness that permeates.”

In the narratives of workers, being a PARC staff requires a form of established emotional comportment. As a manager puts it, a person must be “kind, caring and curious” in order to work at PARC. Another shares, “that’s the one thing PARC has going for it, it has more good people working here, than…shit, a lot of smart people, intelligent, kind and caring.” A drop-in worker tells me “it feels very much like heart work, you know?” Such embodied metaphors appear often in interviews – people discuss “heart work,” and “working from the gut” as essential to the staff subject. Affective language is also pervasive – and, in particular, a reference to the central place of “joy” in the work. A long-time community partner shares: “It’s PARC who do a lot of creative work about unmet needs…but they make it really positive and joyful. People absolutely need to have experience of joy and hope, because they’re absolutely worn down. So I was thinking of this idea of feast in the face of famine. And I think that’s what PARC does a lot.” A long-time manager agrees: “It’s not supposed to be just a serious place, it’s supposed to be a place of joy, too”

It is perhaps the affective components of PARC work that make the agency feel like “more than just a workplace.” As one staff puts it: “I don’t think of it as a job. This is…the greatness of this place is…it’s more than a job.” Another notes, “It’s a lifestyle, not a work environment. It’s lifestyle work. Staff are trying to live their values in their work, live by example the inclusive values of PARC.” In this way, PARC workers are seen to identify as such in every aspect of their lives. A Manager explains, “Staff take it home. We bring PARC to our own communities, whatever they may be, in terms of family, friends, neighbours – to our lives.”
6.2.4. Continuities: Activism and Empathy, Whiteness and Masculinity

In the media, agency-produced discourse and the stories of individual employees, to be a PARC staff is to be in the community, but not of it. We see ourselves and are seen by the world as driven to the work by love and politics rather than life experience. In place of professional designations, the PARC staff subject is identified as an “activist.” In external and internal discourse, PARC staff are seen as champions for the rights and dignity of the members. Media outlets seek out quotes from PARC staff in relation to housing access (Hatfield, 2011; Peesker, 2013; Porter, 2014), food security (Bradburn, 2011; Caton, 2014; Hatfield, 2013d, 2013f; Loney, 2015; Porter, 2009, 2011; Smith, 2007), social assistance reform (Bonnar, 2011a), safety for boarding home residents (Agrell, 2011; Hauch, 2013) and anti-stigma or Mad Pride efforts for psychiatric survivors

Across various internal and external sites, the “activism” of the PARC staff subject is seen as emergent from empathy for the marginalized and/or strong ethical and political investments in the work for social justice. PARC staff are particularly involved in class-based agitation through organizations like OCAP and TDRC. As activists, PARC staff are seen as tirelessly, selfless giving: The 2003 Annual Report boasts that the “drop-in staff team” often work “to the point of exhaustion assisting people” (p. 30). Yet importantly, this selflessness is always understood in the service not only of change, but also “joy.”

These elements of staff subject are not simply discursive productions; they are also felt experiences. Yet they appear to stick more firmly to certain people than others. Indeed, the PARC staff subject almost exclusively appears as a white man. This is in keeping with agency demographics. As of the 2014 Annual Report, PARC’s management layer was 88% white; its administrative team 80% white; its full-time drop-in team 86% white; it’s part-time drop-in team and Edmond Place team 100% white; and its relief team 80% white. With the exception of the administrative team, which is 80% men, the majority of the agency is evenly split in terms of gender – 50% cisgendered men and 50% cisgendered women, with no employees who openly identify as transsexual or transgendered (PARC, 2014, p. 2). The roughly equal distribution of men and women make PARC anomalous in the social service field. According to the Statistics Canada 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 84.5% of Social Workers and 75.3% of Social

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30 Though notably, as I will discuss later, PARC does not speak on, with or for the anti-psychiatry movement
Service and Community Workers in Canada are women (Service Canada, 2014). As a result, PARC can be seen as remarkably masculine, given its context.

A review of my data produces an even more detailed statistical picture of the PARC worker. According to interviews with current and former staff, the average PARC employee is a white person (84%) who speaks English exclusively (81%) and has worked at the agency for 10+ years (77%). Of those I interviewed, 74% did not identify “lived experience” of mental health or addiction issues, 68% called themselves “non-professionals” and/or shared that they had no post-secondary education in social services. Approximately 58% of those people I interviewed were women, but of those current and former managers at the agency, more than 50% were men.

As is clear from the demographics, though PARC’s staff team is overwhelmingly white and uncharacteristically male, there are many racialized people and women at the agency. These people rarely appear in PARC’s public discourse, in no small part because they tend to occupy marginal roles at the agency. The homogeneity of the staff team, and its corollary white, masculine public image, is product of years of unacknowledged alignment, which I detail below.

6.3. Producing the Staff Subject

Rose (1990) writes that the subject or “self” does not “pre-exist the forms of its social recognition.” It is neither fully self-generated nor wholly socially constructed, but rather:

A heterogeneous and shifting resultant of the social expectations targeted upon it, the social duties accorded it, the norms according to which it is judged, the pleasures and pains that entice and coerce it, the forms of self-inspection inculcated in it, the languages according to which it is spoken about and about which it learns to account for itself in thought and speech. Thus ‘belief systems’ concerning the self should not be construed as inhabiting a diffuse field of ‘culture,’ but as embodied in institutional and technical practices – spiritual, medial, political, economic – through which forms of individuality are specified and governed (Rose, 1990, p. 218).

The PARC worker subject is such a “self” – it is neither identical to nor separable from individuals working at PARC, but rather manifests in the space between various technical practices; what Rose (1990) might call the “technologies of subjectivity” (p. 10). As I explore below, the PARC staff subject as it exists today was borne from various technologies: media
advocacy, textual production, and material practices which created emotional, behavioural and discursive norms

6.3.1. The Birth of the Staff Subject: 1980 – 1994

PARC opened in March of 1980 with a staff team of four. It was hierarchically organized with a three-step pay-grade: At the top, there was one full-time coordinator, who acted as the Executive Director; below her, there were two full-time community workers unionized with the Ontario Public Employees Service Union (OPSEU); finally, below them, there was a non-unionized part-time secretary and support person (Consulting and Program Analysis Services, Fiscal Resource Branch, 1988, p. 2; staff interviews). Staff present at the time report that PARC was not initially understood as a space of defiance or non-professional community organizing. Staff were screened by the mostly professional Board of Directors; those chosen had some form of credentials and/or experience in the mental health field. They understood themselves as social service workers. They struggled, however, to do traditional social work tasks. As one former staff explains:

In those days, because there was so few staff, the members had a lot more control over what happened, and there was a lot of stuff that happened that probably shouldn’t have….It was just the nature of the beast. So the work was managing all that and at the same time, building relationships with the people that are in there and working with them to make the place what they wanted it to be. And getting away from some of the structured programs, because they just didn’t work in the space.

The space of PARC is seen as the character of the agency made animate, a manifestation of the member community. It became apparent early on that “structured programs” were not possible in such a space. It is important to identify, however, that members controlled the direction of programming and service by sheer numbers rather than intentional design. Though they discovered their training to be somewhat obsolete, until 1981, PARC staff were still viewed as professionals and charged with implementing structure in a top-down manner.

In 1981, a member, psychiatric survivor and resident at a local Parkdale boarding house lobbied for a job in the drop-in. She recalls:

I was walking past PARC one day and I saw the sign and walked in. I can’t remember what the sign said or how I knew it was for crazies, but I did…and I smelled cooking. I
was starving. So I sat near the front just hoping that somebody would come up and say,“hey, come and join us!” and one staff, who had mistakenly thought that PARC put out the Cuckoo’s Nest, the psychiatric survivor paper I wrote, and that’s why he applied for a job there, introduced himself.

As this staff recalls, the mythos of PARC as a psychiatric survivor space seems to have pre-existed its actual relationship with psychiatric survivor communities. She continues:

I learned that it was a drop-in for crazy folks in the neighbourhood. The board was mostly professional people. Typical. I applied for a job. They turned me down, being a political crazy. And then that one staff told them that if they didn’t hire me, he would go on strike. I got the job next time I applied.

The strike threat would mark the first explicitly political act undertaken by PARC staff. It was effective; one community worker on strike would reduce the full-time drop-in team by 33%. Through the advocacy efforts of a single staff, PARC thus gained a psychiatric survivor employee. She would usher in an era of activism. She articulates the “total focus” of her work as “advocacy.” A former co-worker remembers her as PARC’s first “strong advocate”: “When there was trouble with boarding home operators, she would go in and get people out of there, try and get the operators noticed, at least, something along the lines, so that something could be done about it.”

PARC’s earliest days were relatively uneventful, so far as the media was concerned. After a year of political agitation, however, the agency began to attract significant attention from local and national news outlets. PARC became a go-to for questions on the rights of psychiatric survivors and boarding home residents, as well as poverty and marginalization in Parkdale generally. This newfound attention was self-perpetuating – the more coverage PARC got, the more it would get. This allowed the agency to increase its level of vocal dissent. As one staff remembers:

At one point [the psychiatric survivor staff] was worried that we were gonna lose our funding because of the advocacy work she was doing, and….you know, I said, well, I didn’t think they could. And if they do, well, we have enough press to turn it around and they’re gonna be embarrassed by it. They don’t want that to happen.

It was thus in the early 1980s that PARC began to understand media advocacy as a central to both its burgeoning identity as an agency and its long-term survival in the neighbourhood. PARC staff functioned as a sort of fulcrum for these strategic elements; they were called upon to represent the agency both to the media and to the Ministry, albeit through the Executive Director.
The centrality of staff was consolidated in 1983 when the Executive Director was ousted by a small coup, making drop-in staff the agency’s highest employment tier and the only public face of PARC. Instead of seeking a new Executive Director, staff decided to transition the agency to a collective model. As one remembers:

So, the Director left. And at that point, there were four of us...we had all worked together as equals...so we went, “we don’t need an Executive Director, what do we need that for?” It seemed stupid at that point...I could do the finances, as well as [another staff], so there was two people doing finances, to make sure there was no...fraud or anything else going on. [The psychiatric survivor staff] would do the advocacy…and we’d all do the programming together.

PARC new collective model of governance did not give everyone the same roles and responsibilities. Rather, it prescribed a number of overlapping but discrete staff directions – namely, finances, programming and advocacy. This is notable; the image of the PARC staff subject as an advocate or activist – that is, the idea that advocacy is not just something that particular staff do but an inherent part of the staff role – was coterminous with the collective model. It was reinforced by what staff describe as the “inherent political quality” of the model itself, which was “not the norm for a social service.” It was also an annoyance to the Ministry – and therefore an act of defiance: “The Ministry didn’t like it at all,” one staff recalls, “but they weren’t going to stop it.”

The relative amenability of the Ministry of Health to PARC’s non-normative governance structure may have been a result of the relatively lax oversight procedures; a long-time PARC manager describes all government reporting prior to the Harris era as “pretty easy.” It may also have been resultant from the particular constitution of the collective. While PARC’s new structure was touted as flat – all employees were charged with making decisions collaboratively – participation was limited to those who were already unionized drop-in workers. PARC’s part-time workers – the reception or “secretary” and maintenance positions, all drawn from the membership – were not part of the collective structure. Their work was paid for out of the Ministry of Health’s Psychiatric Assistance and Leadership Fund designed to “enable ex-psychiatric patients to get off of welfare” by “teaching the patients simple job skills” (PARC, 1983, p. 4). This tier would later be called “member employees.” Further, those PARC workers collectivized in 1983 were already social service professionals, with the notable exception of the
self-identified “political crazy.” In order to placate the Ministry of Health, one staff recalls that they just decided to have a point person – a white man with professional credentials whom many remember as “the unacknowledged leader in the collective.” “You have to accept the fact that some people are going to do more than others,” one staff remarks, “all collectives have a leader.” As another long-time staff recalls, “Even when it was a collective, there was a manager, there was one staff who was running it. It didn’t matter who got paid what, you could tell that some people had more responsibilities and some people had less”

This era would mark the simultaneous collectivization of the agency and the individuation of roles and personality types. It would also mark the beginning of member representation at the Board level. In 1986, the Board of Directors transmuted collectivity into equal representation, implementing a 50/50 rule that requires half of its seats be occupied by PARC members. Agency operations came to be articulated as wholly collaborative, an effort of “PARC staff and membership” working “in unison” (PARC, 1986, p. 5).

In 1987, PARC hired the man who remains the agency’s most recognizable employee. Currently a manager, in the late 1980s, he was a local activist and psychiatric nurse just off of a position as Ontario’s first case manager and outreach worker. He had recently been given his “walking papers,” as he describes it, from Queen Street Mental Health Centre for doing public advocacy in the aftermath of a Parkdale controversy: the death of John Dimun at the Channon Court boarding home. As this psychiatric nurse describes, “after the inquest, I kind of gave up”:

I was giving testimony at the inquest, and spoke at the inquest, and it was hard, because I was doing organizing with a nurse from PARC and some media-related support from another PARC staff, because we were doing articles in the Globe and Star about housing conditions, and I was doing it anonymously, because I would get fired.

As a result, he explains, he applied for a job at PARC:

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31 For years, Channon Court, a privately operated boarding house designed for recently de-institutionalized people, had been one of Parkdale’s most notoriously squalid housing sites. Between 1983 and 1986, the Ministry of Health gave Channon Court’s owners $400,000 to improve the facility. The fifty six residents, including John Dimun, saw no substantial changes, suffering from massively overcrowded conditions, poor-quality food, and alternating abuse and neglect by the staff. In 1986, 45 year-old Dimun died of a treatable lung infection in his Channon Court room. He weighed 98 pounds. The results of a coroner’s inquest claimed that Dimun died “by natural causes induced by a self-chosen, inappropriate lifestyle” (Scott, 1987, p. 20).
I think that if I hadn’t been giving my walking papers, then I would’ve been gathering them anyway…and frankly, I was enthused, because I had told myself that PARC was a place that I could do activism as well as serve people.

This staff would prove to be utterly instrumental in PARC’s growing political identity. He would go on to exemplify the PARC staff subject, not only generating agency rhetoric but also becoming the literal face of the agency in the media.

In 1988, PARC’s first “political crazy” left the agency for other pursuits. PARC would not hire another self-identified psychiatric survivor as a full-time staff for over 10 years. In the interim, the agency cultivated its somewhat paradoxical model of the staff subject as it exists today: someone who is not of the membership in identity, but rather with the membership in spirit, for the membership in media campaigns and capable of bringing dignity and joy to the membership through responsive programming and “heart.”

The 1989 Annual Report was the first written by PARC’s newest hire. The introduction reads: “PARC has the capacity to affect us all in many ways. It is a place where we see our friends and express our affection for them. It is a place where we can express ourselves through work and play, and in doing this, test our mettle, patience and resolve” (PARC, 1989, p. 3). “When 150 souls come together in PARC every day,” it continues, “it is truly a room full of dreams….a mysterious and curious mixture, rising from the ideas, will and love of members and staff shaping a common PARC destiny (PARC, 1989, p. 3). This Annual Report established the image of PARC as a malleable, highly emotionally driven place, held together by the bonds of love. These narratives persist in what many of my interviewees call the “PARC spirit,” which is in turns articulated by staff as a feeling of “home,” “belonging,” “authenticity,” “creativity,” “exploration,” and “heart connection.” One notable element of this 1989 quotation is the use of the plural pronoun “we.” It implies that members and staff speak in one voice; that power is flat, flowing multi-directionally between and amongst them. Members and staff appear, by implication, as “friends.” There is some differentiation drawn between the two roles in the following paragraph:

This year has been a long journey for PARC staff. At times our work on behalf of the Centre has interrupted the usual easy going comradie [sic] of PARC. Too often there were not enough of us to go around. At other times we felt the pressure to respond to PARC’s organizational needs at the expense of developing relationships with our
membership. Our sense of the importance of PARC’s future created these situations. Your support has shaped their outcome. Thank you for being there. (PARC, 1989, p. 3).

The ambiguity in this excerpt is worth investigating. PARC staff appear to work *on behalf* of the Centre in some way that exceeds and sometimes precludes relationship building. This both establishes relationship building as a staff responsibility, and places it in a position below the unspecified work of meeting “organizational needs.” These needs could just as easily be media advocacy, identified by many staff present at the time as a crucial survival tactic, as they could be bureaucratic and accounting measures. Through working on these “organizational needs,” staff shepherd PARC into the future. They become the voice of the agency at large. That voice, entwined with the members’ a paragraph earlier, here articulates the membership as a staff possession – they are “ours” (PARC, 1989, p. 3, emphasis mine). This is revealing; as the stewards of PARC’s future, and stand-ins for the agency itself, PARC staff appear to have dominion over the members. This contradiction appears frequently in PARC’s discursive output.

In 1990, PARC was approved for an additional full-time drop-in worker. While prior postings had skewed towards professional credentials, the new one contained no reference to education. Instead, it prioritized emotional, ethical and embodied characteristics that would soon become exemplary of the PARC staff subject. It would remain in use, with minor word-changes, until the early 2000s. The posting reads as follows:

Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre (PARC) is a community of psychiatric survivors and socially isolated adults in the Parkdale area…We are looking for people with a desire to work in a collective structure who have **initiative, commitment, stamina and imagination**…Responsibilities include: direct and intense involvement with members in a crowded and smoky community “living room” / development and implementation of small group programs and community development projects / provision of individual supports / crisis intervention and conflict resolution….Qualifications: Ability to work in a stressful environment. Proven reliability and endurance in an employment setting. Sustained work and/or volunteer experience with mental health system and knowledge of “survivor” issues are essential. **PEOPLE WITH PERSONAL PSYCHIATRIC EXPERIENCES ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY** (PARC, 1990b, 1994b, 1996b, emphasis in the original).
This job posting represents a dividing line in PARC’s history; it marks the move of the staff subject from internal discourse like staff-to-staff conversation and the Annual Reports\(^{32}\) to invitational external texts. Whereas Annual Reports functioned to capture a sensibility in circulation at the agency, the job posting made it not only descriptive but prescriptive as well. This posting established a number of lasting elements of the staff subject: non-professional status, desire for collectivity, and a tacitly bourgeois identity.

Whereas PARC’s original hiring bodies prioritized formal schooling, the 1990 job posting contains no reference to educational background. Staff present at the time tell me that this emerged from and helped to cement a developing sense that PARC workers should not be professionals. As a long-time drop-in worker explains: “You know, *back then,* anybody who maybe had a social work degree was…kind of…put to the side, because you’re looking for people that maybe had more lived experience.” This posting eschews traditional qualifications to prioritize those who understand themselves in political terms. The position requires a “desire to work in a collective,” which screens future employees for their familiarity with such structures (PARC, 1990b, p. 1).

The 1990 job posting contains an emboldened and capitalized encouragement to psychiatrized people. In addition to *Now Magazine*, Toronto’s widely-circulated free newspaper, the job posting was distributed to other psychiatric survivor or consumer/survivor identified agencies in Toronto. Yet PARC did not hire anyone with relevant psychiatric experience for over ten years. While many staff who joined the agency during the 1990 – 2000 period identify as having unsettling or traumatic experiences with their own mental health – “depression,” and “dark times,” – none had experiences of psychiatrization congruent with those of the PARC membership. That is, no one had a history of long-term hospitalization and enforced treatment; none had resided in Parkdale’s boarding homes or rooming houses. To the contrary, it seemed to attract people who experienced PARC members not only as Othered, but, further, as potential instruments for their own personal growth. In so doing, it established the PARC staff subject as someone who comes to know themselves through what Yegenoğlu (2002) might call “a detour

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\(^{32}\) The Annual Reports, as explored in previous chapters, did not reach outside of the agency until the diversification of funding streams in the mid-1990s; they did not garner a wide audience until even later, after the acquisition of 194 Dowling and the implementation of the PARC Ambassadors.
through the other” (p. 1), or what Razack (2002) refers to as the bourgeois “journey into personhood” through “degenerate space” (p. 14).

By 1990, PARC had established itself as a site where member voices were prioritized. At the time, PARC members were almost exclusively psychiatrized and/or de-institutionalized residents of Parkdale’s boarding home and rooming house residents. Conditions in these spaces were horrific (Capponi, 1994; Dear & Wolch, 1987; Slater, 2005; Whitzman, 2009). Overcrowding led to outbreaks of communicable disease; the lack of basic institutional safety measures and structural neglect turned cigarette smoking into a dangerous activity – deadly fires were common. Yet what drew many PARC staff to the agency was the description of the space as “smoky,” “crowded,” “intense” and “stressful” (PARC, 1990b, p. 1).

Several of my interviewees recall this job posting with great affection. One explains a sense of recognition in the Now Magazine ad:

The ad in the paper was amazing. It talked about strong coffee and blue smoke and all kinds of things. It was very poetically put out. It was a masterpiece, it was really good. And when I read it, it came alive for me, on the sheet of paper. It was almost shimmering. I said, yeah, that’s what I want to do.

What this staff seems to have been most struck by was the idea of “direct and intense involvement with members in a crowded and smoky community ‘living room’” (PARC, 1990b, p. 1). He recalls knowing PARC was the place to be after coming to see it in the flesh:

Then I remember choosing not to mail in my application, but hand deliver it, because I’d never seen the place. There was a mailbox right across the street from PARC, and I remember sitting on that mailbox, looking at the door and looking at people coming and going and I had that sense of being at a bazaar in Delhi.

I saw people in various places in their mind. It looked like it was complete chaos. It was totally blue with smoke, and this is midday. It was very, very crowded, almost uncomfortably so. It was a dive. It had this old speakeasy kind of feel to it. It was a great feeling. I had never seen a place like that in Toronto, although I had never gone to a drop-in before, so some of it is my own limitation, my own ignorance of that whole world, but it just felt real. Like, people were themselves, and they were allowed to be themselves. They did the darnedest things, and nobody took notice. It just felt like the kind of energy I was looking for.
This quotation encapsulates the culturalization of madness discussed in previous chapters. The “bazaar in Delhi” is a de-racinated stand-in for exoticized Otherness in PARC’s poor white member community. As Said (1994) reminds us, the cultural image of “the bazaar” has historically been deployed in an Orientalist fashion, an index for the presumably foreign and violent cultural landscape of Arabs: “all roads lead to the bazaar; Arabs only understand force; brutality and violence are part of Arab civilization,” etc. (p. 295). Reference to the “bazaar” are saturated in Orientalism regardless of the intention of knowledge of the speaker. Interestingly, in the whitened context of PARC, the “bazaar” appears to have an exotic allure that flirts with, but does not outright threaten, violence against the bourgeois. This could be due to its proximity to the speaker – PARC gives him access to the desirable energy of the bazaar, without having to deal with racial, linguistic or cultural illegibility.

My interviewee further confirms a kind of self-recognition in a site of degeneracy; this interviewee notes never having been to a drop-in before but feeling affiliated with the “energy” that comes with “dive” conditions. This simultaneously romanticizes these conditions and fixes them as Othered.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the “poetic” representation of the “smoky,” “crowded,” “intense” and “stressful” conditions of poverty did not function to attract psychiatric survivors with experience living in boarding homes or rooming houses. Yet the then-nascent staff subject was not solely an outsider to such experiences – rather, he was someone who desired proximity to such conditions, in order to become better, to become more fully themselves. Sara Ahmed (2000) notes this as a common feature of the larger bourgeois fantasy of authenticity, wherein “the journey towards the stranger becomes a form of self-discovery in which the stranger functions….to establish and define the ‘I’” (p. 6). The notion that PARC staff should have a “desire to work in a collective” (PARC, 1990b, p. 1) can both be read as a requirement for familiarity with collective organizing structure at a staffing level and a suggestion that staff feel a desire to be in a community collective, wherein members and staff might recognize themselves in each other, might begin to merge. Throughout the early 1990s, this sentiment began to appear in agency discourse. The 1992 Annual Report, for example, describes a common interaction between members and staff as follows: “Sometimes, if you watch real close, you can see
members and staff look into each other’s eyes and ask… ‘Is that the real you? Is this the real me?’ (p. 13).

The “realness” that emerges through mutual recognition takes a rather nebulous and ambivalent shape. In the above quotation, for example, PARC is imaged as a place where everyone, members and staff alike, could bring their “real” selves. In other places, however, such as in the quotation from the long-time staff enamored of the 1990 ad, “realness” belongs exclusively to PARC members and PARC space. This is apparent in the words of another person hired during this period:

> You know, it was pretty divey back then…you used what you had…it was not a comfortable place to sort of work with, but you could empathize more with some of the housing conditions that people have to live in and stuff. It was just sort of…real, you know?

For this staff, the “realness” of PARC’s space is definitively outside the staff – indeed, it functions to teach staff empathy through exposure. This was reinforced materially through the abandonment of programs that were designed to train members to become PARC employees. In the late 1980s, PARC established “an affirmative action employment policy” designed to hire “survivors to fill core program positions” (PARC, 1991c, p. 5). By 1991, the agency noted that this policy had “met with variable success”:

> Some have worked very effectively and gone on to lead major projects benefiting the psychiatric community. Others have felt the shift from membership to staff expectations to be painful and have left PARC to find more neutral working relationships. PARC remains concerned about finding effective ways to resolve with issue (PARC, 1991b, p. 5).

In 1994, this policy became a program. The 1994 Annual Report reads:

> After many years of struggle, PARC has instituted an apprenticeship program. The Board is very committed to this program. In the program, two Members are hired on a full-time basis to train as “Community” workers. It is the hope that these Members will then, over time, develop the skills necessary to get full-time permanent employment (PARC, 1994, p. 1).

Despite genuine desire from the membership, this program would be abandoned as soon as Mike Harris was elected. I speculate that this was something of a relief; it resolved the ambivalence of authenticity by establishing staff as definitively *not* members. The efforts which one staff present
at the time notes were “mostly bad and dysfunctional work programs…with innovative principles” would be replaced by a recognition that “we were just a drop-in competing for space. Doing the same work and having some responsibility to kind of…do what the others do, as they need to do what we do.”

6.3.2. Entrenching the Staff Subject: 1994 – 2000

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the PARC staff subject was established in agency discourse and practice as a non-professional advocate with a desire to learn from, and perhaps even merge with, the member community. The staff subject was someone who saw members as at once exotic and “real,” and the drop-in as a place of vibrant authenticity.

The reign of Mike Harris in the mid-1990s dramatically worsened conditions for current PARC members, and brought a large number of newly impoverished people to the agency’s doors. Changes to the social welfare system, in concert with vacancy de-control and the Safe Streets Act, made the lives of Parkdale’s poor nearly unlivable. The increasing difficulty of daily life seems to have caused a shift in PARC’s discourse. Whereas members and staff in the late 1980s and early 1990s were constructed as equal, even indistinguishable, participants in a joyful, dreamy place, by 1995 an understandable negativity had set in. With it came an acknowledgement of staff and members’ different roles and responsibilities in relation to power. The 1995 Annual Report reads:

Resources are limited or even non-existent, people are tired, beleaguered and depressed, costs keep rising, decent and affordable housing is almost impossible to find, violence is becoming an unavoidable fact of urban life. Well, at least there is PARC, where sanctuary and refuge still exist and acceptance is the common denominator (p. 1).

The realism apparent in this Annual Report is coupled with an increasing awareness that the agency was not merely a site of exploration and play, but a social service, with employees charged with providing survival resources to the membership. It continues:

PARC is built upon certain unshakeable beliefs and values. We believe that a connection to “community” has a very important place in our Members’ lives….Meeting Members individuals and guiding them towards program and community resources has always been an aspect of PARC’s work…Any response to the political and social reality we now
see must be based on courage and inventiveness, and a willingness to transform anger and despair into hard work and survival (PARC, 1995, p. 15).

The above quote contains a differentiation between members and staff that would become more frequent as the 1990s wore on. What might have been articulated as the community of members and staff in 1990 by 1995 had become solely about “Members.” Staff recall this as the time when PARC “became a social service, first and foremost.” Importantly, PARC’s turn towards service was also an investment in “political and social reality” (PARC, 1995, p. 15). Activism against the Harris government became part of PARC’s internal landscape. Whereas in the late 1980s, advocacy was seen to emerge directly from psychiatric survivors in the membership, by the mid-1990s it was increasingly in the purview of PARC staff. The 1997 Annual Report reads:

The growing need for community supports/outreach responses and crisis intervention is directly linked to the downsizing and cutbacks strategy of the provincial government. 1997 has been a study in how high level political decisions can inflict real misery on ordinary people. Now, agencies like PARC are being asked to preserve a social safety net that is tattered and breaking up under pressure from the streets….Inside this grim reality, the single most important quality of our Program has been out story telling abilities. Workers are encouraged to describe the experiences of our community’s suffering. PARC stories show the consequences of destructive social, political and economic policies. (p. 10).

The notion that PARC workers are uniquely charged with telling the story of the marginalized works to refute the collectivity of the plural pronoun “our.” To the contrary, it implies that members could not tell their own stories, or that staff have access to a form of social, political and economic analysis that members lack.

In my interviews, I often asked people – staff, members and external partners alike – “does PARC have an ideology?” A representative from the Toronto Drop-In Network, which PARC helped to found, answers as follows: “I think PARC has a political ideology: a critique of capitalism.” When asked to specify, she continues, “Marxism is a pretty strong tool of analysis. I think that’s probably the principle one, but I think there are workers that are…probably anarchists, too.” Though this interviewee was not asked explicitly about workers at PARC, her answer confirms that activism – and, indeed, particular political ideologies like Marxism and anarchism – resides in staff rather than members. This is a dynamic staff themselves often point to:
We were making connections to OCAP, TDRC all of that. Political action seemed necessary. But it also seemed at times imposed. There was a responsibility, for sure, as workers who get paid, to take up those issues for social justice. But there wasn’t always the same passion and energy to do it from the people who were marginalized in the room, who were tired and wanted a meal and had more personal pressing concerns. So there was sort of that tension. On a Friday, because we used to be packed on Fridays, packed to the rafters, we’re not anymore, but it would be standing room only, and we would have this Friday meeting, where we were supposed to be able to hear from the members. So we’d get up there and talk about the next action and how important it was and it kind of felt like it was stressing out the members, because, first of all, we were speaking to their reality and they knew it very well and second of all, like, I don’t know, like…they just wanted their lunch, right?

There are two things to note here. First, the connection this staff points to between PARC and organizations like OCAP and TDRC was primarily orchestrated by staff. Many staff who joined the agency in the late-1990s through the early 2000s were recruited directly from the anti-poverty movement, and retained ties to it that shaped their work. The second notable element of this quote is the recognition of an increasingly stressful environment within the drop-in, both as a result of, and unrelated to, advocacy work. Other staff remember that what had begun as a thrillingly “chaotic” space in the mid-1990s became “pretty awful” – “we were always overcrowded, people were fighting,” one long-time employee remembers, “it was bad.” This had an increasingly significant toll on staff who were asked, first tacitly and then explicitly, to devote hours of unpaid work time to the agency.

While employees had always spent a great deal of time at PARC volunteering and/or simply socializing with other staff, by the mid-1990s unpaid work had become both a mark of pride and a tacit demand. The 1996 Annual Report applauds the “exemplary courage, tenacity and creativity” of staff, who have learned the subtle art of “making do” and working hard “just to keep from falling backwards” (PARC, 1996, p. 2). What this report articulates as the noble “perseverance” of staff, rising “to new levels of discipline, sophistication and dedication” (PARC, 1996, p. 3), is, in 1997, revealed to be gratitude for the “unpaid overtime” which by 1997 had become “the rule rather than the exception” (p. 10). It thanks staff for donate “part of their tax savings, from the Harris tax cuts, to PARC” (PARC, 1997, p. 15). It further applauds one staff for single-handedly putting in “hundreds of hours of unpaid overtime,” implying that this may actually be a necessity in the austerity climate:
Thanks to your efforts and abilities, this program has the money to spend when it is needed. Thanks to your efforts, over one hundred Members each year can work for the centre. Without you, our program would indeed be far less than it is today. You have done a great service to this community (PARC, 1997, p. 3)

The moral imperative here is subtle, but present. It was reinforced by a growing expectation of selflessness amongst the staff team. During this period programs and roles were often shifting as PARC chased various disappearing funding streams. Staff were regularly asked to take on the duties of multiple positions while being paid for only one. One recounts:

My job was funded for one and a half people. So that means one full-time and one part-time. But they didn’t hire for the part time position. The money was allocated to other things. PARC was always like this. I was happy about it, because I wanted a job and I loved the work, but I didn’t know my rights. I can’t be one and a half people. And then they started giving me extra work, and it all fell apart.

Program budgets in the 1990s were rarely fixed. The scramble to keep up with ever-changing funding agendas also caused many positions to be rearranged or re-designated. Few staff during this period were given job descriptions, a situation which led to significant strife. One long-time staff tells me that since the mid-1990s, staff have been expected to “work harder and harder” but “never complain.” Even in the worst of times, there remained an emphasis on “uplifting …the spirit…in an atmosphere of joy and peacefulness” (PARC, 1997, p. 8). The 1997 Annual Report notes that “as the spirit lives, so do the mind and body” (p. 7). The emphasis on “enthusiasm” and “smiles” in the drop-in was, of course, a necessary element of what this report calls “the survival of the PARC spirit” (PARC, 1997, p. 7). Yet while staff recall celebratory moments with great fondness, many also remember the mid-1990s as a time when issues within the workplace culture were seen as a distraction from the “real work” of bringing joy to the members, contributing to a “grin and bear it” philosophy. This was reinforced by a lapse in the mechanisms for redress of problems within the staff team.

PARC’s collective agreement expired in 1989. It was not renegotiated until 1999. In the intervening years, staff was restructured and the pay grid rearranged; the management layer and Executive Director thereby paradoxically remained bargaining unit members for five years after they were granted hiring and firing powers. This made it impossible to utilize the union to file grievances. Annual Reports at the time note this as an issue; however, as the 1998 Report admits, “Something always seems to come up which takes time away from the basics” (p. 16). The
sheepish but decided tone implies that to be a good PARC staff requires a de-prioritization of the structural components of a safer workplace. Staff recall the tension: “Oddly enough, we were unionized, but the union was completely inactive. There was nothing. We didn’t have a collective agreement. We just continued on.”

The dormancy of PARC’s union in this period is interesting given the agency’s increasing politicization; and, in particular, the growing awareness from the public that PARC staff were associated with Marxist and/or anarchist investments. It seems that activism and political striving in this period were only seen as such if they were directed towards the members. This is confirmed by interviewees, one of whom notes with some wistfulness that before the 2000s, staff were “less selfish” and able to “focus on the members.” This added to the sense that to be a PARC staff was to be an activist – but only insomuch as it relates to the lives of Others.

6.4. Maintaining the Staff Subject

The PARC staff subject thus became a tacitly bourgeois activist through a variety of discursive, social and political conditions borne of the 1980s and entrenched in the 1990s. As PARC’s internal policy has changed and its structure neoliberalized, the staff subject has remained remarkably intact. While the actual demographics of the team have changed slightly – more women and racialized people have been hired – power continues to be concentrated in the image of the white male staff. Indeed, what marks PARC as white and masculine is not solely a lack of embodied diversity within the staff team: The managerial layer, while overwhelmingly white, contains both women and racialized people. I follow Andrea Smith’s (2010) reminder that the “politics of multicultural representation” – exemplified in the sense that “if we just include more peoples, then our practice will be less racist” – conceals “the nuances of how white supremacy is structured” (para. 19). While representational diversity is important, it is far from the point. What makes PARC a site of patriarchal whiteness is what Puwar (2004) might call the “disembodied institutional narrative,” which, when coupled with material practices and an insistently embodied image of who and what constitutes the staff subject, ensures that whiteness and masculinity remain the “somatic norm” (p. 57). How does this somatic norm persist unacknowledged? I argue that there are various seemingly race, gender and class-neutral technologies that functionally entrench the PARC staff subject as bourgeois.
6.4.1. Hiring Practice

As recently as spring of 2015, PARC added three full-time employees, two of whom were white men and one of whom is a white woman. While the functional racial diversity of the agency has increased dramatically since the 1990s, when PARC added its first racialized staff, it is notable that the only two staff teams are substantially racially mixed: the spatially siloed POP team, which is 50% racialized workers, and the peer team, which is an unprecedented 100% racialized. Interestingly, these teams also have the highest concentration of credentialed professionals; there are more people with or working towards BSWs and MSWs in those two teams than in the rest of the agency combined. They are also, however, among the least visible and least systemically powerful teams within the agency. All recent hires of racialized people on other internal teams have been in part-time and contract positions, or those funded by and answerable to external granting bodies. Following broader patterns of social marginalization, racialized women are particularly underrepresented, constituting only 10% of PARC’s full-time employees. While the agency has run Indigenous-specific programming – and, notably, has received funds from the Federal Government’s Urban Aboriginal Strategies Stream – it has been unable to retain Indigenous staff; there is currently only one Indigenous employee.

How has PARC managed to prioritize bourgeois employees while claiming employment equity? I offer that it may be due to PARC’s explicitly activist affiliations. PARC continues to hire from local activist organizations. Though positions posted externally go to a standard list of employment sites – affiliated agency mailing lists and the website “Charity Village,” amongst others – my interviewees tell me that the best way to be hired is to be already “known to PARC.” As one staff puts it, “people get in through the back door a lot.” Through the data gathered from my interviewees, I discerned three paths to employment at PARC: student placement, connection to an affiliated activist initiative, or personal connection to the agency via the Executive Director and/or Program Director.

Approximately 10% of the staff I interviewed began their work at PARC through a placement from a college social service worker program. As one recalls, “when I was hired, it was like, well, you’re a student here, you should just start working as relief. There was no interview process at all.” Another 20% of the staff that I interviewed came to the agency through direct
connections with the Executive Director or the Program Director; a number of these individuals had already been doing ad hoc contract and consulting work at the agency for years before they stepped into an official position. By far the most common route to employment among my interviewees was political. Almost 30% of the staff I interviewed tell me that they came through political organizing: 5% through the psychiatric survivor movement and 25% through the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and/or the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee. Much of the agency’s whiteness and masculinity is at least in part a result of PARC’s political affiliations – and, particularly, those with OCAP and TDRC. OCAP and TDRC are both explicitly “anti-poverty” organizations indebted to Marxism, anarchism and the historical struggles of the working poor; both prioritize economic solutions to oppression over any other methods of political engagement.

David Roediger’s (1991/2007) historical exploration of white working class identity, *The Wages of Whiteness*, explores the mutual constitution of class-based political agitation with systemic racism: specifically, colonial triumphalism and anti-Blackness. Though his study is situated in the United States, there is resonance with the Canadian context. He notes that the appearance of white working class political identity was coterminous with naturalization of the white masculine subject as universal. The subject of work – and, thereby, the subject of unemployment and poverty – came to be understood as inherently white and male. The same general trajectory can be seen in the development of the Canadian working class. Whiteness has long been established as the natural category for personhood in Canada; it is understood as a state of “unmarkedness,” whereas racialization represents “multicultural difference” or “identity” itself (Goldberg, 2009, p. 10). Similar to the ways in which “homeless” is prefigured as white and masculine, “poverty,” as it appears in Canadian media, only appears to address racialized people and/or women when a qualifier is added. Institutional bodies like Employment and Social Development Canada (2013) note the difference between “poverty” and “racialized poverty”; research groups like McMaster’s Poverty and Employment Precarity in Ontario (2013) insist that racial and gendered differences turn low-income concerns into something “more than poverty” (p. 11, my emphasis). The fact that these reports are designed as interventions on the standard discourse reveals the general association of poverty with whiteness.
PARC’s politicization occurred simultaneous to a 362% percent increase in the number of racialized families living in poverty in Toronto (United Way of Toronto, 2004). As of 2006, 62% of Toronto’s poor were racialized (Statistics Canada, 2013). Yet PARC and its activist affiliates OCAP and TDRC only name poverty – and not “racialized poverty” – as their focus. Even the murder of Edmond Yu was de-racinated in order to serve the agency’s growing economic-only political rhetoric. The 1997 Annual Report reads:

On February 20, 1997, Edmond Yu was shot dead by the police. Edmond’s death and story shocked Toronto. It was a graphic portrait of violence, homelessness and the search for hope against crushing odds. For PARC and other similar communities, Edmond’s tragedy represented what happens when the world chooses to make war on poor people instead of making war on poverty (PARC, 1997, p. 10).

While PARC does not mention racial dimensions of poverty and police violence, OCAP and TDRC often do. They rarely, however, acknowledge racial and colonial imperatives as constitutive of the current economic conditions. OCAP engages in work with Indigenous communities under the banner of “solidarity” (OCAP, 2015) and the TDRC addresses the international policy component of the housing crisis with its “Housing Not War” campaign (Housing Not War, 2012). Roediger (1991/2007) notes that historical class-based agitation engaged similarly with race, positioning it as resultant from and therefore secondary to capitalism. As he writes, the struggles of the early American working class, and the contemporary anti-poverty movements that are their legacy, imagine that race is “wholly ideologically and historically created, while class is not wholly so created,” leading to the notion that “class (or 'the economic') is more real, more fundamental, more basic or more important than race, both in political terms and in terms of historical analysis” (Roediger, 1991/2007, p. 7). This view “informed and deformed the practice of the socialist movement during its heyday in the US”; it has led to “the political conclusion that Blacks and whites should look to class-based revolution as the solution to racism” (Roediger, 1991/2007, p. 7). Rojas (2007) notes that this trend persists nationally and internationally in those organizations “generally focused only on overthrowing capitalism,” wherein class is identified “in the classic Marxist analysis as the ‘primary’ contradiction” (p. 208).

PARC has not always been connected to the anti-poverty movement. In the early-to-mid 1980s, PARC was most strongly associated with the anti-psychiatry movement, as led by psychiatric
survivors. Yet it rarely, if ever, hired survivors into staff positions. This, I suggest, may be resultant from the feminization of the movement itself, as well as the madness it addresses. A number of long-time staff expressed marked distaste for the anti-psychiatry movement, implying that it was an overly dogmatic and/or ego-based project living in the bodies and minds of survivors. A former long-time drop-in staff insists that PARC was “never really anti-psychiatry so much as…wary of it.” Another tells me that “PARC is definitely not anti-psychiatry.” A manager muses:

Although [a prominent psychiatric survivor activist] worked here, we have never been particularly anti-psychiatry or pro-psychiatry…I think that psychiatry is a bit of a blunt object and PARC tends to be a place for the people for whom those treatments and supports didn’t really work. PARC is a place where people can come to be less lonely, or he could try to regain those relationships? So it’s an interesting place for people to, sort of, convene. But it’s not an anti-psychiatry organization.

The anti-psychiatry movement has long been exclusionary, prescriptive and overwhelmingly white. As a result, it has come under much-needed critique by mad-identified racialized people in both organizing and academic spaces (Gorman, Saini, Tam, Udegbe & Usar, 2013). I argue, however, that PARC’s general discomfort with the anti-psychiatry movement may be more about its feminization and, further, its emergence from lived experiences of oppression than its whiteness or reductive dogmatism. The above quotation begins with an “although”; “although [a prominent psychiatric survivor activist] worked here, we have never been particularly anti-psychiatry.” The tacit implication here is that an individual on staff might make the organization anti-psychiatry; that the anti-psychiatry movement exists within the personage of individuals – particularly, certain psychiatric survivors. The PARC staff subject, much to the contrary, is seen to operate from ethical and political investments and/or personal empathy rather than life experience. The hard-line dogmatism associated with the anti-psychiatry movement, reductive and exclusionary as it may be, emerges directly from the trauma experienced by psychiatric survivors, and their consequent anger at the system that so profoundly injured them. The transparency and selflessness of the PARC staff subject are antithetical to such a position.

Unlike the anti-psychiatry movement, the anti-poverty movement is associated with the working class – and, therefore, with traditional labour structures. Its tactics, metaphors and images often skew masculine, even if its demographics do not. PARC’s surprising masculinity, especially in a
typically feminized field, might be resultant from the masculine associations with the labour movement or, further, the broader association of “politics” and “the political” with masculinity. The gender binary of heteropatriarchy generates what Einwohner, Hollander and Olson (2000) call a “conceptual split” between “men’s and women’s separate spheres (the public, masculine world of work and politics and the private, feminine world of home and family),” associating politics and political power with masculinity (p. 681). “In contrast,” they continue, “women’s participation has been seen as anomalous, ineffective, and sometimes inappropriate because it contradicts gender expectations” (Einwohner, Hollander & Olson, 2000, p. 681). This is often amplified in organizations that primary engage in what Einwohner, Hollander and Olson (2000) call “protestors’ tactics reflect ideas associated with masculinity,” like the public demonstration and the picket line (p. 686).

6.4.2. Promotional Practice

PARC’s hiring practices thus tacitly prioritize both demographically white sites and culturally white, masculinized associations. Promotional practice takes much the same route. While professional requirements have been slowly but surely introduced to the agency’s front-line job postings, movement up the organizational hierarchy appears to depend on something more nebulous than educational credentials: “taking up space.” If my interviewees’ recollection is accurate, the 1995 reintroduction of agency hierarchy was the result of a single ambitious individual. His personal advocacy created three employment tiers – Executive Director, a small management team, and a larger group of front-line staff. PARC’s management layer has since expanded significantly; it is now equal to all other full-time teams. Over the past ten years, the people hired for these positions have predominantly come from within PARC staff, and seem to understand their suitability for these roles as a result of attitudinal and behavioural comportment. As one tells me:

My personal trajectory was about me taking up space. I took on more and more tasks that other managers were either shedding or the personal capacity was being eroded by this place. I was suddenly falling into positions that I don’t have training for, or taking on leadership roles, or delivering large projects….again, because I was taking up space to do it. That continued on, project after project, success after success, I would say, as well. So I took up space. That’s all it was. I saw that somebody needed to step up. And so I stepped up.
Another shares a similar journey:

When I first came to PARC, I didn’t have a job description, I didn’t get an orientation, but I was always available. Pretty soon, I became a kind of go-to, so I started to take up more space, because I was here all the time. It was a little stressful – I mean, not knowing necessarily what my role was…And I’ll be honest with you, I would go to staff meetings and be, like, “I’ve got this new idea!” and people were kind of like, “that’s nice.” They were never really like, “tell us more about what you’re building.” I always thought that was odd at the time. And felt like I really was…championing new directions…and really trying hard to champion something, without a partner, without anybody nearby… I just sort of had to….go around people at the time. I was just kind of like “I’m doing this” instead of “can I do this?” You really have to kind of…take up your role. On your own. That’s how you get things done.

These managers use the established discourse of the staff subject: They talk about themselves as dedicated, committed and selfless. The second manager focuses on the power of positivity; a familiar term – “champion” – becomes a stand-in for advocacy and personal sacrifice. Both these managers portray themselves as flexible, and see their advancement as a result of personal will. Their stories imply that they are feel they are simply better staff subjects than many of their co-workers – the first notes the ability to withstand what had “eroded” the “personal capacity” of others; the second comments on the lack of enthusiasm and a self-reliance in the rest of the team. Finally, both return to the concept of “taking up space” to explain their upwards movement.

The use of “space” is both literal and figurative. These managers were physically present in PARC’s environs – the second recalls being at PARC “all the time.” Yet most PARC staff are consistently in the building – as such, they “take up space” by default. “Space,” however, as Lefebvre (1991) writes, is best understood not as a “thing” but rather “a set of relations between things” (p. 83). I posit that these managers advanced through the agency not simply by existing in space, but by being recognized as both natural to and essential within space – that is, by taking up the right space, in the space in the right way, with the right relationship to the right people.

During the Harris era, a tacit moral imperative towards unpaid overtime and volunteer work began to circulate at PARC. Annual reports contained compliments on staff behaviour related almost exclusively to their ability to speak on behalf of the increasingly poor membership and/or their tireless dedication to the organization outside of staff hours. During this period, a financial norm was established: Staff began to donate tax returns and, later, a small portion of their income
back to the agency. This helped to propagate the sense that the staff subject was someone with both spare hours and spare dollars; it was in this period that the agency became more explicitly “lifestyle work.”

In order to be valued as staff, PARC workers needed to first display a baseline of financial security and available time. In order to advance in the agency, a staff further needs to “take up space” and “be responsible for something.” As one puts it, being a manager means “the buck will stop with you”:

And in fairness, anybody could say, “well, I do that. The buck stops with me.” But I could say, you know, do you punch out at the end of the day? Do you leave it behind you? Or do you carry it with you and…not that you worry about it, but that you are responsible for that. That’s, to me, is…you have to own that, you have to be responsible not only to the people, but to the organization. You don’t have a job. Your job is to make sure this place runs healthy and whole. That’s my loose definition of the manager.

Thus, advancement within PARC requires not only a comfort within the space – the ability to “own” it – but also to “be responsible” without “worry.” A future manager must be able to bear intense conditions with positivity and good will. Further, and perhaps most importantly, a future manager needs to already be proximate upper echelons prior to their advancement. It became clear as my interviews progressed that when these managers describe “stepping up,” they specifically refer to “filling in gaps” left by people already at the top.

As my manager interviewees explain it, advancement is a matter of “being in the right place at the right time. With the right capacity for the right need.” In the context of PARC, “the right capacity” appears to be the ability to emulate the PARC staff subject – to be proactive and positive, to focus on advocacy and good feeling. The “right need” is determined at the management table; final decision-making power rests with the Executive Director. This has led to what one staff calls “a vicious cycle in hiring” and another describes as “like following like”: “So long as the same people do the hiring, they’re gonna keep hiring people like them, whether they’re aware of it or not.” This repetition is not merely demographic; it is also economic. As in all hierarchical organizations, the bourgeois comportment of the management team is rewarded with significantly higher salaries.
6.5. Community Activism Vs. Social Work

The PARC staff subject’s activism is a tacitly bourgeois position; a form of governance that claims genuine affiliation with members while ensuring primacy and power to white, masculine, middle-class ways of being. I posit that the figure of the social worker is crucial in our subjectification as staff; indeed, I think it is one of the main reasons why it is so difficult for us to name and confront bourgeois power.

The process of subjectification is also a process of differentiation. Enlightenment individuals come to know ourselves as selves in and through coming to know others as Other (Ahmed, 2000; Sibley, 1995). Comparison, both conscious and unconscious, thus becomes crucial to generating discrete identities. This is a racial and gendered process. The contemporary hegemonic power of white masculinity, however, lies in its obfuscation of it as such (Ahmed, 2000; Nast, 2011; Razack, 2007). This dual dynamic can be tracked in the way the PARC staff subject self-produces. Though we are undoubtedly materially contrasted with members (we have keys and they don’t; we are paid and they aren’t, etc.), we often discursively define ourselves against a different figure: the social worker. While PARC’s Annual Reports and many of our personal stories minimize the difference between staff and members, we maximize the difference between PARC staff and social workers. In this way, we create a sense of PARC as an agency united; it is easy to imagine that we are all laterally invested in one another and against the oppressive institution of social work.

Below, I explain the how the figure of the social worker is used to consolidate the imaginary position of the PARC staff subject as somehow subaltern. This positioning is akin to what Rey Chow (1993) refers to as “self-dramatization” or “self-subalternization,” a process wherein an intellectual elite (in her exploration, a Maoist vanguard in 1970s China; in mine, PARC’s Marxist/anarchist staff subjects) over-identifies with marginalized peoples in an attempt to push forward a presumably redistributive agenda and simultaneously maintain their own power. While Maoism was no doubt significantly more extreme and impactful than the PARC staff subject, Chow’s (1993) warning feels relevant. Self-subalternization, Chow (1993) writes, “has increasingly become the assured meant to power and authority” (p. 13). The result is often that “the oppressed, whose voices we seldom hear, are robbed twice – the first time of their economic
chances, the second time of their language, which is now no longer distinguishable from those of us who have had our consciousness ‘raised’” (Chow, 1993, p. 13)

PARC workers produce ourselves as subaltern in comparison to the figure of the traditional social worker. In the PARC imaginary, social workers are highly schooled, rigid, clinical professionals with negative attitudes and a focus on individual rather than systemic problems. The staff subject, in contrast, is a non-credentialed activist whose work is “casual,” but “heart-driven”; we operate “from the gut,” towards structural change and “joyful” community investment. The vision of social workers that we rely on to create our oppositional identities is not accurate; it is, rather, both situated and somewhat outdated. For example, while social work is a professional designation, credentialization is an ongoing, complex and contested process (Hebert-Boyd, 2007). Clinical work, with its medicalized language and prescriptive boundaries, is one of many paradigms; further, even within the clinical sector, “strengths-based” positivity is a core element of practice (Healy, 2005, 2014). Finally, many social workers identify themselves explicitly as “activists,” focusing their work on community mobilization and movement building against encroaching neoliberalism (Smith, 2011).

The point here is not that social work is categorically better than PARC imagines it to be. While the terrain of social work is more contested and conflictual than we often imagine, it remains broadly committed to stabilizing “middle-class power” under the guise of compassion (Margolin, 1997, p. 5). What is notable is rather that the elements of social work that PARC positions itself are somewhat superficial. PARC does not and cannot address the fundamental form of domination at the core of the social work relationship because we repeat it rather than defy it. The version of the social worker subject we inadvertently employ as a foil for our own identities refocuses our attention away from the power dynamics within our agency. This, in turn, allows us to continue using an objectified version of members’ experiences, ideas and bodies to come to know ourselves as enlightened participants in an authentic community.

While the practice of social work is variable, depending on the workplace and philosophical paradigm, there is a commonality across the profession in its hierarchical positioning of human worth. Social work has long relied on lines drawn between the undeserving poor, whose lives are a threat to the social order, and the deserving poor, who might be assisted into modernity on the
The gates to worthy humanity are kept by the social worker, a bourgeois subject comes to understood herself as moral, civil, and good through the “helping” encounter. In this equation, helping professionals are the agents of change, while those in need of help are its objects. As Heron (2007) writes, “the Other” – that is, the social worked as opposed to the social worker – “is presented as crucial in helping us to know and/or attain our real selves” (p. 50). “This quest for self is, of course,” she continues, “equally an actualization of class privilege” (Heron, 2007, p. 51).

What Heron (2007) refers to as “class privilege” here she articulates elsewhere more fulsomely as “bourgeois power,” which she notes as always white. Thus, “class privilege” is not simply an economic descriptor, but a racial one, concealed in and through the moral imperative of “goodness” which “suffuses white middle-class identity” (Heron, 2007, p. 125). Indeed, as Badwall (2013) writes, practices of goodness are “intimately locked into the constitutive scripts of whiteness, and to a sense of self that can only experience itself as a good subject through its interactions with subjects who in turn are constructed as being in need” (p. 68) “All social workers,” Badwall (2013) asserts, “are regulated and governed by the naturalizing qualities of these discourses” (p. 68).

The white bourgeois goodness of social workers is consolidated through their “helping” encounters with the deserving poor. Similarly, the white bourgeois goodness of the PARC staff subject relies on proximity to and communion with a romanticized, exoticized and objectified membership. This is perhaps most apparent in the staff who recounts a first encounter with PARC as akin to wandering through “a bazaar in Delhi,” a “real” manifestation of “the kind of energy I was looking for,” or what other staff understand as the ability of the PARC drop-in to let staff “really be ourselves.” Unspoken in this assertion is the fantasy that we become ourselves through encountering the energy – joy, camaraderie or authenticity – that inheres to sites of degeneracy. This sense converts conditions of structural violence into resources for self-making. This is apparent in social work, wherein “the pain experienced by others becomes a source of morality for the helpers, while simultaneously obscuring the relations of power between them” (Smith, 2011, p. 129). It is, I would argue, equally apparent in the staff subject who comes to know himself through the Other. These processes can only be seen as “good” if, as Razack (2007) puts it, “the hero of the story is us” (p. 385).
Here, we find a fundamental affinity between PARC staff and social workers: Both assist Others into civility as a part of their own self-making practice. What, then, separates us? Certainly, there is a difference in credentials and professional oversight. In order to call themselves such, social workers in Ontario must have completed a Bachelors or Masters of Social Work. To become registered social workers (RSWs), graduates from accredited programs must join the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW), a provincial branch of the Canadian Council of Social Worker Regulators (CCSWR). The College has policies and practices in place to investigate ethical issues in the workplace. Registered Social Workers are also entitled to join professional associations – either Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) or the Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW). Though some PARC workers have or are working towards degrees, no one currently on staff is an RSW.

As an organization without formal ties to the OCSWSSW, CCSWR, CASW or OASW, PARC workers have the freedom and flexibility in practice outside the general scope of social work. Our independence also allows people to work with a degree of impunity not otherwise possible. Many of the women staff that I interviewed told me that there is “stuff that goes down – stuff the male managers do” that “is totally unprofessional and inappropriate” and “wouldn’t fly at any other social service agency.” A long-time staff also notes that because she is “unschooled,” she feels she “learned a lot of really wrong things from watching other workers at PARC.” The gendered component of this is crucial – interestingly, the majority of women on PARC’s staff have or are working towards professional Social Service Worker, Social Worker or Occupational Therapist degrees, whereas the majority of men on PARC’s staff either do not have University-level education or have received it in a different sector. Perhaps more tellingly, the white workers in the highest positions at the agency – the Executive Director and multiple managers – are the least credentialed, whereas PARC’s most racialized teams (the peer workers and POP teams) also represents its highest concentration of professional degrees. Again, this is not to say that professionalization is somehow better, but rather to note that only certain bodies seem to be able to occupy spaces of power without it.

PARC’s work also diverges from social work in its reliance on a patriarchal narrative of dissent. The PARC activist subject is tacitly masculinized. This is in keeping with Enlightenment associations of protest with masculinity. Following foundational thinkers like Thoreau, AK
Thompson (2015) explains that the “withdrawal of consent” from broad structures such as governance in “was tantamount to an assertion of glorious individual will” in Enlightenment philosophy (p. 52). “Men who serve the state” – “soldiers, constables, jailers, and lawyers” – were, for Thoreau, not sufficiently masculine; rather, they were “as machines with their bodies” (in Thompson, 2015, p. 52). Resistance, on the other hand, became “an elevated calling, a kind of devotional act carried out by those who are able to make moral distinctions” (Thompson, 2015, p. 52). As Thompson (2015) concludes, “in the process of defining themselves in opposition to the dominant order and becoming “martyrs,” subjects who resist through the withdrawal of consent advance for themselves a heroic, messianic ontology” that is inherently masculinized (pp. 52 – 53). The PARC staff subject’s insistent differentiation from social work – even “activist” social work – helps to ensure that such a dissenting identity remains masculine. The “helping professions,” as Badwall (2013) notes, are inherently feminized; as the professionalization of the narratively “feminine” characteristics of “love, nurturing, and empathy,” social work allowed “white women gain the toe-hold on respectability by being imagined as subjects who are best suited to shape the moral character of the nation (Fellows & Razack, 1998)” (as cited in Badwall, 2013, p. 18).

The relationship between PARC’s defiance of social work, its resistant self-characterization, its whiteness and its masculinization cannot be overstated. It is worth remembering that beginning in the 1990s, PARC staff were discursively constituted as “political” only insomuch as they acted as transparent relays for member needs and desires and/or selfless advocates on the members’ behalf. Staff were explicitly understood as people who speak for the marginalized rather than those who experienced marginality themselves. The staff subject thus became socially unmarked and “the political” came to be understood as something that flowed through, rather than originated in, PARC workers. Racialization and feminization - and thereby the experiences of racism and sexism, as well as the idea of social work in general - have come to be seen as in excess of “the political” and, as a result, incongruous with staff subjectivity.

The masculinity of the PARC staff subject casts some of its fundamental metaphors – especially those it shares with traditional social work – in a different light. Throughout the practice of social work, direct service providers are referred to as “front line,” as in “on the front lines,” a war metaphor which is often coupled with such military phrases as “on the ground” and “in the
trenches.” Chris Beckett (2002) calls this “the language of siege,” and notes that it pervades contemporary social work practice. PARC workers make liberal use of these metaphors: Peer workers, case managers and drop-in staff refer to ourselves as “front line.” Many of my interviewees speak lovingly of our work “in the trenches,” as in the following quote: “When I started, people were there because they wanted to connect with members. We didn’t have a collective agreement for 10 years, but it didn’t matter. We weren’t the priority. We were there for the members. And the friendships [between staff] that came out of it were more like...being in the trenches together.” In the context of PARC’s masculinized dissenting subject, the military connotations feel more actively charged. What war are we fighting? What is our role in this war? Do we tacitly imagine ourselves as the intellectual vanguard leading the class struggle? How does this differ from the moral uplift of the social worker, or the civilizing work of the tolerant, level-headed, compassionate middle class?

The argument, thus, is not that PARC staff are social workers but that the distinction between PARC staff and social workers, like the distinction between revanchist gentrifiers and the enlightened bourgeois, distracts from a much more fundamental affinity. Hage (2000) advances a similar argument in his exploration of racists and multiculturalists in contemporary Australia, and it functions as an illustrative example of this phenomenon. As Hage (2000) writes, “those who wanted the ‘ethnics’ to stay and those who wanted them to leave were divided as to who and what should be allowed into the national space” (p. 17). “They were united, however, around two things which seemed to me far more fundamental,” he continues, “their belief in their centrality of enactors of the Law...[and] their conception of ethnics as people one can make decisions about: objects to be governed” (Hage, 2000, p. 17). “Both the ‘racists’ and the ‘multiculturalists,’” he concludes, “shared in the conviction that they were, in one way or another, masters of national space, and that it was up to them to decide who stayed in and who ought to be kept out of that space” (Hage, 2000, p. 17). This dynamic is apparent in Parkdale, in agency history, in the making of PARC’s space and finally here in staff self-conception.

What is perhaps most interesting is that at PARC, the members – whom Hage (2000) might call the “objects to be governed” (p. 17) – do not experience the distinction between the staff subject and the social worker. When I asked members what makes someone a staff at PARC, many told me that a “staff” is a person “with a social work degree.”: “You’ve always had to have the right
level of education to work here,” says a long-time member, “so you have to go to school to be a social worker.” Another shares: “They call us member employees to differentiate us from staff. That’s because they have the degree and we don’t. It’s power on the basis of education – because they have the BSW, they can work full-time. They would never hire me, or any of us members, because we don’t have BSWs. They wouldn’t allow us to be staff.” It is notable that the fact that PARC workers are not social workers is not something that members know; indeed, they presume the opposite, likely because they are primarily subject not to staff self-talk but to our actual practice, not to our discourse but our institutional power. This creates a circumstance wherein staff can simultaneously assert power and deny accountability for it – a situation that Chow (1993) might describe as the self-subaltern “circuit of productivity that draws its capital from others’ deprivation while refusing to acknowledge its own presence as endowed.” (p. 14).

6.6. Conclusion

The PARC staff subject contains an internal contradiction: He staunchly opposes social work while simultaneously embodying its fundamental power relationship. His activism, understood as a defiance of the professionalized sector, masculinizes rather than undermines its hierarchical and civilizing strategies. In this chapter, I attempted to explore how such a contradictory subject emerged, and how he is operationalized today. What I have only begun to answer, however, is why this situation persists. PARC’s members and staff are negatively affected by the bourgeois construction of the staff subject. Further, our attempts to seek redress for oppression are stymied by the confusing insistence that PARC is a place of friendship, community or activism rather than a formal social work site. Yet most members and staff remain deeply committed to the agency; many, myself included, stay on for years after they have developed cogent criticism of the space. In the conclusion to this work, I speculate on why we have remained so invested. What is it, I ask, that PARC offers us?
Conclusion
Tending to the Past

“My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.”

- Michel Foucault (as cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 231)

7.1. Reassembly

This dissertation has explored the intricacies of white, bourgeois, heteropatriarchal power as it simultaneously makes and maps onto the political terrain of PARC and Parkdale. As with a set of nesting dolls, I have worked from the largest to the smallest scale. Here, I want to reassemble the pieces in order to look at the whole. In the last chapter, I examined the most microcosmic and, perhaps paradoxically, the most powerful site of white, bourgeois power in the figure of the staff. This subject did not emerge spontaneously – it was a slow, organic production of agency discourse and practice, anchored in ideas about PARC’s heart and soul. As I explored in Chapter 4, PARC’s soulful character is exemplified by the agency’s flagship drop-in, a complex and ambivalent space of freedom and foreclosure. My investigation of the drop-in localized the broader work done in Chapter 3 on PARC’s buildings. Both chapters worked to spatialize what I see as PARC’s central paradox: its desire to be of and for the marginalized through becoming increasingly invested in the private market and the needs of the bourgeois. This spatializing work drew from foundational theory laid out in Chapters 2 and 1, which discussed, respectively, racial neoliberalism in PARC’s organizational history and the remapping of the Parkdale neighbourhood by the enlightened bourgeois.

As a whole, my research has attempted to generate a dense and simultaneous analysis of how whiteness, heteropatriarchy and bourgeois normativity saturate white, masculine activism. This was not my original intention; quite to the contrary, I hoped this dissertation work would reignite the very activism that I ended up deconstructing. As I collected my data, I discovered that my initial premise was extremely influenced by PARC’s existing institutional thought. Delving deeply into PARC’s textual, spatial and emotional archive, I found that the agency is much like
many others of its kind: hierarchically-structured, funding-dependent, and increasingly spatially restricted and enclosed. These realities remain at odds with agency narrative, which continues to frame PARC as a non-professionalized and non-hierarchical capacity-building space.

For those who haven't been inside the agency, who haven't accessed or provided services, participated in its celebrations or shared its struggles, it would be easy to imagine that the structure is real, the story an invention. Yet PARC's narrative makes its structure, its structure makes its narrative; materiality and story are mutually imbricated. All of the things explored about PARC – the good, the bad, and the ugly – are true. Together, they create a discordant whole.

Living with and in such ambivalent realities can be quite uncomfortable. Yet many of us stay connected to PARC year after year, decade after decade. Why? This question dogged the latter half of my research. I remain confused as to my own level of commitment, which has not waned despite no longer holding an official staff position. In fact, despite a now-strained relationship with many at PARC, I still go to the agency on a regular basis. Countless friends and colleagues outside the agency have recommended that I make a break with it, but I seem unable to do so. In combing through my data, I found that many staff seem equally vexed about their ongoing investment. When asked “why do you stay?” most of my staff interviewees respond with a laugh or a sigh, a shake of the head, and an appeal to the idea of love. The line that stuck with me most was the following: “I stay because despite it all, I love it here.” This resonates: When I search my own motives, I too come back to the idea of “love.” Indeed, I began this dissertation with the assertion that the work itself was an act of love. Love, I wrote, following bell hooks (2000), is an action: a set of investments and behaviours invested in transforming domination.

Of course, this definition of love is highly idealized and abstract. It also has worrisome resonance with PARC’s broader institutional discourse: it speaks of a warmth and connection that may function to obfuscate its own limits, its own alignment. In keeping with agency rhetoric, it is also emergent from and utilized by some people and not others. As I looked back through my interviews for answers, I noticed that “love” – like “community,” or “activism” – seemed most important to those people at PARC who are the most like me: white, politicized staff with little personal relationship to the material conditions that bring members to the agency’s doors.
My conversations with these interviewees were permeated with “love”: it bookended stories of struggle and triumph, and punctuated even serious critique. It was associated with other familiar PARC ideas – that of “freedom” (one manager tells me he “loves the work” because it gives him “a freedom” that he “couldn’t get anywhere else,” while a front-line staff laughs at being “ruined for other places” by the “incredible freedom of the drop-in”) and “home.” Managers and front-line staff told me again and again that they love PARC because it makes them feel “seen” and “known”: “When I think about PARC, I always go back to Cheers…a place where everybody knows your name,” or “it just felt from the first time I walked in the door, I loved it; it felt like home.” I know this feeling: I still share it.

“Love” did not appear in the same way in my interviews with PARC’s racialized and Indigenous staff, nor those who had significant lived experience of poverty, psychiatrization or homelessness. These interviewees that referred to it only did so in regards to their particular relationships with individual members; many did not call upon “love” at all. While PARC white employees tended to offer “love” as the reason they remain at the agency “despite it all,” racialized, Indigenous and poor/formerly poor staff gave practical explanations: one told me of her desire to follow-through with her existing workplan, and three others reminded me of the extremely limited job options currently available for non-credentialed front-line workers.

Further, and perhaps more interestingly, PARC members referred to “love” only in relation to PARC’s survival services (one member told me that he “loved PARC” because the staff helped him “find housing and get fed,” while another told me he “loved” the erstwhile large-scale maintenance program because it “paid”) or to lessen the impact of their own harsh criticisms (three member interviewees began critiques with the phrase, “I love PARC, but…,” and six others concluded stories of alienation or oppression with, “but it’s PARC, and I love it”).

These different relationships to the idea of “love” bring up serious questions: How do our affective relationships to the agency – and here, I am referring to people like me, PARC’s white activist staff – help us circumscribe acknowledgment of our own complicity in domination? How do our good feelings work to reinforce and obfuscate our power? Who is invited into “love” for PARC? When is such an invitation extended – and for what purpose?
There is much to be said about the ways that “love” – as a discourse and an affective state – circulates at PARC. In this conclusion, I hope to provide a small window into what may underlie this and other good feelings that many of us value so much. I hazard that the “love” we return to may be part of a broader strategy of innocence. This is not to say that it is not a genuine experience, nor is it to imagine that it is somehow bankrupt. Rather, I want to suggest that it has both limits and implications beyond our desire, and our control. Further, and perhaps more importantly, I offer that equity and reform at PARC, if they are possible, will require that we stay with the uglier, more ambivalent feelings that emerge when we explore the limits of our subjectivity – and, indeed, that we find ground for action in the uncomfortable places.

7.2. Innocence

I have suggested throughout this dissertation that PARC makes many of its staff – especially white, activist subjects like me – feel good. Working at PARC and organizing in Parkdale gives me and people like me access to a sense of purity, and the feeling that we are in among the marginalized, and therefore ethically or politically superior to, for example, traditional social workers or revanchist gentrifiers. Sherene Razack and Mary-Louis Fellows’ (1998) might rearticulate these feelings of goodness as moves to innocence. They would offer that such good feelings of innocence make it difficult for us to account for the ways we oppress others.

In their important article “The Race to Innocence: Confronting Hierarchical Relationship among Women,” Razack and Fellows (1998) explore how Western feminists have historically been averse to acknowledging the complexities of our activism and identities. Though we are able to fight back against straightforwardly or traditionally patriarchal forces, Razack and Fellows (1998) note how feminists often find ourselves repeating broader superstructures of power in our relationships with one another. This particularly manifests in situations where we are called to account for oppressing each other. In such circumstances, we often appeal to our own personal experiences of subordination to avoid having to deal with the interlocking nature of power, its complex embodied density. This allows us to maintain what Razack and Fellows (1998) refer to as the “deeply felt belief” that, as survivors of sexism invested in the pursuit of justice, we will not, perhaps cannot, repeat dynamics of domination in our daily lives (p. 335). While we are comfortable acknowledging our affinity with others on the basis of our own trauma and
oppression, we also often use our sites of pain to deny our real participation in power. “Feeling only the ways that she is positioned as subordinate,” Razack and Fellows (1998) explain, “each woman strives to maintain her dominant positions” (p. 336). It is worth recalling here the ways in which the enlightened bourgeois in Parkdale, and the activist staff at PARC, look “up” to power, seeing it a unidirectional top-down structure; we are less able – or perhaps less willing – to look “around at” domination as it flows between us. Razack and Fellows (1998) offer that a lens on power is a defensive strategy, a part of “the race to innocence,” wherein progressive people yearn towards self-exoneration and respectability in and through their dissident identities. This allows “the systems of domination that position white, middle-class, heterosexual, nondisabled men at the centre” to “continue to operate among all other groups, limiting in various ways what women [or, in PARC’s case, activists] know and feel about one another” (Razack & Fellows, 1998, p. 336).

The concept of “the race to innocence” is useful – the phrase itself helps us remember that self-exoneration is both an active quest (innocence is a move that we make) and a racial project (innocence, like moral goodness, functions to simultaneously exalt and unmark whiteness). It applies to much of the conscious and unconscious work that occurs at PARC; work that I believe is recapitulated in our inability to stay with negativity, our return to the feeling of “love.” Though I have not explicitly named it as such, throughout this dissertation, I have explored the ways in which PARC as an agency participates in just such a “race” by way of “love.” Parkdale enlightened bourgeois, for example, call upon their love for the neighbourhood to obfuscate and/or excuse their participation in gentrification. PARC’s discourse of community participation and activism distracts from the encroachment of racial neoliberalism on agency practice. In each case, whiteness and heteropatriarchy have been crucial in maintaining good feeling. So long as power is imagined to be race and gender neutral, we may imagine ourselves as victors or victims, never perpetrators.

The “race to innocence” is simultaneously constituted and complicated by intention. As Razack and Fellows (1998) are careful to point out, progressive subjects rarely seek to reinforce domination; rather, we explicitly want to oppose it. Yet we are invested in maintaining our personal sense of responsibility and respectability – and in continuing to experience the good feelings that come along with it – and in so doing, we become agents of oppression. These
gestures towards innocence follow what Ahmed (2006) so eloquently describes as “orientations” or “lines of movement.” These lines, Ahmed (2006) writes, “make certain things, and not others, available...when we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach” (p. 14). Over time, PARC has moved away from certain possibilities and towards others, aligning itself with the white bourgeois.

Throughout this research, I have identified moments where PARC, as an agency, believed it was making the only choice available. Upon further reflection, it seems other avenues were possible. For example, there were times when PARC could have practiced transparency about the legal status of its building, and the professionalizing nature of the workforce, rather than insisting on maintaining a rhetoric of communal practice and shared ownership. This may have alleviated some of the confusion and pain that agency dissonance has caused the increasingly de-prioritized membership and disgruntled staff. PARC could also have sought to accommodate the Tibetan immigrant population in the mid-2000s, recognizing immigrant and refugee mental health as a part of its Ministry mandate. More recently, PARC could have used the reorganization of the staff and management structure to implement more equitable hiring and promotional practices. PARC did not make these choices because it did not see them as available. Now that this research has been completed, the question remains – will other options manifest? If so, how will PARC respond to them?

7.3 Opening

PARC’s lines have always been drawn by whiteness and heteropatriarchy. Our existing investments in civility and bourgeois power, as well as our vision of domination as a top-down, race-and-gender neutral phenomenon, have limited our options as an agency. This research has allowed me to reflect how power at the macro and micro level shaped PARC’s decision making process over the past 36 years. It has also put me in a position to consider what, if anything, could be different now. Given that this work has yet to be read by many at PARC, it feels preliminary to imagine any changes it could bring about. Further, it is not necessarily the appropriate role of the scholar – particularly one so embedded in and captured by agency discourse and affect – to prescribe a remedy. I do, however, believe that this dissertation suggests alternate courses of action.
PARC’s investments in whiteness, bourgeois power, and heteropatriarchal masculinity are infrastructural – they are part of a broad superstructure that administrates decision making and delimits the field of possibility for subjectivity. Yet while this infrastructure exceeds the individuals who run the agency, it does not operate without them. The optics of an overwhelmingly white agency, from drop-in to Executive Director, help to reinforce the centrality of whiteness to the agency’s mission. Since 1980, PARC has been governed by white people; and, since the mid-1990s, it has been run by white men. The agency has never attempted to change who is at the top. What would be different if, for example, the entire management layer – a site of contention to begin with – was replaced by psychiatric survivors or, perhaps more radically, racialized or Indigenous women? How would the agency shift if it reoriented its hiring practice to prioritize languages and identities relevant to Parkdale’s immigrant and refugee communities? What if it required so-called “lived experience” of homelessness, poverty or psychiatrization in its workforce? Or if it changed its programming to specifically focus on the so-called “mental health,” housing and/or addictions needs of immigrant and refugee communities, sex workers, or the many Indigenous people living in the neighbourhood?

There is no doubt that the suggestions above are problematic. First, they imagine that change may be made in an infrastructure simply by changing the people who run it. This inclusionary prescription is not unlike institutional diversity initiatives that Sara Ahmed (2012) unpacks in On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life. As Ahmed (2012) makes clear, adding “diverse” (read: racialized) bodies to a white space does not in and of itself change institutional logics – indeed, to the contrary, it often functions as an explicitly non-performative anti-racist practice. Ahmed’s (2012) case studies that racialized people are invited into power on the condition that they maintain psychic and structural whiteness, making these inclusionary gestures functionally a reinforcement of white norms. Denise Da Silva (2001) might argue that the attempt to include race into the realm of legitimate or governing subjectivity is a losing battle; that whiteness as an organizing structure for contemporary life depends on race – and, in her reading, particularly Blackness – as “the other side of universality” (p. 421).

In her article “Towards a Critique of the Socio-Logics of Justice: The Analytics of Raciality and the Production of Universality,” Da Silva (2001) contextualizes the danger of imagining racism as a form of exclusion and argues against the notion of inclusion as progress. For her, the
conceptualization of the human subject as a potential conduit for transcendental goodness (rationality, equity, justice) is predicated on racialization remaining abject. In this way, the normative human subject is, for Da Silva (2001), a dialectical construction. The production of universality, and the subject who can apprehend it, is a spatial and social process that emerges from and within modernity, shaped by the conceptual matrix of enlightenment science and morality. As Da Silva (2001) writes, “racist ideas are not extraneous to the modern imagination but instead circumscribe the zone of operation of universality” (p. 424).

I have not used Da Silva (2001) in this dissertation work. Yet many of the writers whose work I did rely on – Kirby (1998), Lowe (2015), Mohanram (1999), and Razack (2000; 2015), for example – put forward similar arguments on the place of race in the construction of the legitimate human and, therefore, the progressive institution. These scholars might seriously question whether inclusion would improve PARC. I remain unsure where I stand – while I align myself theoretically with the work of these particular theorists, I am also attached to the idea that change at PARC is possible. Certainly, it is hard to say how, exactly, inclusion would manifest at the agency simply because it has never been tried. I am compelled to ask the agency to attempt such changes, and then track how they unfold.

In hoping that PARC could be reformed and improved, I am reminded again of Da Silva (2001), who writes,

> To account for how the racial has operated as a strategy of power in modernity…it is necessary to address the very conditions of production of the symbolic mechanisms deployed in the constitution of people of colour as modern subaltern social subjects....modern mechanisms of knowledge are the privileged instruments of a form of power whose most crucial accomplishment is to inscribe itself in the bodies and souls of its subjects (p. 427)

Da Silva’s (2001) insistence on the ways in which subjectification is intrinsically racial leads me to my second hesitation in prescribing something different for PARC. It is hard for me to trust my own suggestions because, in making them, I risk in participating in the same gestures of superiority and enlightenment that I have accused the agency of. It would be easy to imagine myself as an expert on PARC, to dole out advice as if I would or could have made those decisions at the time. Further, and perhaps more alarmingly, this entire reflection on innocence allows me to experience myself – and, perhaps, be experienced by others – as above it. The
journey I have described from institutional thinking to critical analysis is like many self-exonerating narratives: Once I was ignorant, but now I know better; once I was lost, but now I am found. Am I just another white activist subject in pursuit of redemption?

As Harjeet Badwall (2013) writes in her dissertation, “reflexivity,” especially amongst people in the helping professions, “functions as another apparatus to secure innocence for subjects” (p. 89). In a more recent article, Badwall (2016) notes how the movement from “unmarked” to “critical” identity allows white people to retain their sense of moral superiority and remain the centre of the story (p. 2). This is particularly true for academic discourse production, which not only dresses Enlightenment-style rational knowledge production as fact, but fixes it forever in writing.

In generating this text, I have not wriggled out of the “race to innocence” – I have, in some ways, redoubled it. This leads me to serious questions about my own integrity, and a significant feeling of ambivalence about the project itself. It does not, however, make me regret what I have done.

I began this project desperate for certainty. I wanted to be able to pinpoint the mistakes of the past in order to ensure we never repeated again. What I have found, rather, is that my sense of the past as comprised of distinct successes and failures is itself a product of my own immersion in PARC’s white, bourgeois orientation. This, I would argue, makes it all the more imperative for myself and people like me to engage fulsomely with the past from as many angles as we can. Further, we must allow our engagement with the past to chart a more ambivalent path to the future, one in which our access to certainty and knowledge is more unstable than we might like.

In his essay on solidarity, Chris Chapman (2013) offers that “implicating oneself in oppression requires measuring oneself by one’s impact on oppressed peoples,” a process that “causes uncertainty and pain, and destabilizes one’s sense of oneself as coherently moral” (p. 182). This identity destabilization, though painful, is also an opportunity. “Exalted subjects,” Chapman (2013) writes, must develop a “troubled consciousness,” allowing “themselves to be unsettled by the knowledge that they might enact oppression at any moment” (p. 195). This reminds me of Foucault’s famous warning, “everything is dangerous” (as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 231). This idea, as I see it, is neither relativistic nor resigned. Everything may be dangerous, but it is not equally dangerous, nor is it dangerous in the same way. Our job as bourgeois subjects, activists, and, perhaps, simply people is to “determine which is the main danger” for us as
individuals, and within institutions, every day, with every decision we make (Foucault, as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 231). This is not an abstract process – it requires a material commitment to making change. We must be willing to act differently, make different choices, and even de-prioritize our own personal comfort. I am recalled to Andrea Smith’s (2013) article “The Problem with ‘Privilege.’” In it, Smith quotes her own activist mentor Judy Vaughn, who says, “you don’t think your way into a different way of acting; you act your way into a different way of thinking” (para. 2).

These ideas are particularly difficult for those of us who have been socialized to believe in both the primacy and privacy of our psyche, and put faith in ideas like agency, freedom and control. I want to recall here how difficult the final chapter of this dissertation was to write – thinking through the historicity of the subject, and the political constraints that always already exist on our personal will has been extremely painful. Theorizing subjectivity, as I have attempted to do here, leaves many, myself included, dissatisfied and left with the feeling that there is no room for individual commitment to justice. It becomes hard to see our potential act differently, or make different choices. What might we learn if we avoided the typical progressive push towards “what next?” or “how can I do better?” What might be different if, as Ahmed (2012) suggests, we stayed awhile with the negativity, the bad feelings, the obstructions to movement, the racism within our institutional life. “We might need to get in the way if we are to get anywhere,” Ahmed (2012) provokes, “We might need to become the blockage points by pointing out the blockage points” (p. 187). It is for this reason that I want to insist that we become awake to the past, to our history, to how the constraints of what has come before shape what is yet to be.

I named this dissertation after the Robert Frost (1914) poem “Mending Wall,” which skewers American isolationism, and by proxy, the Puritanical Enlightenment individual subject (in Lathem, 1969, p. 33). Though I find the poem relevant and moving, it is not lost on me that Frost himself was a quintessentially bourgeois subject. Born in San Francisco to a white settler family descended from earliest British colonists, Frost made his living commenting wryly on a rural lifestyle that was mostly symbolic to him. I want to end with a very different poem from a very different kind of poet. Lucille Clifton (1991), whose work has long been very important to me, knew firsthand the brutalities of racial and colonial erasure. Clifton’s ancestors were stolen by trans-Atlantic slave traders from the West African kingdom of Dahomey. She lived her life as
a Black woman in highly segregated mid-20th-century New York and Washington, DC. Her work reflects both the violence of history, and its promise. The poem “I am accused of tending to the past” insists that engaging with the past helps us be open to a different future, and gives us agency we might otherwise lack. Clifton (1991) writes:

i am accused of tending to the past
as if i made it,
as if i sculpted it
with my own hands. i did not.
this past was waiting for me
when i came,
a monstrous unnamed baby,
and i with my mother's itch
took it to breast
and named it
History.
she is more human now,
learning languages everyday,
remembering faces, names and dates.
when she is strong enough to travel
on her own, beware, she will.

(Clifton, 1991, as cited in Young & Glaser, 2012, p. 327)
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Appendices

Appendix A

Initial Proposal to the PARC Board of Directors

Project Overview

Stasis and Change is research project conducted by Griffin Epstein for her PhD in the department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Although this research is part of an academic program, she hopes that it will also have a positive impact on PARC. She intends to use the research process to create spaces for learning, dialogue and solidarity within the organization. She also plans to produce reports, presentations and recommendations for the PARC community.

For the duration of her active field-work, Griffin will be on leave-of-absence from her job as a drop-in worker. When she is present in the drop-in, it will be as a researcher and not as a support worker.

The purpose of Griffin’s project is to study change in Parkdale and at PARC. Her research will be guided by the following questions:

How has Parkdale changed?

How has PARC changed?

How are changes in the neighbourhood related to changes at PARC?

How do we feel working at PARC? How do we feel accessing services at PARC? Have those feelings changed over the years?

What stories do we tell about what PARC was, is, and will be? Do we tell different stories to different people?

As workers, how have the changes at PARC informed our sense of who we are and why we do what we do?

As members, how have the changes at PARC informed our sense of who we are and why we come to the drop-in?

Could we see things differently? Could we do things differently?

Methods

This project is “interdisciplinary” and uses a “mixed methods” approach. This means Griffin will borrow tools from many different research traditions. She will be looking at PARC’s historical
archive, collecting and performing demographic studies and, most importantly, interviewing many PARC members, staff and managers. As per an agreement with the Board of Directors, all interviews with managers and staff will occur on PARC hours or will be counted as lieu times and all interviews with members will be compensated at a rate of $25/hour.

Griffin’s research will be anchored by a small committee called the Research Direction and Support Group (RDSG). This group will be comprised of Griffin, one manager, two staff and four members. They will meet to help set research priorities and goals. They will also collaboratively develop reports and presentations to communicate the research findings back to the community. Participants in the RDSG will be compensated for their time – PARC employees on PARC hours, members at $25/hour.

**Phases**

The research will occur in three phases. The first phase will focus on PARC’s past and present. During this phase, Griffin will put together the RDSG, collect historical documents and interview current and former members, staff and managers who use English to communicate.

The second phase will focus on gaps in PARC’s services. During this phase, Griffin will interview members who do not speak English by using language interpreters. She will also interview Parkdale residents (English and non-English speaking) who do not use PARC’s services.

In phase three, Griffin will produce reports, presentations and documents on the research, with the help of the RDSG. These reports will be available in multiple languages.

**Consent and Confidentiality**

Consent and confidentiality are both crucial elements of this project. Griffin has developed a rigorous consent process, and is committed to protecting the confidentiality of all individuals involved; however, the agency will be named in the final document.
Appendix B

Letter of Approval from PARC’s Board of Directors

Tuesday October 15th 2013

Sherene Razack
Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education (HSSSJE),
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE),
University of Toronto, 12th Floor North,
252 Bloor Street W, Toronto, ON M5S 1V6 Canada

Dear Sherene Razack,

Please be advised that I have reviewed the Ethics Review Protocol Submission Form provided by the lead researcher as well as spoken to Griffin Epstein about the proposed research. Griffin’s request was discussed at the PARC board of directors and approved upon adequate review of the Ethics Review Protocol.

I look forward to receiving the approved Ethics Review Protocol Submission Form and to the research that Griffin intends to undertake. If you have any questions about this letter or PARC’s support of this research please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Executive Director
PARC
Appendix C

Recruitment Email for Manager and Staff RDSG Participants

Greetings,

I am writing to you as a researcher rather than a co-worker. I have taken a leave of absence from my drop-in position to conduct research for my PhD. I am currently a student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education.

My PhD research focuses on PARC. Over the next six months, I will be studying the ways in which our organization has reacted to neighbourhood change, including immigration and gentrification.

My intention is that this research be of benefit to PARC. Towards this end, I am assembling a Research Direction and Support Group (RDSG). The RDSG will be a small committee of PARC members, staff and managers who will be responsible for helping me shape the direction of my research. As a participant in this this committee, you will have the opportunity to look at the data that I collect, engage in conversation about it, give me feedback about the project and help me determine how to communicate what results I find back to the organization.

I am writing this email to request staff and manager participants in this committee. As a staff or manager member, your first task will be to help me reach out to the community to fill the four PARC member committee spots. Once the committee is fully assembled, we will meet as a group no more than four times in the coming year. Meetings will last no more than two hours. There will be very little work for the committee outside of regularly scheduled meetings. All meetings will be conducted on your existing work hours, as per an agreement I have made with PARC’s Board of Directors.

As this is not a part of your regular work portfolio, participation is fully voluntary and you may withdraw from this process at any time with no penalties.

If you are interested in being a member of this committee, or have any questions you’d like me to answer, please get in touch with me at griffin.epstein@gmail.com or on my cellphone at (416) 333-9109. We will then arrange a short meeting to give us the chance to discuss the potential risks and benefits of this work.
Appendix D

Application Form for Member Participants in RDSG

Research Development and Support Group

Member Application Form

The Research Development and Support Group (RDSG) is a new committee designed to be a space for conversation about PARC’s history, present and future. As a group, the RDSG will ask questions about PARC, think and talk about PARC and develop presentations, reports and posters for the community to communicate our ideas.

The RDSG is an essential part of research that Griffin Epstein is doing for her PhD at the department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education at OISE / University of Toronto. Griffin will be looking at how PARC and Parkdale have changed over the years and how we, as the PARC community, think about, talk about and respond to that change. For the duration of this research, Griffin will be on a leave-of-absence from the drop-in. This means that she is currently not a drop-in worker.

The RDSG is looking for member representatives to work with two staff, one manager and the lead researcher. If you are interested, please fill out this application form and return it to any of the PARC staff.

The RDSG will be interviewing members on Friday, February 21st from 1:30 – 3:30 pm in Meeting Room 1 on the second floor at PARC. If you are interested in being a part of this group, you will have
to come to the interview. Please arrive at 1:30 to sign in and get an interview time.

Name:

Contact information:

How long have you been coming to PARC?

Have you ever been on a PARC committee? If so, which one?

Have you ever worked in a group before? If so, which one? How did it go?

Do you think you would enjoy having hard discussions with a group of other people? Why or why not?

What questions do you have about PARC? Do you want to know PARC’s history? Do you want to know about PARC’s funding? Do you want to know how we hire staff? Do you want to know why certain programs exist and others don’t?

Do you have any special skills, experiences or knowledge that you want us to know about?
Appendix E

RDSG Interview Process

RDSG – member-participant interviews

Friday, February 21st

Materials:

Interview questions (Griffin will distribute copies)

Physical numbers to hand-out (Griffin will generate)

Schedule:

12:45 pm – Griffin will make an announcement in the drop-in explaining the RDSG and indicating that interviews will begin at 1:30 pm

1:15 pm – Griffin will make a final announcement, reminding those people who are planning to be interviewed to come upstairs at 1:30 pm

1:30 – Current RDSG participant check-in. Reminder: RDSG participants can take breaks or opt out of certain interviews if need be. Interviews will be held concurrently – Griffin in one room, a PARC staff or manager in another.

1:40 – Assign numbers to members waiting for an interview. Give remaining numbers to receptionist to hand out as members arrive.

1:50 – 2:00 – Interviews 1 / 2

2:00 – 2:10 – Interviews 3 / 4

2:10 – 2:20 – Interviews 5 / 6

2:20 – 2:30 – Interviews 7 / 8

2:30 – 2:40 – Interviews 9 / 10

2:40 – 2:50 – Interviews 11 / 12

2:50 – 3:00 – Interviews 13 / 14

3:00 – 3:10 – Interviews 15 / 16
3:10 – 3:20 – Interviews 17 / 18

3:20 – 3:30 – Interviews 19 / 20

This schedule should allow for some flexibility. Some interviews may take slightly less than 10 minutes – some may take slightly more. Additional interviews will be scheduled if needed, to continue until 4:00 pm.

4:00 – 4:30pm – Current RDSG participants meet and choose four member participants.

4:30pm – interviewees informed of the outcome of their interview, either in-person or by phone. If people have left, arrangements should be made to follow-up. It will be important to let both those chosen and those not chosen know the outcome. Members who are not chosen should be provided with a gentle but honest explanation of why they were not chosen to be a part of the group and encouraged to participate in the one-on-one interviews which will be scheduled later in the project.

**Examples of why a member might not be chosen to participate:**

*They have been on many PARC committees* – we should explain to folks that we are prioritizing folks who may not have had the chance to serve on PARC committees in the past.

*They are a long-time member* – we should explain to folks that we’re looking for a diversity of relationships to PARC. This means that we can’t choose too many people who have been members for a long time – in some circumstances, to ensure that there are many different experiences represented on the team, we might need to choose new members over ones with a longer connection to PARC.

*They are a recent member* – see above – we have to be conscious of the make-up of the group, and if many recent members apply, we might need to prioritize folks with a longer connection to PARC.

*They are representative of the “mainstream” of PARC’s population* – again, it’s important to let folks know that we are looking for diversity in this group. In the past, committees have sometimes been homogeneously white, predominantly male or mostly middle-aged. We may have to let folks know that we’re focusing on creating a broad spread of identities and life experiences.

*They do not appear to want to work collaboratively in a group of this kind* - it’s possible that members who have never worked on a committee anywhere before will indicate to us in the interview, either verbally or in the way that they speak with us, that they are not interested or prepared to work with others in this particular way; in the course of the interview or on the
application, they may appear to have solely negative experiences working with others and predict that it will be negative to work with others, etc.

**Interview questions:**

How are you feeling today?

Can you explain the RDSG to me, as you understand it?

Do you have any questions about the RDSG that we can clarify now?

Do you have experience talking about ideas or emotions in groups of people? This can include committees at PARC or in your personal life, like with friends and family.

What is your favorite part of talking or working with others?

What is your least favorite part of talking or working with others?

Why do you want to be a part of the RDSG?

Can you tell us one or two issues or ideas that you would want to bring to the RDSG?

How do you think you would react if there was someone on the RDSG that you felt uncomfortable with?

How do you think you would react if someone on the RDSG said something that you really disagreed with or found upsetting?
Appendix F
Recruitment Email for Staff and Managers Interviews

Greetings,

I'm writing to ask if you would be interested in a one-on-one interview with me sometime in the next six months. As you may already know, I am not currently employed at PARC. I am on a leave of absence from all of my front-line duties. I am writing you in regards to research I am undertaking for my dissertation – I am a PhD student in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education at OISE/UT. I am, therefore, writing to you as a researcher only.

With the approval of the Board of Directors and under the direction of a PARC group called the RDSG, I am undertaking a study of PARC. In particular, I am interested in the ways that our organization has changed over the years. I am trying to develop a picture of how we have reacted to the profound demographic and social changes in our neighbourhood, with a focus on the stories we tell about immigration, gentrification and race.

Over the next few months, I will be conducting one-on-one interviews with people at various levels of the organization. I will be asking people questions about how they came to the organization, how they perceive the work that they do within it, and how they believe the organization has changed over the years.

I would like to invite you to participate in this project at a time and location of your choosing.

Though, as per my agreement with the Board of Directors, your interview will take place on your work hours, it is not understood as part of your work portfolio. Participation is totally voluntary. If you choose to participate, we will set up a short telephone or in-person pre-interview. Here, you can ask me questions about the project and I can give you a better sense of the consent process. This study also endeavours to be confidential. Towards this end, I will be giving all participants pseudonyms and referring to them by their job title alone.

If you are interested in meeting with me, please get in touch at this email, at griffin.epstein@mail.utoronto.ca or on my cellphone at (416) 333-9109.
Appendix G

Consent Form for External Partners and Local Residents

Stasis and Change: Interrogating neoliberalism, gentrification and race at the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre

Who I am and what the research is about:

My name is Griffin Epstein and I am a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education. I am also a person who identifies as mad – I have lived experience of the mental health system. For the past six years, I have been a front-line worker at the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC), a multi-service agency in the neighbourhood that provides social housing, runs a drop-in, conducts case management and outreach and offers social recreation programming to psychiatric survivors as well as homeless, under-housed and poor residents of Parkdale. At the moment, I am on a leave of absence from PARC. I am approaching you today strictly as a researcher.

I am conducting a study for my PhD thesis about PARC. My research focuses on the ways in which Parkdale has changed over the past 30 years and how – or whether – PARC has changed along with it. I am particularly interested in the stories that we tell about the organization. I am looking for how – or whether – race, colonization and gentrification appear in these stories. As a worker at PARC and a person with lived experience of the mental health system, I will be reflecting extensively on my own experiences, perceptions and beliefs. I will also be looking at PARC’s archive, analyzing policy documents, annual reports and other texts.

I’m interested in talking to people who may have heard of PARC but do not actively use PARC’s services. I am interested in what PARC means to the broader community. I would like to invite you to participate in this research by sharing your thoughts, feelings and opinion about PARC with me in a one-on-one interview.

What is involved in this study?

There are some requirements for participation in this study. You must be willing and able to participate in an hour-long conversation about PARC. You cannot be a PARC Board member or frequent volunteer. You do not have to be an English-speaker – I will happily provide interpretation and translation into your language if you would like to participate.

As a participant, you will be asked questions about your knowledge of PARC. For example, I will ask what you have heard about PARC; how you believe the organization fits into
the neighbourhood; what you think social services such as PARC do, etc. If you are a Parkdale resident, I may ask you how the neighbourhood has changed; what you think about whether social services in Parkdale have changed and what you imagine Parkdale will look like in ten years.

I would like to audio record interviews for later transcription. If you are not comfortable with this, I can take written notes instead. Either way, I will be happy to stop whenever you ask me to, so you can ask questions or say things ‘off the record.’

Your participation in this study is fully voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the interview at all. If you agree to the interview, you can refuse to answer any particular question. You can stop the interview at any time, either to take a break or to withdraw completely, without losing your compensation. You can complete the interview and later choose to withdraw any or all of the information you shared. If you choose to withdraw from the study completely, audio recording and interview transcription or notes from our conversation will be destroyed and all your data will be removed from the project.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of your information is my utmost concern. I will endeavour to protect the identities and personal information of all parties involved in this research. The only exception to this is my duty to report. If you tell me something that causes me to believe that a child is being abused or neglected or that you present an immediate harm to yourself or others, I am legally bound to alert the authorities. If we are using an interpreter, know that s/he has signed a confidentiality agreement. You may ask to see it at any time.

If you choose not to be recorded, I will re-copy my written notes after the interview, removing all identifiable information. I will then destroy my original notes. If you choose to be audio-recorded, I will transcribe the recording. All identifiable participant information – name, contact information, etc. – will be removed from the transcripts. Once I have transcribed your interview, the original audio will be destroyed. The transcribed data will only be kept on an encrypted USB memory key. This USB key will be stored locked drawer in my home office. For the duration of the project, only my supervisor and I will have access to the transcripts. If we are using an interpreter, s/he will have access to the transcript or notes only once after the interview – when we meet with you to review its contents. All remaining transcripts and notes will be destroyed five years after the completion of my research.

I will not be recording your name or signature at any point during this research. Once you and I feel totally satisfied that you understand this project and can willingly consent to it, I will indicate your verbal agreement to participate in my field notes. I will not use your name in that
note. I will not use your name at any point in this research. Instead, I will use a pseudonym throughout. This will ensure that you are completely unidentifiable to any/all authorities.

In the unlikely event that any of my research becomes of interest to a criminal proceeding, I want to assure you that I will resist any pressure to disclose anything, including police intimidation and subpoena. I will argue against disclosure using the Wigmore Criteria. There is precedent for this resistance in Canada and the U.S. If you have further questions on this, please feel free to ask me.

I will include portions of our interview in summaries of research, presentations to PARC, my final dissertation and, potentially, in future publications. I will give you the opportunity to see a draft of each of these pieces, so you can remove any information that potentially identifies you.

**What are the risks and benefits?**

There are some immediate benefits to participating in this project. You will have the opportunity to reflect upon and share your ideas, opinions and feelings about social services in Toronto and/or in Parkdale.

As an interviewee, you will be given the chance to see a research process first hand. You will be given the opportunity to discuss the design and intention of the research at length. This may be good information to have if you ever intend to participate in or undertake research projects of your own.

You will also be contributing to a scholarly project that attempts to bridge a gap in existing research. There is very little written about how social service agencies respond to neighbourhood change. It is my hope that this research will have a positive impact not only on PARC and Parkdale, but on other communities of scholars, policymakers, city planners and urban dwellers.

There are no physical risks associated with participating in this research. The legal risks are minimal. I have a duty to report reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect and/or any imminent danger to yourself or others. As mentioned, I will resist external pressure to disclose, including by subpoena. There are, however, some emotional and social risks.

During the course of our interview, we may discuss difficult issues. You may share ideas you feel strongly about. We may talk about people or experiences that you find triggering. There is, therefore, the risk that the interview will cause you some discomfort. I will do my best to create a safe environment for you to feel your way through anything that may arise. I will be happy to make any accommodations to ensure that the space where we hold our interview – a space that you choose – feels welcoming.
There is also a risk that you will feel uncomfortable with how you are portrayed in the research findings and/or the final dissertation. You may worry about how others will perceive you, if they recognize your voice in the research. I will do my best to minimize this risk by ensuring that you are completely anonymous.

**Compensation and costs**

All participants in the interview are offered an honorarium of $25 cash. You will not be asked to sign for this. You can choose to stop the interview at any time – or withdraw your information after the interview is completed – and still receive your money.

Managers, PARC staff and members of the external community are given an option with this honorarium. You may choose to receive it in cash on the day of your interview, or you may choose to re-invest it in the project. If you do, it will go towards offsetting the costs of interpreters and translators for those interviewees who do not speak English. You can indicate your choice on the day of the interview.

**Publications and Summary of Results**

The final dissertation and any publications that may come out of it will be made available to the broader community. I will be distributing large-print copies through PARC – I can meet with you to give you your copy, or email it to you. Once the thesis and any subsequent publications are available online, the link will be made available to you.

You will be contacted at various points throughout the process to look over and provide edits to your interview transcript. You also may ask for a progress report at any time.

**Contacts**

My supervisor for this study is Dr. Sherene Razack, a senior faculty in Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education at OISE. She can be contacted at any point if you have questions, comments or concerns. You can also contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273 at any time with questions you might have about your rights as a participant in this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Griffin Epstein or Sherene Razack

156 Shanly Street 252 Bloor Street W.
Toronto, ON M6H 1S9 Toronto, ON M5S
416-333-9109 416-978-0177

griffin.epstein@utoronto.ca sherene.razack@utoronto.ca
Appendix H

Consent Form for Current and Former Managers

Stasis and Change: Interrogating neoliberalism, gentrification and race at PARC

Who I am and what the research is about:

My name is Griffin Epstein and I am a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education. I am also a person with lived experience of the mental health system. You may know me as a worker - for the last six years, I have provided front-line services at the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC). Since November 2013, I have been on a leave of absence from that work. I’m approaching you today strictly as a researcher.

I am conducting a study for my PhD thesis about PARC. My research focuses on the ways Parkdale has changed over the past 30 years and how – or whether – PARC has changed along with it. I am particularly interested in the stories that we tell about the organization. I am looking for how – or whether – race, colonization, madness and gentrification appear in these stories. As a worker at PARC and a person with lived experience of the mental health system, I will be reflecting extensively on my own experiences, perceptions and beliefs. I will also be looking at PARC’s archive, analyzing policy documents, annual reports and other texts.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research by sharing your thoughts, feelings and opinion about PARC with me in a one-hour one-on-one interview.

What is involved in this study?

There are some requirements for participation in this study. You must have been in-role as a PARC employee for more than three months at some point over the last 33 years. You must be willing to share your thoughts, feelings and opinions on PARC’s past, present and future.

As a participant, you will be asked questions about your experiences at PARC. For example, I will ask you questions like – when were you hired at PARC (and in what capacity)? What do you think PARC does as an organization? What did you expect from the organization? Did it meet your expectations? How has Parkdale changed? How has PARC changed? Etc. I will come with a list of questions called an interview guide. The direction the interview ultimately takes, however, will be guided by you – your responses will lead our conversation.
If possible, I would like to audio record interviews for later transcription. However, if you are not comfortable with this, I can take written notes. Whichever option you prefer, I will be happy to stop the interview at any point, so you can ask me questions or say things ‘off the record.’

Your participation in this study is fully voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the interview at all. If you agree to the interview, you can refuse to answer any particular question. You can stop the interview at any time, either to take a break or to withdraw completely, without losing your compensation. You can complete the interview and later choose to withdraw any or all of the information you shared. If you choose to withdraw from the study completely, audio recording and interview transcription will be destroyed and all your data will be removed from the project.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of your information is my utmost concern. I will not disclose anything you say to me during or outside of an interview to any other PARC manager, staff or member. The only exception to this is my legal obligation – if you tell me anything that might cause me to have reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect or imminent harm to yourself or others, I am duty bound to disclose to authorities. Otherwise, I will endeavour to protect the identities and personal information of all parties involved in this research.

If choose not to be audio-taped, I will re-write my notes using a pseudonym and destroy the originals. If you consent to be audio taped, I will transcribe your interview soon after we complete it. In the transcribed data, I will remove all names and immediately identifying personal information. Once I have transcribed your interview, the audio recording of it will be immediately destroyed. The transcribed data will only be kept on an encrypted USB memory key. This USB key will be stored locked drawer in my home office. For the duration of the project, only my supervisor and I will have access to the transcripts. Five years after I complete my dissertation, I will destroy all remaining materials.

I will not be recording your name or signature at any point during this research. Once you and I feel totally satisfied that you understand this project and can willingly consent to it, I will indicate your verbal agreement to participate in my field notes. I will not use your name in that note. I will not use your name at any point in this research. Instead, I will use a pseudonym throughout. This will ensure that you are completely unidentifiable to any/all authorities.

In the unlikely event that any of my research becomes of interest to a criminal proceeding, I want to assure you that I will resist any pressure to disclose anything, including police intimidation and subpoena. I will argue against disclosure using the Wigmore Criteria.
There is precedent for this resistance in Canada and the U.S. If you have further questions on this, please feel free to ask me.

I will include anonymized portions of our interview in summaries of research, presentations to PARC, my final dissertation and, potentially, in future publications. I will give you the opportunity to see a draft of each of these pieces, so you can remove any information that potentially identifies you.

**What are the risks and benefits?**

There are some immediate benefits to participating in this project. You will have the opportunity to reflect upon and share your ideas, opinions and feelings about PARC in a way that extends beyond your current role. Your voice will be included in a research report that is designed to have an impact on PARC’s future programming and development. In this way, you will have the opportunity to participate in organizational change.

As an interviewee, you will be given the chance to see a research process first hand. You will be given the opportunity to discuss the design and intention of the research at length. This may be good information to have if you ever intend to participate in or undertake research projects of your own.

You will also be contributing to a scholarly project that attempts to bridge a gap in existing research. There is very little written about how social service agencies respond to neighbourhood change. It is my hope that this research will have a positive impact not only on PARC and Parkdale, but on other communities of scholars, policymakers, city planners and urban dwellers.

There are no physical risks associated with this project. The legal risks are minimal. I have a duty to report reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect and/or any imminent danger to yourself or others. As mentioned, I will resist external pressure to disclose, including by subpoena. There are, however, some emotional and social risks.

During the course of our interview, we may discuss difficult issues. You may share ideas you feel strongly about. We may talk about people or experiences that you find triggering. There is, therefore, the risk that the interview will cause you some discomfort. I will do my best to create a safe environment for you to feel your way through anything that may arise. I will be happy to make any accommodations to ensure that the space where we hold our interview – a space that you choose – feels welcoming. I will be sure to remind you that you can stop the interview at any time.

There is also a risk that you will feel uncomfortable with how you are portrayed in the research findings and/or the final dissertation. You may worry about how others will perceive
you, if they recognize your voice in the research. I will do my best to minimize this risk by ensuring that you are completely anonymous.

**Compensation and costs**

If you are a current PARC manager, you will be compensated on your work hours or be able to claim them as lieu time. If you are a former manager, you have the option to receive $25 compensation for your interview or to re-invest this money into the project. If you choose to receive the compensation, it will be paid to you in cash on the day of your interview. If you choose to re-invest, the money will be kept to help pay for member participants and offset the cost of translation and interpretation services. You may choose to withdraw from the research at any point and still receive your compensation.

**Publications and Summary of Results**

Research results will be made available to PARC’s community through various presentations in the drop-in and easy-to-read materials which will be available at the front desk. None of these materials will contain anything that might identify individual participants.

The final dissertation and any publications that may come out of it will be made available to the broader community. Large-print copies will be available at PARC. Once the thesis and any subsequent publications are available online, the link will be made available to the PARC community.

You will be contacted at various points throughout the process to look over and provide edits to your interview transcript. You also may ask for a progress report at any time.

**Contacts**

My supervisor for this study is Dr. Sherene Razack, a senior faculty in Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education at OISE. She can be contacted at any point if you have questions, comments or concerns. You can also contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273 at any time with questions you might have about your rights as a participant in this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Griffin Epstein or Sherene Razack

156 Shanly Street 252 Bloor Street W.
Toronto, ON M6H 1S9 Toronto, ON M5S

416-333-9109 416-978-0177

griffin.epstein@utoronto.ca sherene.razack@utoronto.ca
Appendix I

Consent Form for Current and Former Staff

Stasis and Change: Interrogating Race, Neoliberalism and Gentrification at the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre

Who I am and what the research is about:

My name is Griffin Epstein and I am a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education. I am also a person with lived experience of the mental health system. You know me as a worker - for the last six years, I have provided front-line services at the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC). Since November 2013, I have been on a leave of absence from that work. I’m approaching you today strictly as a researcher.

I am conducting a study for my PhD thesis about PARC. My research focuses on the ways Parkdale has changed over the past 30 years and how – or whether – PARC has changed along with it. I am particularly interested in the stories that we tell about the organization. I am looking for how – or whether – race, language, power and gentrification appear in these stories. As a worker at PARC and a person with lived experience of the mental health system, I will be reflecting extensively on my own experiences, perceptions and beliefs. I will also be looking at PARC’s archive, analyzing policy documents, annual general reports and other texts.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research by sharing your thoughts, feelings and opinions about PARC with me in a one-hour one-on-one interview.

What is involved in this study?

There are some requirements for participation in this study. You must have been a staff in some capacity – peer worker, relief worker, part-time or full-time – for at least three months at some point in the last 33 years. You must be willing to share your thoughts, feelings and opinions on your work at PARC.

As a participant, you will be asked questions about your experiences at PARC. For example, I will ask when you were hired at PARC; what you expected your job to be like; how the organization did or did not meet your expectations; what you think social services do in the neighbourhood; how the neighbourhood has changed; how the organization has changed; how those changes have been impactful and what your hopes, dreams, fears and desires are for the future of PARC.
If possible, I would like to audio record interviews for later transcription. However, if you are not comfortable with this, I can take written notes. Whichever option you prefer, I will be happy to stop the interview at any point, so you can ask me questions or say things ‘off the record.’

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Remember: I am undertaking this interview as a researcher and not as a staff. Whether or not you choose to participate will have no impact on your employment, and nothing you say can affect your job at PARC. You can refuse to participate in the interview at all. If you agree to the interview, you can refuse to answer any particular question. You can stop the interview at any time, either to take a break or to withdraw completely, without losing your compensation. You can complete the interview and later choose to withdraw any or all of the information you shared. If you choose to withdraw from the study completely, audio recording and interview transcription will be destroyed and all your data will be removed from the project.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of your information is my utmost concern. Everything you say to me will be held in the strictest confidence. The only exception to this is my duty to report. If you disclose anything to me that might cause me to suspect child abuse/neglect or an imminent danger of harm to yourself or others, I will be legally bound to report this to the authorities. Otherwise, I will protect the identities and personal information of all parties involved in this research.

If choose not to be audio-taped, I will re-write my notes using a pseudonym and destroy the originals. If you consent to be audio taped, I will transcribe and code your interview soon after we complete it. In the transcribed data, I will remove your name and any immediately identifying personal information. Once I have transcribed your interview, the audio recording of it will be immediately destroyed. The transcribed data will only be kept on an encrypted USB memory key. This USB key will be stored locked drawer in my home office. For the duration of the project, only my supervisor and I will have access to the transcripts. Five years after I complete my dissertation, I will destroy all remaining materials.

I will not be recording your name or signature at any point during this research. Once you and I feel totally satisfied that you understand this project and can willingly consent to it, I will indicate your verbal agreement to participate in my field notes. I will not use your name in that note. I will not use your name at any point in this research. Instead, I will use a pseudonym throughout. This will ensure that you are completely unidentifiable.

In the unlikely event that any of my research becomes of interest to a criminal proceeding, I want to assure you that I will resist any pressure to disclose anything, including
police intimidation and subpoena. I will argue against disclosure using the Wigmore Criteria. There is precedent for this resistance in Canada and the U.S. If you have further questions on this, please feel free to ask me.

I will include portions of our interview in summaries of research, presentations to PARC, my final dissertation and, potentially, in future publications. I will give you the opportunity to see a draft of each of these pieces, so you can remove any information that potentially identifies you.

What are the risks and benefits?

There are some immediate benefits to participating in this project. You will have the opportunity to reflect upon and share your ideas, opinions and feelings about PARC. Your voice will be included in a research report that is designed to have an impact on PARC’s future programming and development. In this way, you will have the opportunity to participate in organizational change.

As an interviewee, you will be given the chance to see a research process first hand. You will be given the opportunity to discuss the design and intention of the research at length. This may be good information to have if you ever intend to participate in or undertake research projects of your own.

You will also be contributing to a scholarly project that attempts to bridge a gap in existing research. There is very little written about how social service agencies respond to neighbourhood change. It is my hope that this research will have a positive impact not only on PARC and Parkdale, but on other communities of scholars, policymakers, city planners and urban dwellers.

There are no physical risks associated with participating in this research. The legal risks are minimal. I have a duty to report reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect and/or any imminent danger to yourself or others. As mentioned, I will resist external pressure to disclose, including by subpoena. There are, however, some emotional and social risks.

During the course of our interview, we may discuss difficult issues. You may share ideas you feel strongly about. We may talk about people or experiences that you find triggering. There is, therefore, the risk that the interview will cause you some discomfort. I will do my best to create a safe environment for you to feel your way through anything that may arise. I will be happy to make any accommodations to ensure that the space where we hold our interview – a space that you choose – feels welcoming. I will be sure to remind you that you can stop the interview at any time. I will also remind you that you can choose to see PARC’s staff therapist.
after the interview – he will not be informed that you, specifically, are being interviewed, but he will have been apprised that he may receive calls from people involved in the process.

There is also a risk that you will feel uncomfortable with how you are portrayed in the research findings and/or the final dissertation. You may worry about how others will perceive you, if they recognize your voice in the research. I will do my best to minimize this risk by ensuring that you are anonymous.

Compensation and costs

If you are a current staff, your participation in this project will occur on your work hours. You will, therefore, be compensated at your standard hourly rate or receive lieu time.

If you are a former staff, you will be given the option to receive a $25 honorarium for the interview or to re-invest these funds in the project. If you choose to receive the honorarium, it will be provided to you in cash at the time of your interview. If you choose to re-invest the funds, they will go towards offsetting the cost of translation and interpretation for interviews with people who do not speak English. You can decide this on the day of your interview, or let me know beforehand.

Publications and Summary of Results

Research results will be made available to PARC’s community through various presentations in the drop-in and easy-to-read materials which will be available at the front desk. None of these materials will contain anything that might identify individual participants.

The final dissertation and any publications that may come out of it will be made available to the broader community. Large-print copies will be available at PARC. Once the thesis and any subsequent publications are available online, the link will be made available to the PARC community.

You will be contacted at various points throughout the process to look over and provide edits to your interview transcript. You also may ask for a progress report at any time.

Contacts

My supervisor for this study is Dr. Sherene Razack, a senior faculty in Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education at OISE. She can be contacted at any point if you have questions, comments or concerns. You can also contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273 at any time with questions you might have about your rights as a participant in this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:
Griffin Epstein or Sherene Razack

156 Shanly Street 252 Bloor Street W.
Toronto, ON M6H 1S9 Toronto, ON M5S

416-333-9109 416-978-0177

griffin.epstein@utoronto.ca sherene.razack@utoronto.ca
Appendix J

Recruitment Posters for Member Interviewees

Do you live, work or access services in Parkdale?

*  

Do you ever go to the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC)?

*  

Would you be interested in sharing your thoughts, feelings and opinions about PARC and/or the Parkdale neighbourhood?

*  

If so, I would like to interview you!

*  

You will receive $25 for one hour of your time

My name is Griffin Epstein and I am a PhD candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education. I am interested in talking to PARC members, as well as service users from other agencies.

If you choose to participate, you will meet with me for an hour-long, one-on-one interview at a location of your choice. This study is confidential. You will be given an opportunity to edit and amend your interview statement after they have been transcribed. You may withdraw at any time. You may choose to remove any or all of your information. If you’re interested, please get in touch with me at: (416) 333-9109 or griffin.epstein@mail.utoronto.ca
ཡིད་ཀྱི་ཁོ་ནང་གི་དབུ་བོ་བོད་ལྗོངས། འབྲུག་པ་ཞིག་བཅོད་པའི་ཁྱབ་གྱི་ཞིག་

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ཡིད་ཀྱི་ཁོ་ནང་གི་དབུ་བོ་བོད་ལྗོངས་ འབྲུག་པ་ཞིག་བཅོད་པའི་ཁྱབ་

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ཡིད་ཀྱི་ཁོ་ནང་གི་དབུ་བོ་བོད་ལྗོངས་ འབྲུག་པ་ཞིག་བཅོད་པའི་ཁྱབ་
为讲国语和广东话的社区会员召开的会议

您可以参加PARC的会议与朋友就餐，交谈，欣赏音乐或做义工/工作吗？

您愿意为提高PARC的服务而设计的研究项目讲述您的经历吗？

如果愿意， 请加入我们，与我们共同享受美味的点心，咖啡，苏打水，并获得如何参加的信息：

星期六，九月27日

下午1点—3点

PARC 二楼 愈合中心

会议由研究人员主持并提供翻译员。

现场提供讲英文的儿童看护人员。

Researcher: Griffin Epstein – griffin.epstein@gmail.com / (416) 333-9109

Supervisor: Dr. Sherene Razack Institution: Social Justice Education Department, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto
Spotkanie dla POLSKO - Mówiących Członków Społeczności

*Czy odwiedzają Państwo centrum doraźne PARC by zjeść posiłek, porozmawiać ze znajomymi, pograć na instrumentach lub w ramach pracy/wolontariatu?

*Czy byłiby Państwo gotowi opowiedzieć o swoich doświadczeniach w celu badania naukowego mającego za zadanie poprawić usługi w PARC?

Jeśli tak, to proszę się z nami spotkać na kawę, oranżadę i pyszne przekąski by uzyskać informacje o tym jak można się zaangażować?

sobota, 15 listopada   
13:00 - 15:00
PARC, 2 piętro, Centrum Zdrowia (*Healing Centre*)

Spotkanie z badaczem naukowym odbywa się za pomocą tłumacza. Opieka nad dziećmi w języku angielskim zapewniona na miejscu. Żetony TTC dostępne dla potrzebujących.
Találkozó - a közösség magyar nyelvű tagjai számára

*
Be szoktál nézni a PARC-ra, hogy egyél egy kicsit, barátokkal beszéljgess, zenélj vagy önkéntes munkát végezz/dolgozzál?

*
Hajlandó lennél beszélgetni tapasztalataidról egy olyan kutatási Projekthez, amelynek célja, hogy a PARC szolgáltatásokat fejlessze?

*
Ha igen, kérjük csatlakozz hozzánk finom harapnivalóra, kávéra, üdítőre és információt kapsz arról, hogyan vehetsz ebben részt:

Szombat, Október 18-a
Délután 1-től 3-ig

PARC 2. emeleti Gyógyító Központ

A találkozó a kutatóval, és egy tolmáccsal lesz megtartva.
Angol nyelvű gyermekfelügyelet biztosított a helyszínen.
TTC tokeneket kaphatnak azok, akik igénylik.
Appendix K

Consent Form for Members

This form is for your information. Please keep it. If you have any questions about it, feel free to ask me.

*Stasis and Change: Interrogating neoliberalism, gentrification and race at the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre*

Who I am and what the research is about:

My name is Griffin Epstein and I am a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education. I am also a person with lived experience of the mental health system. You know me as a worker - for the last six years, I have been doing front-line work at the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC). However, since November 2013, I have been on a leave of absence. I am approaching you now strictly as a researcher. This means that anything you say to me during my research cannot and will not affect the services you receive at PARC.

I am conducting a study for my PhD thesis about the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC). My research focuses on the ways in which Parkdale has changed over the past 30 years and how – or whether – PARC has changed along with it. I am particularly interested in the stories that we tell when we talk about PARC. What do we say? What *don’t* we say? Do we talk about race? About immigration? Do we talk about the ways in which all the new stores, bars and restaurants in the area have changed what it feels like to come to the drop-in or attend programs at PARC?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research by sharing your thoughts, feelings and opinions about these things me in an hour long interview. If you speak English, this interview will be one-on-one. If an interpreter is necessary, they will also be present.
What is involved in this study?

There are some requirements for participation in this study. First, you must have come to the drop-in, or used case-management services, more than once in the past 33 years. You be able to understand the basics of this project and consent to the interview. You do not have to be an English-speaker – I will happily provide interpretation and translation into your language if you would like to participate.

I want the interview to feel safe. Because of this, I will ask you not to participate if you are feeling very unwell for any reason. We can discuss and decide together what that means. Unfortunately, you will not be able to participate if you think of me as your main worker at PARC.

As a participant, you will be asked questions about your experiences at PARC. For example, I will ask when you started coming to PARC, what you expected from the organization, how the organization did or did not meet your expectations, what you think social services do in the neighbourhood, how the neighbourhood has changed, how the organization has changed, how those changes have been impactful and what your hopes, dreams, fears and desires are for the future of PARC. Before the interview, I will meet with you to discuss what the interview will be like. At this time, I will offer you a copy of the interview guide, so you can reflect on it before we speak. I will be open, however, to changing the direction of the interview as we go – you will lead our conversation.

I would like to audio record our interview. If you do not feel comfortable with this, I will take written notes instead. Either way, I am happy to stop the interview at any time. You will have the chance to ask or tell me anything you’d like “off the record.”

Your participation in this study is fully voluntary. You can say “no” to being interviewed. If you agree to the interview, you can refuse to answer any of the questions. You can stop the interview at any time, either to take a break or to withdraw completely, without losing your compensation. You can complete the interview and later choose to withdraw any or all of the information you shared. If you choose to withdraw from the study completely, the audio recording and the
written copy of our conversation or the notes I have taken will be destroyed and all your data will be removed from the project.

Confidentiality

I am not currently a PARC staff. The interpreter is not a PARC staff. Everything you say to either or both of us is confidential. We will not tell anyone else at PARC anything you say. Nothing you say will impact the services you receive at PARC or in Parkdale.

The only exception to this confidentiality is the legal duty to disclose. If you tell me or the interpreter anything that causes us to believe that a child is being neglected or abused or that you are in danger of harming yourself or others, we will be required to call the police. Otherwise, everything you say is completely confidential.

If you choose not to be audio taped, I will re-write my notes from our conversation as soon as the interview is over. At this time I will remove all names and identifying information. I will then destroy the original notes. If you choose to be audio taped, I will transcribe the interview. All identifiable information – your name, your contact information, the details of any story you tell – will be removed from the transcripts. I will write up and create a code for your interview soon after we complete it. Once I have written up your interview, the audio recording of it will be immediately destroyed. The written version of our conversation will only be kept on an encrypted USB memory key. This USB key will be stored locked drawer in my home office. For the duration of the project, only my supervisor and I will have regular access to the transcripts. The interpreter will see the transcripts or notes only once – when we meet with you to verify their contents. All transcriptions and notes related to our interview will be destroyed five years after my research ends.

In order to protect your identity, I will assign you a pseudonym, or fake name. I will not be recording your real name or signature at any point during this research. Once you and I feel totally satisfied that you understand this project and can willingly consent to it, I will indicate your verbal agreement to participate in my field notes. I will not use your name in that note. I will not use your name at
any point in this research. Instead, I will use a fake name throughout. This will ensure that you are completely unidentifiable to any/all authorities.

In the unlikely event that any of my research becomes of interest to a criminal proceeding, I want to assure you that I will resist any pressure to disclose your personal information, including police intimidation and subpoena. I will argue against disclosure using the Wigmore Criteria. There is precedent for this resistance in Canada and the U.S. If you have further questions on this, please feel free to ask me.

I will include portions of our interview in summaries of research, presentations to PARC, my final dissertation and, potentially, in future publications. I will give you the opportunity to see a draft of each of these pieces, so you can remove any information that potentially identifies you.

What are the risks and benefits?

There are some immediate benefits to participating in this project. You will have the opportunity to reflect upon and share your ideas, opinions and feelings about PARC. Your voice will be included in a research report that is designed to have an impact on PARC’s future programming and development. In this way, you will have the opportunity to participate in organizational change.

As an interviewee, you will be given the chance to see a research process first hand. You will be given the opportunity to discuss the design and intention of the research at length. This may be good information to have if you ever intend to participate in or undertake research projects of your own.

You will also be contributing to an important research project. There is very little written about how social service agencies respond to neighbourhood change. It is my hope that the final product will have a positive impact not only on PARC and Parkdale, but on other neighbourhoods and maybe even other cities.

There are no physical risks associated with participating in this research. The legal risks are minimal. I have a duty to report reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect and/or any imminent danger to yourself or others. As mentioned, I will
resist external pressure to disclose, including by subpoena. There are, however, some emotional and social risks.

During the course of our interview, we may discuss difficult issues. You may share ideas you feel strongly about. We may talk about people or experiences that you find triggering. There is, therefore, the risk that the interview will cause you some discomfort. I will do my best to create a safe environment for you to feel your way through anything that may arise. I will be happy to make any accommodations to ensure that the space where we hold our interview – a space that you choose – feels welcoming. I will be sure to remind you that you can stop the interview at any time. I will conduct interviews only during PARC’s open hours and will be sure that there are appropriate community workers to support you after the interview, if you need to debrief. I have made contact with local agencies that provide counseling services in other languages, if this is something you might need or want.

There is also a risk that you will feel uncomfortable with how you are portrayed in the research findings and/or the final dissertation. You may worry about how others will perceive you, if they recognize your voice in the research. I will do my best to minimize this risk by ensuring that you are completely anonymous.

**Compensation and costs**

You will be offered an honorarium of $25 in cash for an hour-long interview. If you decide to stop the interview at any time – or if you decide later to withdraw your information – you will still receive your money.

**Publications and Summary of Results**

Research results will be made available to PARC’s community through various presentations in the drop-in and easy-to-read materials which will be available at the front desk. None of these materials will contain anything that might identify individual participants.
The final dissertation and any publications that may come out of it will be made available to the broader community. Large-print copies will be available at PARC. Once the thesis and any subsequent publications are available online, the link will be made available to the PARC community.

You will be contacted at various points throughout the process to look over and provide edits to your interview transcript. You also may ask for a progress report at any time.

Contacts

My supervisor for this study is Dr. Sherene Razack, a senior faculty in Humanities, Social Sciences and Social Justice Education at OISE. She can be contacted at any point if you have questions, comments or concerns. You can also contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273 at any time with questions you might have about your rights as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Griffin Epstein
156 Shanly Street
Toronto, ON M6H 1S9
416-333-9109
griffin.epstein@mail.utoronto.ca

Sherene Razack, OISE
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6
416-978-0177
sherene.razack@utoronto.ca
Appendix L
Confidentiality Agreement for Interpreters

Confidentiality Agreement

Name of interpreter/translator _____________________________________

As an interpreter or translator for the research project *Stasis and Change: Interrogating neoliberalism, gentrification and race at the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre*, I am bound by this confidentiality agreement. Outside of my legal obligation to report suspicion of child abuse/neglect or imminent harm to/from a participant, everything that I hear, read, translate/interpret or write in the context of this study is confidential. I am under obligation to respect and keep the privacy of the participants.

Therefore, in consideration of my engagement as a translator or interpreter, I agree

1. I will not reveal or use information about or disclosed by a research subject gathered in the process of outreach, pre-screening conversation, interview, transcription or follow-up conversation.

2. That confidential data includes personal information such as names, contact information, legal/medical status and details of any personal history or story disclosed about or by the participant.

3. All audio-tapes, notes and translated documents will remain the property of the primary researcher.

4. At the time I terminate my relationship with the project for whatever reason, I am still bound to keep confidentiality.

Signature _______________________________ Date ______________

Witness Signature __________________________ Date ______________
Appendix M
Interview Scripts

**Members:**

Is there anything we should start with? Do you have questions? Are there dynamics between us that we should address?

What is PARC?

How long have you been coming to PARC?

What first brought you to PARC?

What do you get from PARC?

Why do you come to PARC?

How often do you come to PARC?

What kinds of services does PARC offer?

Have you been able to communicate with any staff at PARC?

What was your impression of PARC before you came?

Has your sense of what PARC is or does changed since you arrived?

Has PARC changed since you first came?

Who is a PARC member? Are you a PARC member?

Are you getting what you need from PARC?

What would you change about PARC if you could?

What would you never change about PARC?

Do you feel like you are a member of PARC’s community?

What kinds of services would you like to see PARC offer?
Have you interacted with PARC staff?

What do you think of PARC staff?

What do PARC staff do?

What is the role of members in the organization?

Do members have a voice in the organization?

Do you feel your voice is heard at PARC?

Tell me about Parkdale.

Please describe your sense of the Parkdale neighbourhood before you came to PARC.

Has Parkdale changed since you first came?

What is PARC’s relationship to Parkdale?

What is Parkdale’s relationship to PARC?

Who is PARC’s community?

Has PARC’s community changed?

What is the future of PARC?

What is the future of Parkdale?

**Staff / Managers:**

Is there anything we should start with? Do you have questions? Are there dynamics between us that we should address?

What is PARC?

How long have you been at PARC?

What roles have you held at PARC?

What brought you to PARC?
What was your impression of PARC before you came?

Has your sense of what PARC is or does changed since you arrived?

Tell me a bit about PARC’s history.

Has PARC changed since you first came?

Who is a PARC member?

What is the role of members in the organization?

Who is a PARC worker?

What does a PARC worker do?

Tell me about “boundaries.”

How do you define oppression?

How do you define anti-oppression?

Is PARC an anti-oppressive organization?

Is there oppression at PARC?

How do you feel your voice is heard at PARC?

Tell me about Parkdale.

Please describe your sense of the Parkdale neighbourhood before you came to PARC

Has Parkdale changed since you first came?

What is PARC’s relationship to Parkdale?

What is Parkdale’s relationship to PARC?

Who is PARC’s community?

Has PARC’s community changed?

What is the future of PARC?

What is the future of Parkdale?
How did it feel being asked to do an interview about PARC?

How did it feel actually talking about PARC?

Is there anything you wish I had asked? Anything you wish I hadn’t asked?