Negotiating Subjectivities Through Literature: Anticolonial Counternarrative Fiction Book Clubs and Their Possibilities

by

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

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Abstract

“Tired of reading straight, racist, colonial fiction?... Want to read meaningful anti-colonial fiction that disrupts racism on Turtle Island?” This is the call I put out to engage participants in this anticolonial book club research project. Reading two books together, I asked: How do five racialized women and one Indigenous woman negotiate their subjectivities during processes of reading anticolonial fiction? This research question was the aim of the project, but the anticolonial political commitments are at the foundation of the anticolonial feminist literacy theoretical framework and feminist Deleuzian methodology used. As a queer, white, settler researcher and educator, I created the project with a desire-based lens, in order to focus on the subversion, persistence, and thriving in the feminist anticolonial space. I recruited the six women with two main goals: examine how reading anticolonial fiction can help facilitate the negotiation of subjectivities and examine how reading fiction that is not white settler colonial in nature can create generative spaces for people to thrive. Using the feminist Deleuzian methodological framework through the anticolonial feminist literacy theoretical lens allowed me to focus on the hot spots of the data that arose in the book club conversations, one-on-one meetings, and reading journals. Focusing on these hot spots, or what ‘glowed,’ I explain how reading and language are embodied processes and allowed one participant to continue becoming bilingual-immigrant-
racialized-woman in ways that resist molar/static understandings of her subject positions and a more liveable life. Focusing on a second hot spot, I explain how reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction enabled a space for deep self-reflection which helped the participants build trust in their subject positions and experiences of marginalization, which allowed them to create a new consciousness outside of white settler colonial discourses. In the last data chapter, I explain how this anticolonial book club created an anticolonial community of care to walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives through feminist solidarity and horizontal comradeship. Walking alongside Indigenous resurgence is always contextual, but this research project shows one way in which this is possible in a non-reactionary, productive way.
Dedication

For my nieces.

You continue to teach me so much about myself and the world.

My life’s work is for you.
Acknowledgments

My sincere appreciation must first go to the women who joined this book club. Thank you for your time, dedication, and input. You have taught me so much and I am so thankful to have found lifelong friends with you. Aadhya – I always loved hearing you speak. Your wise take on the world and compassion are inspiring. Carolina – Your passion for this work is contagious. I look up to you and your passion and action in social justice education. Kiara – I feel like we were sisters in another life. You teach me through your honesty and self-reflection and care. Min-seo – You have taught me so much. I’m so happy to be friends with you and to continue learning with you. Samantha – You push me to be more outgoing and free. I feel thankful to share this journey with you and continue to learn from your excitement, joy, and passion. Thuy – I am sorry that we lost contact and I hope you feel free to reconnect anytime. You taught me so much and pushed my thinking throughout the project. I cannot thank you six women enough for contributing not only to the research and the dissertation, but to each other’s lives and my own life and research journey.

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Chapter 1: An Introduction

It always comes back to sexuality.
I am not just my sexuality
I am me.

Try to fit me into your box
and I will

\[ \text{e x p l o d e.} \]

Internal conflict
belonging or not
Becoming

\[ \text{m e.} \]

Whatever that means.

Why can we not just be.
definitions
structures
‘supposed to be’s’

\[ \text{g a p s} \]

What about the
indescribable differences
sameness
and in betweens.

I am not just my sexuality. I am me.

With the
internal conflict
belonging or not
Becoming

\[ \text{m e.} \]

Fluid boundaries

\[ \text{f l u i d w a n t s and} \]

\[ \text{f l u i d n e e d s.} \]

To not define who I am.
To be

\[ \text{j u s t m e.} \]

Something of my own design.
The only way I can be

\[ \text{m e.} \]
Above is one of the first poems I wrote in my adult life. Created for a ‘queer’ group of educators and teacher candidates I was facilitating, the autobiographical poem was a healing process for me which I shared with the group. Other group members shared short stories, poetry, and other forms of art to share parts of who they are. This was the point in my graduate school career where my research started to shift in a very different way. This new direction of research included a shift in my thinking towards the importance of the many parts of people’s lives that cannot be pulled apart and are interconnected and constitutive of the people, places, and affect we are continuously immersed in. Writing poetry has helped me through many difficult times and I bring it into this dissertation, although making my self\(^1\) vulnerable, as it has been closely linked through my journey of self-reflection and research.

*i plant the seeds*

*and take special care*

*as i wait*

*for this new beginning*

- poem written in March 2017

The Journey That Helped to Lead Me Here

In an original draft of this dissertation, I had written an entire chapter about my self: The Autoethnography of Shawna. The almost forty pages explained my journey from childhood to adulthood with fiction and non-fiction, and how these reading experiences have led me to the research through the lens or theoretical framework I use in this dissertation. It also interweaved personal explorations of how my life circumstances, relationships, and battles with mental health and addiction impacted the way I saw my self and the research. These are all important to me in my journey; however, the goal of this dissertation is to highlight the experiences of the women of colour and Indigenous woman that were part of this project, not my own. The reason why I worked with women of colour and an Indigenous woman in particular, explained much more in detail throughout the dissertation, is simply because I do not want to centre a white experience. There is much research and conversations about white experiences. Removing the autoethnography chapter that I had written is a political choice I have made to ensure that the

\(^1\) Throughout this dissertation, I choose to separate the ‘self’ from ‘my,’ ‘our,’ or ‘them.’ I do this intentionally to call into attention the ways that the ‘self’ is comprised of not just ‘my’ version of my self that continues becoming and is always unstable, but the way that these ‘selves’ are in constant negotiation which is impacted by how one is seen (Coloma, 2008).
goal of this dissertation remains to examine the ways the women a part of this research project negotiate their subjectivities while reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction and how they subvert white settler colonial discourse. What led me to this project is relevant and I will share details I think are especially significant, however I will take up less space in order to focus on the participants’ instead of my own journey or ‘confession.’

The journey of this particular research study has been an interesting one. It is important to note the various ways in which my experiences have shaped how I arrived at and conducted this research. I came to this research project after many years of unease. I was uneasy with the white settler colonial discourse that inundated my life, but I couldn’t label it that way until I was part way through my doctoral studies. However, it was much earlier that this unease began. Reflecting on my secondary school experiences, I remember feeling uneasy about the literature we were reading. I couldn’t explain it then, but I disengaged because I couldn’t relate to the characters. This feeling of unease, which was based on my non-stereotypical female-gender identity, non-normative sexuality, and working-class experience is where both my disengagement, as well as unease and questioning started. In my secondary school life, I proclaimed that, “I don’t read,” when people asked me about what novels I had read or was reading. While I was in high school, I was not reflective of my gender, sexuality, working class status, or experiences of addiction and often tried to ‘fit in,’ so these statements of rejecting reading were never more than a simple statement – or so I thought.

Although I had sexual and romantic experiences with women in high school, I had the privilege of not being ‘outed’ as I conformed to a normative, white feminine external appearance. When I did push the boundaries of my gender expression, it was seen as a fun or cool ‘tomboy’ expression. I pushed the boundaries of gender only enough to not be seen as ‘Other.’ Whether subconsciously or consciously I don’t know, but I knew I had to conform to the white settler colonial discourse and this discourse that is constitutive of capitalism taught me that I could not work at a factory like my parents and could not quit school at 14 like my sister. My ability to hide my sexuality and ‘fit in’ was available to me as a white, cisgender woman and I was able to hide these parts of my self and my struggles with addiction and mental health because of this. As I describe in more detail in Chapter Five, putting into words experiences outside of the norm may have helped me understand that my gender, sexuality, class, and addiction were not seen as ‘favourable,’ and that I was hiding these aspects of my self. If I had
read novels about characters with similar subject positions and experiences of marginalization, perhaps I could have gained more trust in my self and my subjectivities at a younger age.

In the first year of the PhD degree, I realized I struggled with addiction and mental health issues, just as many members of my family did/do. LGBT fiction was one thing that helped me become sober, as it allowed me to escape my everyday reality in a healthy way. Some of the novels I read were very close to my own subject positions and experiences with my sexuality. I felt validated and free because I had a ‘model’ of difference. This putting into words the subject positions I had not yet really come to terms with, allowed me to realize it was possible to leave my relationship of 8 years with a cis-gender man and still be okay. Reading fiction helped me fight my addiction because it was a different form of escape. Reflecting on this a few years later allowed me to reaffirm how important fiction has been to my life when it represented parts of my subject positions and experiences of marginalization.

What brought me to this research has a lot to do with not only my own subject positions, but that of my best friend and chosen family/sister, Wat^hiine and later her children. Wat^hiine is Haudenosaunee, Oneida of the Bear Clan. Meeting in 1999 when we were in middle school, we have been connected ever since and I have helped to raise her two daughters, who are now eleven and thirteen. Wat^hiine has been disconnected from her biological family for a variety of reasons, so it has been difficult for her to find community with Haudenosaunee roots and culture. She has craved a connection and teachings from her roots as Bear Clan, and has only recently in the past few years been able to connect with people in the community. Living in a small city, she has experienced much overt and covert racism, but as she is not always read as Indigenous, the racism she experiences is complicated and is also interconnected with sexism and classism. My nieces also feel a strong connection to Indigenous teachings and have experienced overt racism towards their own subject positions, culture, and histories. As a caregiver in their life, how can I protect them, or can I? As a white settler, I can never fully understand their experiences in this world. I have a responsibility to care for them, to protect them, but I am also complicit in white supremacy. I have intense sadness for the way that people view them and their history. There is so much hatred and ignorance on this land. Drawing on Cannon (2018), my relationship with my nieces and the land in which I live and work are relational to the way I am privileged by the settler colonial state. It is my responsibility to continue to take account of my privilege, but not to remain here. I must push past conversations of accountability and take anticolonial action (Cannon, 2018), which is my aim in this research project. I continue to negotiate my role in their lives, as a caregiver, but also as a white settler who cannot ever share their experiences. It is for
them and their futures that I commit my work and research to uncovering white settler colonial discourse and creating anticolonial spaces.

My journey into learning about the intersections of oppressions which helped to understand my nieces’ and sister, Wat’hìine’s, experiences with white settler colonial discourse started to take root in my Master’s degree. During this degree I took a course that explained white supremacy and whiteness ideology in Canadian society. This course and another course which asked me to write a currere helped me reflect on my self, my race, and my sexuality. I thought that I was so open and inclusive with marginalized groups, but I wasn’t even open and accepting of my self for so many years. These two courses helped me to start thinking about the very systemic ways in which we monitor our selves, as well as understanding the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, but I still had not understood the ways in which these issues were interconnected with settler colonialism. As a white, cisgender female with a ‘queer’² sexuality, coming to terms with my non-normative sexuality was only possible after it was affirmed through the process of writing the currere. I was scared to ‘come out’ before this, but I quickly became angry that I was not able to understand this part of my self until the age of 24. I came to this research because I felt that if I had read a novel during my teenage years that affirmed my attraction to women and gender-nonconforming people, I would have had a much different life with different experiences. For example, I would have had different romantic relationships, taken different courses in my undergrad, and joined different clubs and communities.

In first imagining this research when I applied for my doctoral degree, I imagined a critical project that was based on a notion of lack or deficit. I was passionate about this particular topic because of my own experiences with the lack of fiction that was accessible to me during my secondary schooling career. These frustrations based on my own experiences turned into research on the lack of fiction and conversations about non-normative sexualities and genders available in secondary schools across Canada (Ashcraft, 2012; Blackburn, 2005, 2012; Moje & MuQaribu, 2003; Schrader & Wells, 2004; Vetter, 2010). I agreed with other scholars that sexualities and literacy are interconnected and there was not enough research on the topic (Ashcraft, 2012; Blackburn, 2012; Blackburn & Buckley, 2005; Lewis & del Valle, 2009;  

²I use the term queer to signify ‘... neither a foundational logic nor a consistent set of characteristics’ (Jagose, 1996, p. 96), but a way to oppose normalizing, disciplining forces of my sexuality (Seidman, 1993). I choose to ‘reclaim’ the word queer to represent the non-heteronormative nature of my sexuality, and also its fluidity and suspension of a sexuality classification such as lesbian or bisexual (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015).
McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Moje & MuQarib, 2003). After arriving at this conclusion, I was left with asking myself: so, what now? I reached a conclusion I had already known from my own experiences, which is that subject positions outside of the norm are not represented in classrooms or in much of the fiction accessible to youth and adults. This shift to ‘now what,’ and its connection to my new-found love of poetry from my experiences in the queer educators group (shown at the beginning of this chapter), is where my research turned.

In my research, I started to look at the ways in which issues of representation were available through the discourses in Canada. Understanding the history of Canada and the current context of the land as colonized and as a settler colonial state started to inform the way I viewed the research and allowed me to make sense of my nieces’ experiences in the white settler colonial education system. I realized it was not just genders and sexualities that must conform to the norm, but any subject position outside of what the white settler colonial state reinforced as ‘normal.’ Through my research I started to understand that this careful re-production of what is normal helped to strengthen the positions of power held by the majority white, male, heterosexual government officials, business people, and others. This white settler colonial discourse, explained in detail in the next chapter, constituted the white settler colonial canons of fiction taught in schools. This literary canon, or “sanctioned or accepted group or body of related works” (Canon, n.d.), was brought with white settler’s culture, policies, and government to the stolen land of Canada in order to “discipline and acculturate subjugated peoples” through a nationalist narrative of England (Jayesh, 2014, p. 54). Explained by Said (1994), literature and these canons aim to naturalize European imperialism (Jayesh, 2014). The canon shows the oppressive nature of the white settler colonial discourse that pervades schools and many library book shelves, as “the authors in the ‘canon’ are almost exclusively Western white males” (Searle, 1990, para. 17). Although the canon has changed slightly from its roots in English education, it does not ‘include’ much (or any) space for racialized, women, gender-nonconforming, or non-‘western’ writers (Applebee, 1991). My research journey started to shift to focus on this moment and context, where the schools are constituted by the white settler colonial discourses in which they were created.

Arriving at the Research Problem

This history and lack of representation is important to note in bringing me to this research, but the ‘lack’ of representation is not where I wanted to keep my focus. Although
people are marginalized within the white settler colonial state, they are still finding spaces within it to thrive. In this research study, I focused on the ways in which women who identify as a person of colour (POC), racialized or Indigenous, are thriving in a context where they are told they should not. I originally aimed to work with youth; however, as explained in detail in the methodology chapter, was not able to recruit youth participants. Although not youth, the women who are part of this research project are current or past OISE students, which is a community I am a part of, and five of the women identify as women of colour or racialized, and one as Indigenous (Cree-Italian). These experiences of subversion and thriving were the focus of this research, as I consider these experiences of thriving and subversion as most important in the current political and historical context. Through a book club format, I focused on the ways the participants engaged with fiction and how their reading processes informed the ways in which they negotiated their subjectivities by asking the research question: **how do five women of colour and one Indigenous woman negotiate their subjectivities during processes of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction?**

In order to answer this question, I followed two main goals of this research project:

1. Examine how reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction can help facilitate the negotiation of subjectivities.
2. Examine how reading fiction that is not white settler colonial in nature can create generative spaces for people to thrive, even within the current context.

Through this research journey, I also hoped that by reading fiction and responding to it through the discussion of affect in a book club format, the participants would have a positive and self-reflective experience, which was the outcome of the project. The book club had an impact on all of our lives, we formed close relationships, and we continue to meet outside of the research for meals and book club meetings.

In summary, this research project focused on women-identified folks who identify as a person of colour (POC), racialized, and/or Indigenous, in order to show how they negotiated their subjectivities during the processes of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction. My intention was to look at how our many experiences shape who we are (focusing on the books we read), but also how although we are subjectified within discourses, people find ways to subvert discourses and their classification systems. My goal of the research project was to concentrate on how these acts of refusal, subversion, and persistence happen. Throughout the following chapters I look at the ways people subvert and negotiate subject positions through the lens of my anticolonial feminist literacy theoretical framework, which I explain in the theoretical framework.
chapter. It is also representative of how I conducted the research through anticolonial methods and forms of analysis. This research project in only a small part of a large and complicated conversation to understand the ways in which the women who were part of this study negotiate their subjectivities within the settler colonial context through acts of refusal, subversion, and persistence through their reading processes.

Significance

This research will build on some of Mollie Blackburn’s (2002, 2012) work with LGBTQ2SI youth negotiating non-normative sexualities in book clubs. My entry point and concentration on the white settler colonial context, racialized and Indigenous participants who are adult women, affective knowledges and hot spots within the data, is where our research differs. As an anticolonial feminist project, the book club was an anticolonial space which allowed a decentring and subversion of white settler colonial discourse. The book club was not reactionary, but is an example of one way in which persistence and walking alongside Indigenous resurgence can be enacted. It is also an example of an anticolonial feminist book club, which can add to critical literacy conversations and “how literacy is used in different social and institutional contexts” (Janks, 2010, p. 118), in anticolonial, productive ways. This project also adds to the conversation within critical and postmodern literacy studies on ways to shift dominant discourses (Janks, 2010).

Focusing on the affect that circulated during the reading processes allowed me to uncover and name the becomings in the in between spaces of reading and speaking about reading. I focused on the negotiation of the participants’ subjectivities, as I feel it is important to look at how our many experiences impact the negotiations of our subjectivities. I use the word ‘negotiation’ to signify the ways in which people grapple with, shift, (re)make, and constitute their subjectivities. This is important for educators, as reading is an embodied process and there were many affective moments through the reading process and within the book club. These moments allow for real learning and shifting/growing, which points to the ways in which we can engage with issues of colonization through the lens that we are all implicated. The book club allowed for a deep learning of white settler colonial processes to occur and also grew relationships between the members through the common understanding and subversion of the white settler colonial state and its discourses.
This research is important, as people find ways to subvert the white settler colonial fiction available in classrooms and find ways to thrive in spite of it. I concentrated on the ways in which the participants were persisting in their contexts and the many possibilities of subverting white settler colonial discourse. This is a project that does not ‘document’ white settler colonial discourse and processes but is a productive project that questions the ways in which we can situate ourselves in relationship to Indigenous resurgence initiatives in order to build a better world. This moves theory into action, where instead of acknowledging the structures of power and oppression, educators can “start to move beyond a simple acknowledgement of privilege to place words into real, anticolonial, transformative, and pedagogical action” (Cannon, 2018, p. 178). I draw on the Kahnawake Mohawk scholar, Audra Simpson’s (2007, 2014, 2017) theory of refusal as productive and non-reactionary, as this research project contributes to a conversation about turning theory into action by creating anticolonial spaces. I am not documenting the horrors of colonialism to enact guilt, I am purposefully and productively subverting white settler colonial discourse with this research project. I am not researching white settler colonial discourse, but I focus on how these women subverted it and how these anticolonial spaces can mobilize people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in collaborative, anticolonial action. Through this anticolonial book club, “refusal is an alternative to recognition” (A. Simpson, 2014, p. 177), where the women find ways to continue subverting white settler colonial discourse.

In addition to this, this research project shows how a white researcher can work with women of colour and an Indigenous woman to create a productive, anticolonial space. Although I de-centre whiteness by not focusing on my own experiences of reading the fiction, this research project was created by me and my subject position as a white settler cannot be divorced from the project, the relationships, and what was written on these pages. I aimed to not reproduce white settler colonial discourse, however, the lens in which I view the world and the research is still based on my white experiences in the world and I can/will never be innocent in colonial processes. This does not mean I or other white settlers should remain inactive in our complicity. In order to continually resist the settler state and white settler colonial discourse, I refuse to silence Indigenous voices and Indigenous sovereignty through my research and teaching. This also means not assuming the white settler colonial discourse is inevitable, as it is only one lens to view the world (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013). My goal is to contribute to its end through projects such as these as well as my commitment to teaching through an anticolonial lens. However, this does not make me innocent in colonial processes, as “we are implicated in the worlds that we critique; being critical does not suspend any such implication” (Macoun, 2016, p. 86). I work
alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives with a focus on Indigenous sovereignty and futurity with the goal of land repatriation. Again, this does not make me innocent and I have the privilege to enter and exit these conversations as I please. I also benefit from being seen as a ‘good’ white person by working on issues of race or with Indigenous peoples (Macoun, 2016). Further drawing on Macoun (2016), although I do this research to walk alongside Indigenous resurgence through anticolonial action, “I do this as a white settler with sets of experiences and relationships and knowledges profoundly shaped by the meanings this embodiment has in our political and socioeconomic systems” (p. 96). Although I am always implicated in colonial processes because of my white skin, this will not immobilize me and should not immobilize other white settler educators from doing this important work for themselves and their students.

This research project also contributes to a conversation about how racialized women are implicated and complicit in settler colonialism. Although much different than the ways in which I as a white settler am complicit, the racialized women a part of this group are complicit in processes of colonization as they live and work on stolen land. White settlers and racialized settlers are treated differently by the state and racialized settlers are marginalized and provided with different opportunities in the settler state, but all settlers are complicit in settler colonial processes (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014). The way that each person is complicit and implicated in white settler colonial processes differs, but we are all accountable as settlers to work against the state. As further explained by Lawrence and Dua’s (2005) seminal work,

People of color are settlers. Broad differences exist between those brought as slaves, currently working as migrant laborers, are refugees without legal documentation, or émigrés who have obtained citizenship. Yet people of color live on land that is appropriated and contested, where Aboriginal peoples are denied nationhood and access to their own lands. (p. 134)

This research project examined how women of colour are marginalized by the same discourses that invisibilize Indigenous peoples and their claims to land, but through building this anticolonial space can discuss their responsibility in collectively fighting against the white settler colonial discourse and the state.

In addition to these contributions, I also bring my passion for poetry and its possibilities to the research, and re-presented some of the data in poetry form, which is a purposeful anticolonial act that will be explained in the methodology chapter. Re-presenting the data through poetry subverts colonial English (Cole, 2002) and creates new ways of looking at these reading processes. Overall, this research project contributes to a feminist, anticolonial
conversation of the ways people negotiate their subjectivities during processes of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction and the ways in which we can create these anticolonial spaces to walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives.

Overview of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation includes six additional chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, explains how I bridge two theoretical frameworks: anticolonial feminisms and literacy theories. In order to do this, I explain the history and key concepts I will be utilizing from each and how these two theories can be compatible and a way for me to view the research. Through this explanation, I also explain the key literature in which my work is situated. In Chapter Three, I explain my methodology, which is rooted in a feminist Deleuzian methodological framework. I explain how this was imagined through my theoretical framework and how I utilize the methods, such as the book club format, through this lens to analyze the data.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six re-present the data collected through the research project. In Chapter Four, I utilize Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) and Coloma’s (2008) understandings of becoming and Sumara’s theory of embodied action to show how reading and language are embodied processes. Through a focus on these theories, I explain how one research participant, Carolina,3 continues becoming a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman, through reading Native Speaker in the book club. Through the analysis of one hot spot, I explain how Carolina continues becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman in ways that resist molar/static white settler colonial understandings of her subject positions and creates a more liveable life during her embodied reading processes. I also weave in the experiences of two other participants, Samantha and Thuy, to explain how varied the process of embodied reading was and how it depends on the readers’ own assemblages. I explain why this is relevant to education, as it is our duty as educators to provide access to these narratives which can help create more liveable lives.

Chapter Five focuses on four participants to show how reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction enabled a space for deep self-reflection to take place which helped to

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3 All research participants’ names and identifying information have been removed. I use pseudonyms throughout the dissertation, which were created with the help and approval of the participants.
create a new consciousness of their subject positions and experiences of marginalization. In this chapter, I focus on Coloma’s (2008) constitutive subjectivities, Anzaldúa’s (1987) new consciousness, and Sumara’s (1996, 2003) embodied action to understand this process. Through focusing on the self-reflective reading processes of the participants Aadhya, Kiara, Min-Seo, and Samantha, I explain how this self-reflective process enabled a ‘putting into words’ their subject positions and experiences of marginalization that they did not access before. Reading this and reflecting on it in the book club allowed the women to build a strong trust in themselves, their subject positions and their experiences of marginalization outside of a white settler colonial discursive lens. This building of trust by putting into words their subject positions and experiences of marginalization created a new consciousness outside of the white settler colonial discourse that allows them to subvert simplified white settler colonial understandings of their subject positions. This is significant for education, as shown through the chapter, some of the women really connected to the subject positions and experiences of marginalization through *Native Speaker*; however, Samantha who identifies as Cree-Italian physically could not read *Native Speaker* because of its sexist and colonial elements. It is through reading *The Marrow Thieves* that Samantha had a similar experience of developing a new consciousness, which allows her to subvert white settler colonial discourse and thrive in the context in spite of its discourse.

In Chapter Six, I show how processes of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction and participating in a book club created the development of a community of care. Through coming around the table and sharing in food, conversations, and experiences of marginalization, a deep sense of familial bonding occurred in the book club. In this chapter, I utilize Sumara’s (1996, 2003) embodied action, Ahmed’s (2006) queer phenomenology, Mohanty’s (2003) feminist solidarity, Leanne Simpson’s (2011, 2017) resurgence, and Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel’s (2014) understandings of accountability to understand how this community of care was developed and its possibilities. These findings are significant for education, as developing communities of care through a feminist solidarity lens is important for racialized and Indigenous women. It is in these spaces that racialized women and Indigenous women can create horizontal comradeship and develop ways to subvert white settler colonial discourse together. The space allowed the women to persist and thrive within the white settler colonial context and created a space to learn about colonialism and the ways they are differently implicated in its processes. I finish this chapter by explaining how these anticolonial communities can walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives.
I conclude the dissertation in Chapter Seven, by summarizing the findings, explaining the implications of these findings, and sharing the limits of this research project. I consider how the understandings shared in this dissertation of the negotiations of subjectivities through anticolonial counternarrative fiction can be utilized within the context of education. I explain how it is important for racialized women to walk along Indigenous resurgence initiatives in order to develop ways to deconstruct and subvert white settler colonial discourse. I also explain the role of white settler educators and researchers, in their efforts to be imperfect accomplices in the fight against white settler colonialism and other global systems of oppression. I finish by explaining how this research can be extended and altered to be utilized in different global, anticolonial contexts.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In order to guide this research project, in this chapter I develop a theoretical framework and explain how it is situated within the literature. I develop a theoretical framework that bridges anticolonial feminisms and literacy theories, which becomes the lens in which I view the research, collect and analyze the data. In this chapter, I will explain what anticolonial feminisms are; their history; and my justification for their use. I will then explain what postmodern and critical literacy theories are; their history; and my justification for their use. Lastly, I will explain how I will bridge the two to create an anticolonial feminist literacy theoretical framework; the convergences and conflicts of the two bridged theories; and my justification for its use.

Anticolonial Feminisms

History and Key Theorists

Anticolonial feminism can mean many things, depending on the person you ask, which is why I use the plural term ‘anticolonial feminisms,’ to connote the many versions of the theory. Here, I will describe how I view anticolonial feminisms and how I arrived at this understanding and use of the theory. As both a theory and practice, anticolonial feminisms have emerged from postcolonial, decolonial, and anticolonial theories with a strong focus on women of colour feminisms within these frameworks (Mendoza, 2016). Postcolonial, decolonial, and anticolonial have multiple definitions and uses, and are ideologies, historical moments, and practices (Herzog, 2013). They can be used as separate definitions and theories, but their ideals and goals overlap. Each theory has come out of conversations about and against colonialism, or the “political control of a society and its people by a foreign ruling state… [where the] ruling state monopolizes political power and keeps the subordinated society and its people in a legally inferior position” (Herzog, 2013, p. 523). I do not centre the terms neocolonialism or postcolonialism to signify an ‘after’ colonial rule in the North American context, as colonialism in North America did not end, but still continues today (Wolfe, 2006).
Postcolonial Theories

Postcolonial theorists are often poststructural in nature in that they question and/or deconstruct meta-narratives (Fawcett, 2008). Poststructural theories understand the world as an always-changing place with endless truths (Britzman, 1995; Fawcett, 2008; Lather, 1992). This theory questions validity, truths, and any notions that are taken for granted (Lather, 2007). Poststructural theories also view subjectivities as multiple, unstable, and continually shifting (Jagose, 1996), which is representative of how I utilize subjectivities instead of identities within this research.

Initially, postcolonial theories were based in and about countries where the settlers left, but where the ideologies, practices, and power of the settler remain (Nair, 2013). The theorists within this field examined European ideology and its impacts and domination on postcolonial populations (Nair, 2013). Today, postcolonial theories focus on the ways in which colonialism has and continues to impact the social, political and economy, through exclusion, marginalization, and dehumanization, with a focus on the power and oppression between the colonizer and colonized (Sherry, 2008) and includes both postcolonial states and settler colonial states (where postcolonial signifies the exit of the colonizer and settler colonial signifies the ongoing colonization of lands within the state). Postcolonial theories have grown out of Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967a, 1967b), Edward Said (1979), and Homi Bhabha’s (1990, 1994) work.

Fanon’s (1963, 1967a, 1967b) works focus on the effects of colonization on individuals’ psyche and the nation through a psychiatric and psychological lens, focusing on the racism of nationalism and imperialism (drawing on his family’s experience as descendants of slavery). Fanon’s works can also be seen as decolonial, as the author’s goal within the works is a conversation on decolonization (Sithole, 2016). However, Fanon’s goal of ‘decolonization’ focused on the political independence of a country from the colonizer (Sherry, 2008), compared to current conversations in decolonial theories, which focus on the independence from the colonizer in social, economic, political, and ideological systems (Tuck & Yang, 2012). My understanding of anticolonial feminist theory builds on these ideas of decolonization that Fanon explained, but focuses on the ongoing, multiple, and varied ways colonization continues to occur in the ‘Canadian’ context.

Palestinian-American, Edward Said (1979), is another important postcolonial theorist who focused on ‘Orientalism’ or ‘the Orient’ as an ideology imposed through European
domination and the perceived superiority of the west. The Eurocentric discourse invented the Orient in contrast to the Occident, while creating an identity of ‘the west’ as more developed, superior, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 1979). My understanding of anticolonial feminist theory builds on Said’s understandings of the colonizers’ ‘othering’ of non-western countries, but builds on the idea that colonized subjects within the ‘Canadian’ context who are colonized and/or racialized are impacted by these continuing acts of colonization. Said’s work is critiqued for its concentration on the negative impacts and power of the colonizer, without focusing on acts of resistance (Sherry, 2008). I will elaborate later, but through my anticolonial feminist framework, I examine the multiple and varied ways that people who are marginalized are continually resisting colonization and white settler colonial ideology through a desire-based research lens (Tuck, 2009).

Homi Bhabha (1990) has been influential in postcolonial theory, as Bhabha’s work critiques the ways in which colonial relationships are viewed in binary terms, which are too simplistic, as these relationships are complex, in-between, hybrid, and ambivalent. My understandings of anticolonial feminisms build on Bhabha’s understanding of identities as multiple and based on social, power, and resistance relationships (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha’s work, which draws on his experience as an Indian English theorist, is utilized within this anticolonial feminist framework to understand subjectivities as not only multiple, but also fluid and always negotiated within their contexts (Coloma, 2008). I also build on Bhabha’s understanding of the colonized to be in resistance to the colonizer, and understand this complex relationship to include the multiple ways in which power circulates and shifts depending upon the discourses available. Now, I will explain six postcolonial feminist works and their relevance to my anticolonial feminist theoretical framework.

**Postcolonial Feminisms**

Postcolonial feminism was developed in response to the lack of racial and cultural analysis of western feminisms and also as a response to the lack of gender analysis within postcolonial theory (Bulbeck, 1998). Postcolonial feminist theorists including Anzaldúa (1987), Mohanty (1984, 2003), Spivak (1988a, 1988b, 1988c), Ahmed (2004a, 2004b, 2010), and Coloma (2008, 2009) analyzed the impacts of colonialism within postcolonial and settler colonial states through feminist lenses, which examined the patriarchal domination within the
state. The postcolonial feminists I draw from speak against an additive model of identity and examine the complex relationships and “connections between individuals and social structures of race, gender and class” and the “forces of colonialism” as constitutive within the processes of negotiations of subjectivities (Tisdell, 2008, p. 334).

Gloria Anzaldúa’s (1987) work understands dualisms of oppressor and oppressed as inadequate, as subjectivities are multiple and shifting, and one must learn to navigate the in between and contradictory spaces within and between subject positions. Anzaldúa (1987) was a Chicana lesbian feminist who, through her understandings of race relations and subjectivities, developed a conversation and consciousness about ‘The New Mestiza’. This “mestiza is a product of crossbreeding, designed for preservation under a variety of conditions” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 81, emphasis in original), where the mestiza constantly shifts and develops a tolerance for the multiple contradictions within the in between spaces of cultures. Anzaldúa’s work focuses on the border spaces, which include the physical and metaphorical spaces in which different racialized subjectivities intersect and disrupt dichotomies and hierarchies, and create an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ divide. These ideas are important for postcolonial feminism, as the understanding of ‘new mestiza’ helps feminists in thinking about subjectivities as multiple, shifting, and contradictory as people embody different borderlands in different colonized contexts. Although I cannot transpose Anzaldúa’s (1987) theory onto this research project as all but one of the participants do not identify with the Mestizaje, I understand the ideas of being in between and Anzaldúa’s (1987) theory of a ‘new consciousness’ as similar to what the participants experience in the settler colonial context of ‘Canada.’ I also see the importance of Anzaldúa’s work in my understanding of subjectivities as multiple, contradictory, and always being negotiated and implicated in systemic power depending on our experiences and contexts in which we are situated.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty is another influential postcolonial feminist theorist, who in the paper “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1984), critiqued western feminism as discursively re-presenting women in the third world as veiled, chaste, and homogeneous, in comparison to the secular and liberated western woman through discursive self-presentation. Originally from India and then moving to the US, Mohanty’s work advocates for a “feminist solidarity” or “comparative feminist studies” model, which focuses on the constitutive relationship between local and global, the coimplication of histories and communities, and on the “intersections of race, class, gender, nation, and sexuality in different
communities of women” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 242). Through Mohanty, I understand the ‘feminist solidarity’ developed through the anticolonial feminist book club as being developed through a ‘horizontal comradeship,’ explained more in Chapter 6. Mohanty’s (2003) work examines the struggles, commonalities, contradictions, and the resistance of those within colonial contexts through antiglobalization efforts, which I show through this anticolonial feminist framework in Chapter 6.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1988a, 1988b, 1988c) works are important in understanding how western discourses have silenced ‘Third World’ women, through utilizing the work of Derrida’s deconstruction theory. Building on Gramsci’s ideas of the subaltern, Spivak (1988a) examines the way the subaltern is created as a subject through assumptions of marginalized groups, according to dominant discourses. Western scholars’ portrayals of the subaltern create an idea of a homogenous subaltern and are always re-presented within the discourse where the subaltern does not have a speaking role, which is in itself an act of colonization. In order to subvert these colonial processes, Spivak (1988a) suggests speaking with, instead of listening to and speaking for the contextually marginalized person. If the goal is to ‘give voice’ to the subaltern, it will often re-inscribe hierarchal relationships as there are assumptions of who is needing voice and who has it. This helps point me to a desire-based research lens, which highlights the ways in which the participants are subverting normative discourses and thriving in the white settler colonial context, in spite of their marginalization, described in more detail below. Spivak’s (1988c) understanding of the self is not fixed, similarly to my poststructural understandings of subjectivities, which will be elaborated upon in the next section.

Sara Ahmed (2004b) grapples with the way emotions are culturally produced and politicized through access and marginalization from communities and hierarchies (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Breaking away from psychologizing understandings of emotions, Ahmed (2004a, 2010) examines the way our emotions and subjectivities are negotiated within societies where marginalized groups are ‘hated’ through affect. Ahmed (2004a) also helps to understand the ‘othering’ process through an anticolonial feminist lens through her theorization of ‘affective economies,’ using the explanation of the processes of hate and fear. In “Strange Encounters” (2010), Ahmed explains how ‘the stranger’ is created discursively as a danger or celebrated origin of difference through “stranger fetishism” (p. 3-6). Ahmed (2006) also contributes to my understanding of how the women were oriented towards the anticolonial book club as it was
developed as an intentionally anticolonial feminist space and the women’s life experiences that deviate them from the white settler colonial norm oriented them towards the space. Explained in the next section, Ahmed (2004b, 2010) helps me understand affect as key to this research project.

Roland Sintos Coloma wrote two important works (2008, 2009) that have contributed to how I understand anticolonial feminisms. Focusing on race, curriculum, and transnational colonization through curriculum, Coloma (2009) examines colonial pedagogies within Asia Pacific curriculum and how they are understood through US colonial discourses to imagine the colonized Other in specific ways which affects the type of education they receive. Although I focus in the ‘Canadian’ context, I use these understandings to ground my research in the ways that the participants subvert these colonial pedagogies through anticolonial counternarratives, explained within the literacy theories section of this chapter. Through his experiences being born in the Philippines and then living in North America, Coloma (2008) also guides my understanding of subjectivities as constitutive, which will be elaborated in the next section of this chapter.

I utilize anticolonial feminism, building on the ideas of these theorists to focus on the ‘anti’ ‘colonial’ aspect of the research, rather than highlighting the ‘post’ ‘colonial’ context. Although the ideas from postcolonial theorists overlap with my understandings of anticolonial feminisms, to situate and name a theoretical framework ‘anticolonial’ and not ‘postcolonial’ is a conscious, political choice to bring attention to the ‘anticolonial’ nature of the project. In the current context of the settler colonial state of ‘Canada,’ where this research is situated, colonization is an ongoing and unsettled process that infiltrates all aspects of the land and life on it (Wolfe, 2006).

Decolonial Theories

Decolonialism can be defined through action that aims to undo the horrific impacts of colonialism, including “the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 7). Its emphasis is on self-determination through actions based on anticolonial sentiments. Most simply, the difference between anticolonialism and decolonialism is that anticolonialism is against colonization in general, while decolonization is the undoing of
colonialism with tangible acts of Indigenous sovereignty and futurity (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and a rematriation of lands and resources (Tuck, 2011). The decolonial theorists I draw on are feminist in nature and include initial authors on the topic such as Mignolo (1995) who introduced ideas of global coloniality and the colonial matrix of power that includes gender, Lugones’ (2010) concept of the coloniality of gender, and includes ideas and theories from Tuck and Yang (2012), Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013), Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014), Leanne Simpson (2011, 2017), and Patel (2014).

Argentinian scholar Walter Mignolo (1995, 2011) explains the colonial matrix of power as a guide in understanding coloniality, through authority, economy, knowledge and subjectivity, and race, gender, and sexuality, while religion and patriarchy are at its centre. Mignolo (2011) explains that in order to work on decolonization, people must invest in decoloniality, which involves an understanding in order to overcome the logic behind coloniality and modernity, as well as an “epistemic disobedience and delinking from the colonial matrix in order to open up decolonial options” (p. 9). This ‘delinking’ process, or ways in which one delinks/refuses these types of knowledge systems (authority, economy, knowledge and subjectivity, and race, gender, and sexuality), is embedded within my understanding of anticolonial feminisms. Through my research, I interpret subjectivities as including a refusal and delinking of colonial labelling, while reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction.

Another Argentinian theorist, María Lugones (2010), developed the idea of the coloniality of gender in the article “Toward a Decolonial Feminism.” In this article, Lugones (2010) explains how the “modern, colonial, gender system” (p. 742) hierarchizes categories of race, gender, and sexuality. The coloniality of gender aims to analyze the racialized, capitalist, and gender oppression to overcome the coloniality of gender, or a “decolonial feminism” (Lugones, 2010, p. 747). Lugones utilizes Quijano’s (2008) understandings of coloniality and builds on Quijano’s understanding of gender to be more than just sexual access to women, but an active process of dehumanization and subjectification that aims to dehumanize the colonized (Lugones, 2010). Lugones (2010) critiques Quijano’s lack of gendered analysis and lack of conversations on resistance. I also stray from Quijano’s (2008) theorizations of de/colonization in the Central and South American context, as producing “victims” (p. 168), and as concentrating on the oppressive forces rather than on the resistance that continues against colonization and coloniality. Through Lugones’ (2010) article, I understand the coloniality of gender as an ongoing process that intersects gender, class, and race as central to the settler colonial system of
domination (Lugones, 2010). Focusing on a pedagogy of resistance, Lugones (2010) understands resistance as the tension between the subjectification and subjectivity of the oppressive/resistance relationships. I utilize Lugones understandings of decolonizing gender as a critique of the “racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression” (p. 746) and understand the colonized as invented by the process of colonization (Lugones, 2010). Lastly, Lugones (2010) contributes to the way I understand anticolonial feminisms as a process of resistance to the coloniality of gender by recognizing it and understanding its processes that infiltrate all aspects of our multiple subjectivities and lived experiences.

Maile Arvin (Kanaka Maoli), Eve Tuck (Unangax), and Angie Morrill (Klamath Tribes) (2013) made an important contribution to decolonial feminist theory with their article, “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy.” In the article, the authors explain how “settler colonialism has been and continues to be a gendered process” (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013, p. 9). Through examining Native feminist theories, the authors explain that the goal of inclusion within activist projects is hierarchical and inclusion is actually central to the hierarchal processes within settler colonial states (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013). Critiquing whitestream feminisms as complicit in settler colonial processes, the authors call for a rewriting of feminism to include Native feminist theories, in its goals toward “dismantling not just heteropatriarchy, but also the settler colonial nation-states that heteropatriarchy upholds” (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013, p. 28) in the hopes of decolonization. I use these understandings of ‘inclusive’ acts as problematic and situated within current discourses and focus on the ways in which the people in this study subvert white settler colonial discourses through their processes of reading.

In the well-known work, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang’s (2012) “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” the authors discuss the implications of utilizing decolonization in superficial ways for activist projects, which do not explicitly aim to undo colonization, but in fact further settler colonialism and rescue settler futurity. As explained by the authors, they remind readers that the goal of decolonization is the repatriation of Indigenous land and life, where “decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity,” not settler futurity (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35). I borrow from this work to engage in a self-reflexive reminder of how to engage in the research in ways that do not re-inscribe colonial relationships or centre whiteness, but also that I will always be a white person and as long as I am living and working on these stolen lands, I am complicit in colonial processes.
I also understand the ways in which the women of colour and Indigenous woman in this study can come together to subvert white settler colonial discourse through Snelgrove (white settler), Dhamoon (Punjab, Indian), and Corntassel (Tsalagi [Cherokee]) (2014). The authors explain the importance of people coming together from differing colonial pasts to work towards the opposition of white settler colonial discourse, as “British and European imperialism” is a global phenomenon (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 21). I utilize Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel’s (2014) article to help frame my understanding of how women of colour can walk alongside Indigenous resurgence, as we are all differently implicated within settler colonialism and have a responsibility to find ways to undo it.

To understand Indigenous resurgence, I draw on the authors above and also Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s (2011, 2017) writings about Indigenous resurgence. Leanne Simpson helps me to understand that walking alongside Indigenous resurgence is different from Indigenous resurgence itself. Indigenous resurgence is by and for Indigenous peoples for “dismantling the systems of colonial domination” (L. Simpson, 2017, p. 176). Leanne Simpson (2017) urges Indigenous peoples to be in dialogue with others in their communities to understand what resurgence is to them, as it is highly contextual. Through Leanne Simpson’s (2011, 2017) theories, I also understand that as a white settler, my role is to listen, to not centre whiteness, and work beside Indigenous resurgence initiatives in ways that work for the Indigenous community. Indigenous resurgence will be further explained in the ‘Why Anticolonial Feminisms’ section of this chapter.

As a racialized, daughter of immigrants, Lisa (Leigh) Patel (2014) explains what anticolonial research is and if/how it can serve decolonization efforts. This article was instructive in understanding the differences between decolonial and anticolonial research, as decolonial research “should always speak directly to material changes, specifically to land” (Patel, 2014, p. 359). Echoing Patel (2014), I do not feel comfortable to be in a place of instructing on the ways in which we can decolonize this settler colonial state, as a settler on this stolen land I come from different histories; however, this does not take away the responsibility I have to speak against and oppose settler colonialism, its logics, and its practices. Because I come from a place of critique and a lens of anticolonial activism, I situate my self within anticolonial feminisms, while noting also my privilege and implicatedness in white supremacy within these spaces as well. As explained by Patel (2014),
Anticolonial still allows for locating the hydra-like shape-shifting yet implacable logics of settler colonialism, but does not include in its semantic shape the unmet promises of stripping away colonization, as the term *decolonization* gestures to do. (p. 360, italics in original)

I position my framework and research within an anticolonial framework instead of a decolonial framework, as explained by Calderon (2014), the research “does not decolonize but rather moves [people] to question common settler colonial tropes and erase the complexity of Indianness” (p. 332).

A turn to anticolonial theory is a turn to focus on the ‘anti’ ‘colonial’ nature of the research. Jeong-eun Rhee and Binaya Subedi (2014) explain how postcolonial research can be problematic, as we are not ‘post’ colonization and some lenses of postcolonialism do not connect colonialism to Indigenous experiences. Postcolonial theories also often rely on “western models of analysis, conceptualization, and theorization,” whereas anticolonial theories “seek to work with alternative, oppositional paradigms based on the use of indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 301). However, Rhee & Subedi (2014) explain that this is not a reason to not utilize the theory and clarify that their postcolonial project is not a sign of ‘after,’ as coloniality continues, but is an analysis of the many colonial issues across geographical locations including settler states, third and first world contexts. Incorporating the ideas and theories of postcolonial and decolonial theorists, helps to understand the current context and location as both global and local, and understand decolonial, postcolonial, and anticolonial literature as discrete but interconnected. This is why I borrow from both postcolonial and decolonial theories to build an anticolonial feminist theory I feel comfortable with and can help instruct me through the research to continue to be self-reflexive and to deconstruct the white settler colonial discourse.

**Anticolonial Theories**

Anticolonial theories have grown out of W.E.B. Du Bois (1965, 1976) and Frantz Fanon’s (1963, 1967a, 1967b) writing against colonialism in the US and French colonialism in Algeria, respectively; however, anticolonial thought emerged much earlier, as a reaction to the colonialism by western nations since 1492 (Mendoza, 2016). Anticolonialism “interrogates the
power configurations embedded in ideas, cultures, and histories of knowledge production, validation, and use” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 300). It is “an epistemology of the colonized, anchored in the indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness” and its “goal is to question, interrogate, and challenge the foundations of institutionalized power and privilege, and the accompanying rationale for dominance in social relations” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 300). Anticolonialism theories and discourses understand that power circulates and is not solely possessed by the colonizer, as those who are colonized do have agency and the ability to subvert dominant discourses. Much of the theory spoken about in the previous two sections also falls under anticolonial theory, as they are ‘against colonization’ through purposeful conversations and acts to subvert colonial power and discourse. Anticolonial theories allow me to focus on what the women in this project are doing to subvert the white settler colonial discourse and drawing on Dei and Asgharzadeh’s (2001) work, “realizes the necessity of solidarity, and… collective struggle against hegemonic colonial relations” (p. 312).

**Anticolonial Feminisms**

As explained previously, I utilize an anticolonial feminist framework as a conscious, political choice to bring forward the urgency of ‘anti’ ‘colonial’ work. Anticolonial feminisms can be defined as any work that seeks to critique and/or deconstruct colonialism with an understanding of the gendered processes within colonialism. The theorists that I explained as postcolonial feminists and decolonial feminists can also be considered anticolonial feminist scholars. It is through this framing that I understand and take account of my positionality as a white woman on stolen land. I understand anticolonial feminisms, as explained by Mendoza (2016), to reiterate that slavery and the ongoing oppression of marginalized groups works in dialectical relationship with the freedom of privileged groups and the goal of anticolonial work is not inclusion, but a political project “that seeks to create a new rationality and humanity that reverses Eurocentrism and the coloniality of knowledge” (p. 115). It is also a project of subverting white settler colonial discourse and persisting in ways that oppose “binary oppositions” and one that pays attention to the “interdependence and interrelatedness of sites like race, gender, class, sexuality, age, (dis)ability… how dominance is reproduced and maintained” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 316, 317).
Why Anticolonial Feminisms?

My Positionality in the Research

As explained previously, it is my political responsibility to utilize an ‘anti’ ‘colonial’ feminist framework to critique and speak against colonialism within the ‘Canadian’ context. Anticolonial feminisms also inform my research, as it is my political responsibility as a white settler on stolen land to purposefully name the white settler colonial discourses and logics that oppress Indigenous, racialized, and non-binary peoples in ‘Canada’ (Finley, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Morgensen, 2015). I name the settler colonial discourse that exists in the ‘Canadian’ context as white because of its particular history of white, Eurocentric, heteropatriarchal dominating discourses. As explained by Tuck and Recollect (2016),

Settlers are different than migrants, immigrants, or other newcomers because they bring their own laws and worldviews, and enforce them in a new land. Settlers clear land of Indigenous peoples, often through genocide but also through forced removals, residential schooling, blood quantum policies designed to diminish Indigenous peoples’ claims to land. (p. 17)

This is the history and current context of ‘Canada,’ where white settler colonialism was never just an event, but continues as a structure (Wolfe, 2006) to impact Indigenous peoples, as well as the migrants, immigrants, and ‘newcomers’ to ‘Canada,’ some of whom are forced out of their countries because of colonial processes, in multiple and differing ways.

I utilize anticolonial feminisms without situating my work in ‘first,’ ‘second,’ or ‘third wave’ feminism, as I agree with Smith (1999) that this periodization of feminist movements centres white, middle-class women. Because of my white, cisgendered, settler positionality, I feel that I can name and take space within the anticolonial feminist field that speaks against white feminism and the heteropatriarchal white settler colonial discourses in ‘Canada.’ I do not feel comfortable situating my work within Indigenous or Decolonial Feminisms, as I am not Indigenous, do not want to claim that space, and feel that my work does not have material goals of decolonizing policy or lands.

In order to do this work, which recruited racialized and Indigenous people, I attempted to remain self-reflexive and sensitive to the needs of the participants and my positionality as a white, cisgender settler. Through the development of this research, I asked important questions
of my role in this research: How do I work with Indigenous and racialized women in unproblematic ways? Is it possible? What gives me the right to do this? Why is it important for me to do this? What does this process look like? Who will help me? Why should they? I believe that as a white settler on stolen land, it is my responsibility to speak against colonialism. In order to do this, I want to hear the perspectives and concentrate on the narratives of the people that are marginalized by white settler colonial discourse. This is important in anticolonial work because I want to ensure I focus on and respect the voices of racialized and Indigenous peoples and not centre whiteness. Although I feel vulnerable in this position as a white researcher working with Indigenous and racialized women, I feel that I cannot not do this research. As long as I live and work on stolen land, I will be complicit in colonialism; however, although this is an uncomfortable and vulnerable position, I feel is necessary for me to reflect on this and will not allow this to immobilize me. It is important for white people to acknowledge their privilege, as well as their ignorance, but it is also important for us to not turn away from this work as this will only reproduce the status quo. I come to this research from a place of vulnerability, as I do not want to offend or make mistakes, but I also come from a place of privilege within the white settler colonial context. I believe it is my responsibility to speak with and learn from the participants, and created the research project that enables the production of an anticolonial space. I will do what I can to contribute to the scholarship in new ways by deconstructing the white settler colonial discourses we are constituted by not centring whiteness or the white experience. However, I will never be innocent in colonial processes and it is important to note that this dissertation was written through my lens as a white settler.

White Settler Colonial Discourse

Within the white settler colonial state of ‘Canada,’ many everyday practices re-produce imperialist and colonial ideologies, which is why it is important to name these practices, in order to challenge and deconstruct them. I refer to ‘ideologies’ as “the way in which meanings and ideas are produced, mediated, and embodied in forms of knowledge, cultural experiences, social practices, and cultural artifacts” (Giroux, 2001, p. 209). These colonial ideologies in ‘Canada,’ which I reframe as ‘white settler colonial’ sustain and produce hierarchies (Giroux, 2001) and benefit those white, male, heterosexual white settlers who dominate in positions of power in the ‘Canadian’ context (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011). White settler colonial ideologies oppress those whose gender and sexual subjectivities do not conform to patriarchal
“rigid colonial dichotomies” (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011, p. 215). This ideology is a way to “sustain and produce meanings, such as what counts as literacy, but also how individuals and groups in concrete relations produce, negotiate, modify, or resist them as well” (Giroux, 2001, p. 209). As explained by Barthes (1975),

there is no ideology: where the ‘dominated’ are concerned, there is nothing, no ideology, unless it precisely—and this is the last degree of alienation—the ideology they are forced (in order to make symbols, hence in order to live) to borrow from the class that dominates them. The social struggle cannot be reduced to the struggle between two rival ideologies: it is the subversion of all ideology which is in question. (p. 32)

Through white settler colonial ideology, specific ideas of what a ‘normal’ identity or life should look like are re-produced through discourses, or “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). White settler colonial discourse reinforces normative genders and sexualities through heteronormative and homonormative discourses. I will focus the research on reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction that does not re-produce either of these harmful discourses of genders and sexualities. Using anticolonial feminisms allow me to understand “settler colonialism [as] the historical, institutional, and discursive root of heteronormative binary sex/gender systems on stolen land” (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011, p. 217). The white settler colonial fiction that excludes Indigenous, racialized and non-binary sexualities and genders, re-produces heteronormativity, as white “settler colonialism has been and continues to be a gendered process” (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013, p. 9). It is through this lens that I understand subjectivities as constitutive, which will be explained later.

Heteronormativity is the normalization of heterosexual relationships (especially those who fit into the white settler colonial ideal, such as white, middle and upper class, Christian, etc.). Homonormativity is the normalization of a homosexual relationship (especially those who fit into the white settler colonial ideal, such as white, male, middle and upper class, cisgender, etc.), or a particular normative “gayness, queerness, or homosexuality” (Puar, 2007, p. 2). Homonormativity helps to perpetuate white settler colonial ideologies by producing a “homonationalism” (Puar, 2007, p. 2). Homonalism benefits ‘Canada,’ as it showcases the nation’s ability to be progressive and inclusive by including non-normative sexualities (Puar,
It also furthers the white settler’s goals of the displacement and conquest of Indigenous peoples by ignoring the “connections between whiteness, racisms and colonialisms” (Sykes, 2011, p. 431). This anticolonial feminist framework questions nationalistic ideals of gender and sexuality and how the perpetuation of heteronormative and homonormative discourses re-produce white settler colonial discourse.

Interpreting white settler colonial discourse and its implications within marginalized communities through an anticolonial feminist lens informs my research question and participant focus. Focusing on ‘women’ and ‘gender-nonconforming’ people is a political choice to remain feminist, while critiquing and analyzing the gender system itself and who is included within the category of ‘woman.’ Although my research aimed to include people that identify themselves as women and as gender-nonconforming, only woman-identified participants joined the project. In my recruitment, I also only included people who identify as racialized, Indigenous and/or a person of colour. As explained previously, I concentrated on these groups to examine how they are subverting the white settler colonial discourses through their reading processes.

Desire-Based Research

My project is situated within desire-based research, which is in opposition to damage-centred research. Damage-centred research “is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community… [and] operates… from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation” (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). My research focuses on the ways the participants negotiate their subjectivities through the fiction they read and the ways they subvert white settler colonial discourse, as opposed to focusing on the ‘lack’ of literature that represents them. By focusing on the ways the participants negotiate their subjectivities, I aim to examine the “complexity, contradiction, and self-determination of lived lives” (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). I understand desire as an interconnected web of “experiences, ideas, and ideologies, both subversive and dominant, necessarily complicat[ing] our understanding of human agency, complicity, and resistance” (Tuck, 2009, p. 420) and desire “does not lack anything… but expresses the pure determination of intensity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 164). Utilizing desire-based research allows me to be responsible in my research, as a white settler working with Indigenous and racialized women.
I use a desire-based research lens (Tuck, 2009) to examine the ways the participants find ways to thrive within the white settler colonial state, despite their explicit marginalization within it. This act of thriving is similar to Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor’s (1999) term, survivance. As I aimed to create a book club that was inclusive of Indigenous, racialized, and POC’s views, I could not appropriate the term survivance, especially as a white settler. Survivance brings attention to the active survival of Native peoples “a spirited resistance, a life force, not just anger, negative or destructive” (Vizenor, Tuck, & Yang, 2014, p. 113). I aimed to examine the ways in which the participants went beyond surviving as they found ways to thrive through their reading processes. This desire-based research is linked to the way that I view agency as being productive, which will be explained within the literacy part of this chapter, and explained further in the last section of this chapter.

Beyond Resistance: Refusal and Persistence

Indigenous resurgence are many acts that can contribute to decolonizing land, bodies, and societies. Although sometimes seen differently, acts of decolonization and acts of resurgence are interconnected actions and strategies (Corntassel, 2012). As explained by Alfred and Corntassel (2005), resurgence includes reconnection with: land; Indigenous languages; spirituality and spirituality-grounded action; health and independence from the state through food, clothing, shelter, and medicines; and mentorship relationships (p. 613). These acts of resurgence “are made to reclaim and restore cultural practices that have been neglected and/or disrupted” (Corntassel, 2012, p. 89). By focusing on everyday acts of decolonization or acts of resurgence, “one disrupts the colonial physical, social and political boundaries designed to impede our actions to restore our nationhood” (Corntassel, 2012, p. 88). One can do this by focusing attention on responsibilities, resurgence, and relationships, rather than rights, reconciliation, and resources, which are colonial terms and ideologies. Colonialism has been utilized as a disconnecting force to try and disappear nations, but acts of resurgence reconnect Indigenous peoples with land, culture, and community (Corntassel, 2012).

Indigenous resurgence is about building: building connections, community, knowledge, and love in lives – “it is about finding new ways to love the land, and new ways to love ourselves and our people” (Alfred, 2008, p. 10). Bringing together ideas from Tsalagi (Cherokee) scholar Corntassel (2012), Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2007, 2014, 2017) and Michi
Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2011, 2017), I interpret Indigenous resurgence as focusing on Indigenous responsibilities, relationships, and acts of resurgence that can reclaim and re-politicize Indigenous knowledge and communities through acts of refusal and persistence. But as explained by Leanne Simpson (2011), resurgence is a personal process that should be done in consultation with “communities, teachings, languages and Elders or Knowledge Holders and [each person should] engage in a process where they figure out what ‘resurgence’ means to them, and to their collective communities” (p. 25). In order to do this, Leanne Simpson (2011) explains how people must come together collectively and transform spaces to build places of resurgence. Further explained by Leanne Simpson (2017), Indigenous resurgence “is also a strategic, thoughtful process in the present as an agent of change—a *presencing of the present* that generates a particular kind of emergence that is resurgence” (p. 20). Acts of resurgence celebrate survival, continuance, and community. They are “transformative and revolutionary” and “are meant to propel and maintain social, cultural and political transformative movement through the worst forms of political genocide” (L. Simpson, 2011, p. 24) through acts of “direct action” (L. Simpson, 2017, p. 236).

Within these collective acts also comes individual acts and responsibility to constantly reflect on colonialism (L. Simpson, 2011, 2017). Leanne B. Simpson explains that each of us needs to dig deep to bring to our communities what we feel is needed for transformation and then to listen and collectivize our initiatives. In colonial societies, people often look for meaning versus in Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing, which create meaning. It is a way of “doing, rather than blind consumption” (L. Simpson, 2011, p. 93). This is similar to my goal of immanent, rather than transcendental ways of knowing and doing research, which creates meaning through processes, rather than ‘looking for’ the meaning.

I understand Indigenous resurgence initiatives to be constitutive of acts of refusal. In 2007, Audra Simpson published the article, “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice’ and Colonial Citizenship.” Through research in her own Kahnawake Mohawk Nation, Audra Simpson (2007) examines the ways that the politics of recognition are rooted in colonialism and allowed the colonizers:

> to *claim*, to define capacities for self-rule, to apportion social and political possibilities, to, in effect, empower and disempower Indigenous peoples in the present. Such categorical forms of recognition and mis-recognition are indebted to deep philosophical
histories of seeing and knowing; tied to legal fiat, they may enable disproportionately empowered political forms. (p. 69)

Audra Simpson (2007) helps my understanding of non-reactionary forms of anticolonial action as integral to walking alongside Indigenous resurgence, where refusal can be taken up “in generative ways” (p. 78). I continue learning from Audra Simpson about how describing white settler colonial discourse is not enough and instead follow in writing in deliberate ways, refusing state definitions and lenses.

However, it is clear that resurgence initiatives are Indigenous resurgences, by and for Indigenous peoples. Reading about Indigenous resurgence has allowed me to understand my place, as a white settler, in support of these ideas, but also outside of them. In the 2016 article, *Conditions of critique: Responding to Indigenous resurgence within gender studies*, Scott L. Morgensen explains,

> two-spirit, queer indigenous, and indigenous feminist critiques press me—a white settler practicing gender studies in a colonial academy—to ensure that my discussions of gender respond to indigenous decolonization and its relationships with anti-racist and anticolonial projects. (p. 193)

I echo Morgensen’s (2016) ideas that these principles and goals within Indigenous resurgence are valuable in the current context and I can respond to these calls for tangible changes within research and community; however, I do not feel that I can call my research an act of resurgence but focus on ways that it works alongside, following Indigenous resurgence initiatives. Through the research project, it became apparent that the racialized and Indigenous women developed a level of trust for one another and learned a lot from each other. I will explain how these acts can aid in the process of anticolonial learning and how this can contribute to the understandings of how women of colour can walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives in the last data chapter.

My research project goals were in line with Indigenous resurgence, in that they called for a dismantling of the settler state through acts of refusal. My theoretical framework is consistent with the values of an Indigenous resurgence, as it interrupts and refuses colonial racial, gender, and sexuality categorizations (Morgensen, 2016), and it reasserts the need to do away with colonial, structuralist ways of knowing and doing research. My framework also complicates
narratives of minorities and resistance narratives, which hierarchize power and oppressor. However, I am also cognizant that “an Indigenous community is most successful when the non-Indigenous ally acts as a resource in various capacities… The decision making must be left up to the Indigenous community” (Cheechoo, 2008, p. 146). Although I had goals for this research project, my priority and main goal was to learn from the participants to understand the way they negotiate their subjectivities and subvert white settler colonial discourse. Even though many people are marginalized in the current settler colonial context, my aim was to disrupt these ideas and look at how the participants of this group continue subverting these classifications and are persisting or thriving in the current context. My aim was to create productive research, with a desire-based lens, as explained previously. In this project, I acted as a collaborator, with the recognition that as a white settler, I cannot rid my self of the privilege I hold as someone who is seen as white on a daily basis, so I remain self-reflexive with an open heart and open ears; however, noting that I can never rid my self of my complicities in settler colonialism as I live and work on stolen land. I am not innocent in settler colonial processes.

By utilizing an anticolonial feminist framework and lens in this research and a non-structural, hierarchal way of enacting my methods and analysis, I aim to not only critique the current white settler colonial state and discourse, but also a focus on how the participants are subverting these, ensures that I do not reify or replicate settler colonial modes of domination (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014). Yellowknives Dene First Nation scholar Glen Coulthard and Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson discuss how for Indigenous people to thrive or for a resurgence, there must be a disruption or end of capitalism (L. Simpson, 2017; Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014). Although this is not a focus of my research, I believe that it is embedded in my framework, as an end to capitalism is an end to much white settler colonial discourse, which could contribute to an end of transcendental ways of knowing, living, and doing research, and a turn to immanent ways of knowing, living, and doing research.

I am aware of my position of privilege in the current settler colonial society and how this implicates my ability to enter into relationships with those who are not in the same position of privilege as I am; however, I also agree with Snelgrove, Dhamoon and Corntassel (2014) that although bodies are differently implicated within settler colonialism and relations of power, these relationships to dismantle white settler colonial discourse are necessary. Explained well by Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014),
Where I, where we, are never outside of struggle, everyone is ‘structurally implicated’ in the dispossession of Indigenous lands. Everyone is differentially structurally implicated, where the ideology of presumed consent underlies settler colonialism. (p. 25)

Although I do not situate my research within an Indigenous resurgence framework, I believe that the participants enacted the values from this framework, in their own way. I feel that this research project, overall, challenges structuralist, transcendental ways of knowing and doing research, and does not conform to colonial ways of doing research. This, as explained by L. Simpson (2004), is one way that a non-Indigenous person can be a true ally or imperfect accomplice to Indigenous peoples. Although I do not use resurgence as a framework, I do see the value in these initiatives by and for Indigenous peoples.

As explained, I see the value in resurgence initiatives and utilize many of its tenets through my theoretical framework and methodology. Reading about resurgence has helped me understand how I want to be conscious of the way in which I use the word ‘resistance.’ I complicate the word resistance, and although it can sometimes be a useful word, it can create a binary because resistance implies you are resisting against something. According to an online dictionary, resistance is a noun that explains “the act or power of resisting, opposing, or withstanding” (resistance, 2017) and the action of resisting is “to withstand, strive against, or oppose… to withstand the action or effect of” (resisting, 2017). Throughout my work and research, I complicate this idea of resistance and understand acts of resistance as more than this. Although I feel that I cannot claim a space in the area of Indigenous resurgence, understanding and utilizing its tenets in my research allows me to understand the research and its moments of ‘refusal’ and ‘persistence’, rather than just acts of ‘resistance.’

The word refusal is explained as “an act or instance of refusing” (refusal, 2017) and the verb refusing is “to decline acceptance, consent, or compliance” (refuse, 2017). This act of refusal does not have the connotation of against a power or a power being forced on a person. There is more agency in the act of refusal. One can refuse a number of things, without a connotation of hierarchal oppressor/oppressed relationship. In addition to using the word ‘refuse’ and ‘refusal’ to connote acts that defy and subvert white settler colonial discourse, I also use the word persistence, as it moves away from a binary and looks at acts of thriving, which is the aim of my research.
Persistence is explained as “the act or fact of persisting” and the “continued existence or occurrence” (persistence, 2017). To persist means “to continue steadfastly or firmly in some state, purpose, course of action, like, especially in spite of opposition, remonstrance, etc.” and “to last or endure tenaciously” (persist, 2017). The idea of incorporating persistence as a theory instead of resistance, came from the guidance of one of my committee members and after attending a session at the 2016 National Women’s Studies Association conference, Decoloniality, in Montreal. At this session, Kenna Neitch (2016) discussed the rhetoric of ‘resistance’ and how it reinforces hierarchies of oppressed and oppressor. Using the word persistence instead, Neitch (2016) discussed how persistence does not hierarchize or necessitate an opposer or an opposing relationship. Utilizing persistence to connote actions of subverting white settler colonial discourse can complicate understandings of resistance and can be seen as a way to not only survive, but thrive in the current context. I draw on these thoughts to remind myself of the ways in which hierarchies and binaries are embedded within my thinking and will continue to self-reflect and correct as I continue with this research to maintain a vocabulary that does not reinforce colonial relationships.

Audra Simpson (2017) also briefly mentions the weakness of using ‘resistance’ as a stance. She explains that acts of refusal are

outside of the repetitive stance of ‘resistance’ that, again and again, over-inscribed the state with its power to determine what mattered, for thinking beyond what counted through the channel of ‘recognition’ and moved away from while pointing to the over-determined effective capacity of the state. (p. 23)

The state itself was developed through white settler colonial discourse which is enabled through systemic oppression and violence. Recognition into the system which is in existence because of “devices of lethal force and dispossession… and economic and political enslavement of particular populations” (A. Simpson, 2017, p. 20) will not bring about the change which is required for Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. Through a lens of ‘refusal,’ Audra explains the necessity for creating a new way of imagining, thinking, and being outside of white settler colonial discourses. Refusal is generative and calls attention to the white settler colonial discourse which requires dispossession and aims to convince the dominant (and non-dominant) populations that Indigenous peoples have been ‘given’ freedom through manipulation and ‘tricks
of consent.’ As explained by Audra Simpson (2017), refusal speaks against contributing to the white settler discourse and,

Refusal is a symptom, a practice, a possibility for doing things differently, for thinking beyond the recognition paradigm that is the agreed-upon ‘antidote’ for rendering justice in deeply unequal scenes of articulation. (p. 29)

Further drawing on Audra Simpson (2014), I also understand that instead of recognition,

Refusal comes with the requirement of having one’s political sovereignty acknowledged and upheld, and raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position of recognizing: What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from? Who are they to do so? Those of us writing about these issues can also “refuse”; this is a distinct form of ethnographic refusal and is tied inextricably to my final claim. (p. 11)

The book club became one anticolonial space of refusal – a refusal to conform or be assimilated into white settler colonial discourse, a refusal to read its books, and a refusal to be individualized and separated. This research project and the book club allowed for a space of coming together in a common act of refusal against the state, its understandings of who the women were and what their subject positions and experiences of marginalization were. This space became a place for “outright refusals—a willful distancing from state-driven forms of recognition and sociability in favor of others” (A. Simpson, 2014, p. 16).

Affect

I understand affect through anticolonial feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed’s (2004a, 2006, 2010) work on affect. Focusing on the ‘affective knowledges’ (Ahmed, 2010) within the participants’ engagement with fiction allows me to examine the underlying processes during reading that may not be named. There are two main schools of thought regarding affect. The first follows Darwin’s ideas around evolutionary hardwiring and psychobiology (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). I apply the second that utilizes Ahmed’s ideas, which follow a Spinozan route and see affect in a relational, complex way that dialectically produces bodies and worlds (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b). The anticolonial feminist ‘affect’ I utilize in my research stems from Descartes’ theorizations of feelings. Affect is a process of what emotions do in an in-
betweenness (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010), and it takes “the ‘shape’ of the contact we have with objects” (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 5). Affect can also be seen as (re)actions that are social and cultural practices and help to shape subjectivities (Ahmed, 2004b). Affect is what “sticks” or “sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 30). In my research, I examine the affects and the stickiness of affects within the participants’ experiences of reading fiction and the affective experiences in the book club meetings. I elaborate on this more within my methodologies section. Focusing on the affective knowledges of the participants and within the research allows me to name the “hot spots” (MacLure, 2013a, 2013b) in the research, which comes out of postmodern literacy theories and will be elaborated on in the next part of this chapter.

Constitutive Subjectivities

I focus on the participants’ subjectivities, instead of identities. Identity, as a humanist or reductionist signifier, rather than constructive term (Gomez, 1997), aims to stabilize identity categories (Butler, 1993; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and regulate people by hailing that person into a subjected status (Butler, 1991, 1993; Gomez, 1997). Identity categories can seek to fully signify a category, but it creates a “site of necessary trouble” (Butler, 1991, p. 14). In these essentialist or developmental approaches to understanding identity, there is a ‘core’ identity that is always there or will be achieved (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015). I do not understand identity in this way, as I follow poststructural understandings of subjectivities, where there is no ‘true’ or ‘core’ identity to obtain, but moments of racialized, gendered, and sexual acts that are multiple, varied, shifting and could conflict throughout a person’s life (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015).

My understanding of subjectivities is rooted in Foucault’s ideas, which see subjectivities as made, negotiated, and resisted within power structures (Chinn, 2010; Kuhn, 2010). It is, however, important to note the historical changes of the term ‘subjectivity.’ Freud began the conversation, but his concept of subjectivity can be seen as pathologizing the dependence and vulnerability of subjectivity (Irigaray, 1985). Foucault extended Althusser’s theorization of subjectivity, which was built on Freud’s ideas (Irigaray, 1985). Foucault’s conceptualization understands subjectivity as socially constructed through discourses, which shape thoughts, beliefs and actions (Chinn, 2010). I use the term ‘identification’ with flexibility and fluidity to
account the factors that (re)create, (re)define, and (re)use the participants’ subjectivities and how they label these.

I also understand subjectivities as always becoming, which is building on the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The ways in which each person negotiates their subjectivities is felt in the body and in between bodies which draws on affect studies, as explained by Deleuze (1990), “that bodies speak has been known for a long time” (p. 285). Becomings are also constitutive of power relationships, as the available discourses and ability to act are constitutive of becomings (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Through Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I also understand becomings through processes of subjectification, which will be further explained in Chapter 4. I draw on Deleuze and Guttarí’s (1987) understandings of territorialization, deterrioralization, molecular, and molar, to uncover processes of the negotiation of subjectivities and subversion of white settler colonial discourse, explained in detail in Chapter 4. 

I also use the terms ‘subject position’ and ‘subjectification,’ interrelated concepts to ‘subjectivity.’ A subject position is how certain subjects are viewed in the world (Salih, 2002). It is constituted through discourses (Salih, 2002) and through “cultural, social, psychical and historical differences” (Fuss, 1989, p. xii). Subjectivities are how one sees their self, which is affected by how one is seen, and is “the dialectical process of self-making and being made” (Coloma, 2008, p. 20). Subjectification is the act of situating someone within a certain subject position, based on the discourses available (Foucault, 1977). Building on Black feminist theorists’ conceptualizations of the intersectionality of identities, I understand subjectivities as constitutive, as explained by Roland Sintos Coloma (2008). It is dependent upon the socio-historical discourses that are always shifting and being negotiated. When I say negotiate, I mean the ways in which people grapple with, shift, (re)make, and constitute their subjectivities. All of these related terms are both constitutive of one’s own subjectivities, and how one is subjected daily (Coloma, 2008). Although I recognize the fluid, ever-changing, and complex nature of the participants’ identifications, I note how the essentialist categories of identities enter my research through labels and categorizations (Valentine, 2014), sometimes as necessary mistakes to create a “common zone” to resist the oppressive forces of white settler colonial discourse (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 318).
Intersectionality and Subjectivities through a Postmodern Lens

Central to anticolonial feminist theorizations is the work on and beyond intersectionality. Conversations about intersectionality are rooted in Black feminist scholar, Kimberle Crenshaw’s, theory of intersectionality (1991). I understand intersectionality as an anticolonial feminist theory, which can be utilized in a way which is not additive or segregating, but as a way to understand the ways that race, gender, sexuality, and class are inseparable categories which are mutually constitutive within the larger system of power relations (Mendoza, 2015).

Intersectionality emerged as an intervention to anti-Black racism, and gained traction specifically in response to white feminist spaces. I comprehend intersectionality through poststructural understandings of subjectivities, which sees subjectivities as always shifting depending on the context, or as constitutive subjectivities (Coloma, 2008). To utilize intersectionality and build on it with a poststructural lens means to take into account the unique and always-shifting geographical, historical, and genealogical context, which allows for an understanding of subjectivities and subject positions as “events, actions, and encounters, between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects” (Puar, 2011, para. 13). This understanding of subjectivities as being multiple builds on intersectionality by providing space for the multiple positionalities of people, and also takes into account the fluidity of these subjectivities.

I come to this understanding of constitutive subjectivities after reading the critiques of Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality. Although foundational in the understanding of the multiple ways in which people are marginalized, Crenshaw’s theory does not examine subjectivities as multiple and fluid; creates distinct categories for subject positions which cannot be pulled apart in practice; and it does not address the ways in which marginalization is produced or sustained (Conaghan, 2009). With its political purposes within law, this categorical thinking was useful and there were gains in representation of people who were marginalized on multiple accounts (Conaghan, 2009). Building on intersectionality with a postmodern lens allows for an understanding of the constitutiveness and fluidity of subjectivities, while still giving recognition to how these important ideas are rooted in Crenshaw’s (1991) foundational and transformational work on intersectionality.

I now explain how I understand postmodern and critical literacy theories, their history, and justification for their use. Then, I will explain how the two theories can be used together to create a theory of anticolonial feminist literacy.
Postmodern and Critical Literacy Theories

Postmodern Literary Theory

Literary theory is a very broad discipline and can be explained as any way that a researcher and/or writer analyzes art, literature, and/or culture (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). The way that the person analyzes the art, literature, and/or culture is based upon their discipline in which they view the work. These disciplines, or lenses of criticism, began around 360 BC with moral criticism and dramatic construction (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). Other lenses of literary theory include formalism and new criticism which began in the 1930s, psychoanalytic criticism, reader-response criticism, poststructuralism and deconstruction of texts, feminist criticisms, gender and queer criticisms, and critical race theory (in chronological order) (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). This list is not exhaustive, but shows the breadth of literary theory and its many lenses.

I explain the history and key theorists from postmodern or poststructural literary theory that contribute to my theoretical framework, although there are many that I could have included. These two terms (postmodern and poststructural) are often used interchangeably within the literature and there are debates on the similarities and differences of the two terms (Fawcett, 2008). Both theories aim to breakdown the “signifying chain” or the assumption that there is a one-to-one relationship between the sign and the signifier (Meacham & Buendia, 1999, p. 512).
Poststructuralism analyzes power and knowledge and the production of meaning with a focus on language and rejects meta-narratives that create boundaries and ideological frames (Fawcett, 2008; Meacham & Buendia, 1999). Postmodernism includes these same practices but includes many approaches, “including discourse analysis, post-structuralism, social constructivism, critical theory, feminist and queer theories, and so on” (Olsson, 2008, p. 656). Postmodernism’s goal is to critique the ideologies within modernist approaches, “such as rationalism, objectivity, and the idea of scientific as social progress” (Olsson, 2008, p. 656). The main difference between poststructuralism and postmodernism is the context of their use, where poststructuralism is used most dominantly within language and philosophy, and postmodernism is used most dominantly in art and sociology (Meacham & Buendia, 1999). I tend to use the term postmodern to signify the overarching, interdisciplinary, and influential nature of both literacy and colonialism.

Friedrich Nietzsche can be read as one of the initial theorists in postmodern literary theory, as the author began a conversation about what constitutes reason and truth, as well as the understanding that reality is always fluid (Glenn, 2004). Originally published in German in 1873, in the essay, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” Nietzsche explains how words can never fully describe their object (Nietzsche, 1979). The foundation of my research incorporates these ideas of deconstruction of power relations that are later taken up by Derrida and Spivak, concentrating on the white settler colonial discourses we are constituted within and the ways the women refuse or subvert them.

Roland Barthes is another key theorist in the postmodern literary theory discipline. Barthes (1968) explains how language is discourse and cannot be removed from it. Barthes (1968) speaks of the “death of the author,” where the author’s subject position is not important and the intended meaning of the text can never be fully known, as it is always interpreted by the reader. Barthes (1974) categorizes texts as ‘writerly’ or ‘readerly,’ where the writerly text allows the active reader to construct their own meanings, while the readerly text has more restrictive meaning intended for the passive reader. I build on Barthes’ (1968) understandings of language and discourse, but see the role of marginalized groups as integral to shifting the discourse through their agency, as explained in the next subsection of this chapter. Barthes’ (1974) work also helps me to examine the constitutive relationship between the text and the readers’ subjectivities through Barthes’ explanation of the construction of meaning between the text and reader, which will be explained more through the lens of transactional reader response theory.
Building on Saussure’s explanation of language as being made up of and always in relationship with the signified and signifier, Jacques Derrida questions what constitutes ‘truth’ within language, as the signifier (word that has been created) and the signified (what the word is supposed to represent) are not consistent or adequate for explaining meaning fully (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Spikes, 1992). Drawing attention to the ways in which language and labels are constantly moving between a state of fixity and unfixity, as well as a constant comparison to other words, or différance, Derrida (1976) helps me understand how language is always moving and deferring to other words. Deconstruction examines these inconsistencies and instabilities in language and can be seen as a “shaking loose, an opening, which makes possible—while it is made possible by—the coming and the call of the other” (Attridge, 1992, p. 21). Derrida’s work has also played an important role in the ways in which genders and sexualities have been deconstructed as binary labels (Lather, 2007), stemming from white settler colonial discourse. Derrida’s theory of deconstruction helped me to arrive at this research, as it enabled me to have the language and tools to deconstruct the power relationships within the white settler colonial society and to look beyond binary labels of many subject positions. It also helps me understand reading not as a transcendent act, but as an immanent act of constitutive relationship between the text and reader. Texts do not contain a specific meaning or truth, but are read in specific contexts and are understood through the discourses available.

There have been critics of deconstruction for its obscure and nihilistic nature (Ellis, 1989; Felprin, 1985; Lehman, 1991). As explained by Spivak (1988a), some critics see Derrida as hard to read; however, it is a worthwhile project that uncovers systems of power to create a space for anticolonial critique for both the researcher and researched within the current settler context (Jimmy, Allen, Anderson, 2015). Through a feminist anticolonial lens, using deconstruction allows me to identify the in-betweens (Brizee, Tompkins, Cernouski, & Boyle, 2015) and deconstruct the white settler colonial discourse that we negotiate on a daily basis. Through a constant negotiation of putting the participants’ reading processes into language which describes it, I aim to deconstruct these discourses in order to examine how they are negotiated. It will also help me to examine how the participants subvert the white settler colonial discourse to create spaces where they can thrive, even within the current white settler colonial state.

Michel Foucault can be seen as a postmodern literary theorist, as the author looks at the ways in which people are governed by discourse through power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977). Discourses are the “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices”
(Weedon, 1987, p. 108) and our “conditions of existence” (Foucault, 1991, p. 60). Foucault helps me understand the ways in which subjectivities and discourse are constitutive of one another and are fluid, always shifting meanings. Foucault believes that we cannot move outside of power, as there is no ‘outside’ of power, but that power and knowledge are constitutive of one another and are also fluid and shifting (Foucault, 1977). Power is not something that is possessed, but it is something that is continually exercised (Foucault, 1977). As explained previously, my interpretation of subjectivities draws from Foucault’s understanding of subjectivities as made, negotiated, and resisted within power structures (Chinn, 2010; Kuhn, 2010).

Postcolonial Literary Theory

I will also incorporate ideas from a postcolonial literary theoretical lens into this research, which can be situated as a subsection of postmodern literary theory. Postcolonial theory, as explained in the previous anticolonial feminism section, incorporates postcolonial literary theory. Postcolonial literary theory also looks at the ways colonialism has and continues to impact societies with a focus on texts. Looking at how colonialism impacts literature, as well as how literature acts as a colonization tool, postcolonial literary theory critiques the western literary canon (Jayesh, 2014) and its role in colonial processes (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). Explained previously, these theorists who are postcolonial can also be seen as postcolonial literary theorists and include Said (1979), Bhabha (1990; 1994), and Spivak (1988a; 1988b; 1988c).

Edward Said (1979) can be categorized as a postcolonial literary theorist, as the author focused on ‘Orientalism’ as an ideology imposed through Eurocentric domination and a perceived superiority of the west. Through the analysis of texts, Said examined the way ‘the Orient’ was written into fictional existence (Said, 1979). Critiquing Foucault’s works for their lack of analysis of the economy and resistance movements (Traboulsi, 2009), Said critiques the ways in which colonialism was justified through the hierarchal processes of western domination (Said, 1979). I utilize these understandings of refusal and interconnected impacts of colonialism on all aspects of people’s lives and subjectivities.

Postcolonial theorist, Homi Bhabha’s (1994) work looks at the ways cultural difference creates moments of conflict within discourse. Bhabha (1994) examines ways that colonized
peoples constantly resist, oppose, and distrust the colonizer, which produces a culture and cultural difference. Bhabha understands language and literature as constitutive of these relationships, as it “reimplicate[s] [signs] within the deferential relations of colonial power – hierarchy, normalization, marginalization and so forth” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 110). I build on Bhabha’s (1994) important explanation of colonial discourse as being reinscribed in literature and concentrate on the ways that marginalized groups refuse these discourses through reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a postcolonial feminist, can also be seen as a postcolonial literary theorist, as Spivak’s work builds on postmodern literary theorist Derrida’s deconstruction, analyzing and critiquing discourses. In the essay, “Feminism and Critical Theory,” Spivak (1988c) explains the work as a feminist literary criticism, and the author examines dichotomies through deconstruction and critiques the colonial understandings of the world that pervades western discourses. I utilize these ideas of deconstruction to read anticolonial counternarratives which speak against the colonial discourse with the participants in this research.

Literacy Theories

As is literary theory, literacy theory too is a very broad discipline and could be described as any way that a researcher and/or writer analyzes or studies literacy practices (including reading practices, writing practices, texts, oral practices, and other forms of communication). The way that the person analyzes or studies literacy practices is based upon the theoretical framework in which they are situated. In this section, I will explain the works within New Literacy Studies (NLS), reader response theories, and critical literacy theories to explain how I understand processes of reading and the negotiation of subjectivities in this research project.

Street (1995) is one of the main theorists to develop the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS), which was a movement in the 1980s from multiple disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, history, education, and so on (Gee, 2015). NLS was a response to traditional, psychological approaches to literacy, which “viewed literacy as a ‘mental’ or ‘cognitive’ phenomenon” (Gee, 2015, p. 35). As an NLS theorist, Street (1995) sees “literacy as a social practice” and rejects Goody (1968, 1977) and Ong’s (1977, 1982) “dominant view of literacy as a ‘neutral’, technical skill” and “instead as an ideological practice, implicated in power relations
and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices" (Street, 1995, p. 1). Drawing on Heath’s term ‘literacy events,’ which refers to a person’s engagement ‘event’ with reading or writing, Street (1995) develops the broader concept ‘literacy practices,’ which “refers to both behaviour and the social and cultural conceptualizations that give meaning to the uses of reading and/or writing” (p. 2). Literacy practices take into account larger systemic forces with regards to patterns within literacy events. Street (1995) explains that an “autonomous model of literacy” is one that focuses on technical skills of literacy, without taking the social context into account. Street (1995) instead advocates for an “ideological model,” which sees “literacy practices as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in a given society” (p. 161). This points to how “literacy practices are aspects not only of ‘culture’ but also of power structures” (Street, 1995, p. 161). Street (1995) also links these conversations to discourse and explains that written and oral language cannot be divided, as both require “knowledge of the culture and ideology” (p. 174).

Drawing on NLS research traditions, I understand that literacy cannot be detached from the social and instead use a literacy theory which “turns its attention to how literacy is used in different social and institutional contexts” (Janks, 2010, p. 118). Drawing on Street allows me to understand how reading practices and the negotiation of subjectivities are both multiple and constitutive of the cultural context (Simon, hicks, Walkland, Gallagher, Evis, Baer, 2018). It also helps to develop the foundational lens of the research that understand reading practices as “something people [do] in the world, not just inside their heads” (Gee, 2015, p. 35). Building a literacy theory with tenets of NLS helps to deconstruct the ways that reading processes are an interaction between text, reader, and “social, cultural, historical, and institutional” contexts and practices (Gee, 2015, p. 35). As explained by Janks (2010),

One of the main achievements of the New Literacies project has been to successfully pluralise the concept of literacy by looking at literacy practices cross-culturally, in different domains, in different discourses and as they vary in relation to different sign systems and different technologies. (p. 117)

I also draw on transactional reader response theory to understand reading practices in the research project. Reader-response theory came as a response to New Criticism (Tompkins, 1980a) and its aim “is to highlight the life of the reader through personal response” (Lewis, 2000, p. 254) instead of focusing solely on the texts’ meanings practiced in New Criticism (Rosenblatt,
New Criticism understands “texts as self-contained aesthetic objects that exist outside of authorial intent or cultural and historical contexts” (Simon & Campano, 2015, p. 477), whereas I draw on reader-response theory, which focuses on the reader’s experience and meaning of the literature (Beach, 1992). Early reader-response theories opposed the assumptions of objective meaning within a text and focused on the reader’s understanding of the text (i.e., Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978).

Rosenblatt is one of the main theorists to develop reader response theory through a ‘transactional’ lens. Seeing reading as a ‘transaction’ between reader and text allows for “the metaphor for ‘transaction’… an ongoing process in which the elements or parts” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 98). Rosenblatt (1985) argues that there are two different types of reading: the efferent and the aesthetic, although all reading “falls somewhere on a continuum” between the two (p. 101). Efferent reading “focuses attention on public meaning, abstracting what is to be retained after the reading” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 101). Aesthetic reading focuses “primarily on what is being personally lived through, cognitively and affectively, during the reading event” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 102). Rosenblatt, however, was “less concerned with historical contexts, prior interpretations, or authorial intent” than on focusing on the “uniqueness of a reader’s transaction with texts” (Simon & Campano, 2015, p. 477). Rosenblatt examines the reader and “their understandings through the lens of their own beliefs, experiences, and interests” (p. 478).

Reader response has been critiqued for its focus on “individualistic readings (Damico et al. 2008; Pirie 1997), elides critical responses to texts (Lewis 2000), and has perhaps become a new orthodoxy (Marshall 1991) that implicitly informs classroom instruction (Applebee 1993; Appleman 2009)” (Simon & Campano, 2015, p. 478). Rosenblatt has also been critiqued as the theorist “sees the individual reader's transaction with the text as primary over the local context of classroom or sociocultural contexts beyond the classroom” (Lewis, 2000, p. 257). However, I work against the reader/text dichotomy that is embedded within much reader-response theories (Tompkins, 1980b). As explained by Simon and Campano (2015), there are some reader response theorists “(e.g., Enciso 2011; Lewis 2000; McGuire et al. 2008) [which] have emphasized the political, social, and power dimensions of textual engagement, presenting persuasive and necessary critiques of positivist and universalist approaches to literary instruction that predominate in schools” (p. 478). I draw on ideas from Rosenblatt’s transactional reader-response theory, but through a poststructural lens pay attention to the ways in which systemic forms of power and oppression are constantly shifting and cannot be separated from the way that
so too are the authors’ and readers’ subjectivities and experience of reading. This means I can see the transaction between reader and text, but also interpret the reader’s subjectivities as being constituted within discourses and impact the way one reads a text, as well as being impacted by the fiction one reads (Tompkins, 1980a; 1980b), a dialectical process which is embedded within much critical literacy theories and will be elaborated on later when discussing the literature review on book club research. As explained by critical reader response theorist Lewis (2000), “understanding the transaction between reader and text involves examining the many social conditions that shape the stances readers take up as they interpret and respond to literature” (p. 258).

I draw on these literacy theories and take into account the readers’ environment through postmodern explanations of discourse (Meacham & Buendia, 1999). Drawing on postmodern literacies allows for an understanding of reading processes that take into account the “collage” (Jameson, 1984, p. 76) of reading, which includes the many interconnected aspects of reading, where the readers’ responses to texts are mutually constitutive of the discourses the reader is embedded within (Meacham & Buendia, 1999). Postmodern literacy theories emphasize either individual or cultural analysis (Meacham & Buendia, 1999). Individual analysis has come out of reader response criticism, where there is a close reading of the text but includes the reader within the process of analysis (Meacham & Buendia, 1999). This theory came as a reaction to structural understandings of reading processes, where there was a fixed meaning in the text. Cultural and critical analysis focuses on the larger systemic forms of power and knowledge (Meacham & Buendia, 1999), which is what I draw on. In other words, I see reading processes as one way in which we make and are made by and through discourses.

I now turn to critical theory and critical literacy studies, as I see the works of these scholars as contributing to the way I understand the research and aim “to reveal the ways that power is embedded in the (always shifting) contexts in which literacy learning is taking place” (Vasudevan, Kerr, Conley, & Riina-Ferrie, 2015, p. 208). Utilizing postmodern literacy theories alongside critical literacy theories means to examine literacy practices as multiple, shifting, and always constitutive within sociocultural contexts with an aim of unsettling dominant discourses (Vasudevan, Kerr, Conley, & Riina-Ferrie, 2015).
Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy Theories

Critical pedagogy is a theory and philosophy rooted in critical theory and aims to “explore how pedagogy functions as a cultural practice to produce rather than merely transmit knowledge within the asymmetrical relations of power that structure teacher-student relations” (Giroux, 1992a, p. 98). Critical theory was founded with Max Horkheimer’s (1937/2002) work, and although the field’s goals and politics vary greatly across the broad discipline, the works are critical of social systems including capitalism (Anwaruddin, 2016). Critical pedagogy examines how ideologies and the production of knowledge in education are produced and how they re-produce relationships of power and privilege (Giroux, 1992a). Critical literacy combines the theoretical and practical aspects of this theory and pedagogy and examines how critical pedagogical theory and philosophy can be utilized in education environments through literacy practices.

Critical literacy studies emerged in the 1960s with the works of Paulo Freire, a famous critical pedagogue (Freire, 1993; Green, 2001; Shor, 1999). Explained as a move to combat the oppressive traditionalist forms of curriculum that see students as empty receptacles waiting to be filled (Freire, 1993), the goal of some critical literacy theorists is one of emancipation, not a deconstruction of the power relations (Giroux, 2001). There are many strands of critical literacy research and practice, but they all generally believe that literacy education “is not a neutral activity” (Janks, 2010, p. 22). Critical literacy scholars, such as Freire (1993) and Janks (2000), see power relations within society and education as structural, based on identities within racial, gender, class, and cultural hierarchies (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008). Critical literacy theorists understand education as a tool for the re-production of dominant ideologies (Janks, 2000). In critical literacy, educators and researchers argue “that literacy must be examined within hierarchies of power and ideologies about whose knowledge counts” (Campano, Ghiso, & Sánchez, 2013, p. 100). The field of “Critical literacy has provided a framework for understanding and critiquing the ways that language and literacy are tied to power” (Campano, Ghiso, & Sánchez, 2013, p. 101). As further explained by Campano, Ghiso, and Sánchez (2013), Hillary Janks’ (2010) work shows “how texts function to forward ideological worldviews, to include or exclude, and to perpetuate hegemonic constructs which reify social stratifications” (p. 101). Overall, critical literacy studies tend to examine the ways in which students are implicated within systems of power and oppression.
Critical pedagogue and literacy theorist, Paulo Freire, allows educators and researchers to name the processes of human suffering; however, the author’s concentration on resistance and emancipation through conversations on class struggles of the very binary oppressed versus oppressor erased the multiplicity and fluidity of subjectivities and the ways in which forms of marginalization are interconnected (Giroux, 1992b). Critiques of Freire also include the “traces of vanguardism” within the works, which are evident in the calls for an emancipatory pedagogy which is in line with “the struggle for national reconstruction” (Giroux, 1992b, p. 18). Freire has also been critiqued for his universalist claims, “without exploring his own privileged position or existing conflicts among oppressed groups themselves” (Weiler, 1991, p. 469). Freire also wrote from a quite western perspective that reproduced transcendental and universalist truth narratives and goals (Weiler, 1991). However, in Freire’s later works (Freire & Macedo, 1987), the author pushes this thinking into postmodern realms through the deconstructing and dismantling of dominant discourses (Giroux, 1992b). Freire is said to examine relationships between culture and power within education, where the school “confirms and sustains the culture of dominant groups while marginalizing and silencing the cultures of subordinate groups of students” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 49). In other words, Freire examines how schools re-produce the power and oppression of the society. Critical theory, including critical literacy, are often critiqued for their rationalistic approaches “to issues of marginalization, empowerment, and emancipation” (Anwaruddin, 2016, p. 387). I bring in ideas of change, but am also cognisant of the systemic forms of power and oppression that people work inside and against.

I do draw on more recent critical literacy theorists to understand that readers are not only interpreting the text, but they are also “makers of cultural meaning… and agents of change” (Simon & Campano, 2015, p. 479). I also understand the anticolonial book club and the reading practices within it as part of a critical literacy framework, where the book club was a “socially situated critical literacy” (Campano, Ghiso, & Sánchez, 2013, p. 120) to refuse white settler colonial discourse. I also do appreciate Freire’s work and can look at his work through a postmodern lens to show how “literacy entails an ongoing reading of the world” and we are “continually revising our understandings” of texts and the world around us (Simon & Campano, 2015, p. 479). As explained by Janks (2010), “In a world marked by social injustice, critical literacy continues to help us understand the effects of power and the need for redress” (p. 205). Drawing on modern critical literacy theorists means I can show how the book club and the “engagement with literacy and with the world is a dialogical, historically rooted process” (Simon
& Campano, 2015, p. 479). I now explain some of the key theorists and understandings I draw on from critical literacy theorists and how I understand them within this project.

I use Janks’ (2010) work to understand my justification for the use of critical literacy theory, as “It is precisely because critical literacy is open to a multitude of theoretical orientations that its practice is both rich and flexible” (p. 207). I draw on the works sited above, and more recent literacy and curriculum theorists explained below, such as Janks (2010), Giroux (1992a; 1992b), Pinar (1998, 2004), Blackburn (2005), Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, (2015), and Sumara (1996, 2002). I utilize some tenets of critical literacy, which understands change within society as possible, but understand this change as always within the discourses available in the particular context. I also depart from some critical theorists in my explanation of subjectivities as I explain them as fluid, shifting, and always becoming within the sociocultural context in which they are a part of.

Drawing on Janks’ (2010) work on *Literacy and Power*, I show how I came to this work because of my own experiences in secondary school, where the literacy practices did not reflect my realities and subjectivities. Literacy practice in school often “bears little relation to literacy practices rooted in children’s lives and their communities… [They focus on] [d]econtextualised set of skills; what Street calls the ‘autonomous’ model of literacy” (Janks, 2010, p. 3), as explained earlier. Janks (2010) explains that the ‘critical’ in critical literacy focuses on power and to examine “the naturalised assumptions… truths… discourses and… practices” (p. 13). This research project aims to look at not only the white settler colonial discourse, but focuses on the ways the women are refusing these through their literacy practices. Janks (2010) pushes critical literacy theory into postmodern terrain, and helps to show how through a lens of discourse, drawing on Foucault, “all discourses, not just discourses of literacy, produce truth, how they are produced by power and how they produce effects of power” (p. 14). Foucault examines how “the procedures which constitute discourses and the means by which power constitutes them as knowledge, that is, as truth” and then “the ways in which these discourses of truth then bolster power” (Janks, 2010, p. 50). Critical literacy theorists that draw on Foucault can explain how “students who don’t or won’t fit the norms are marked as deviant” (Janks, 2010, p.53), through “censorship, exclusion, blockage, and repression” (Foucault, 1980, p. 59). But power also “produces effects at the level of desire—and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it” (Foucault, 1980, p. 59). This helps to understand how language is never neutral and is produced through discourse, which is constitutive of the women a part of
this study’s negotiation of their subjectivities. Lastly, Janks (2010) also helps inform my understanding that discourses do shift and change, which means that dominant discourses can be changed as well as “which discourses are dominant” (Janks, 2010, p. 27).

Henry Giroux (1992b) builds on Freire’s work to examine the ways in which educators and scholars working in equity issues can understand dominant discourses through the deconstruction of the colonialist and imperialist discourse. Giroux (1992a) utilizes postcolonial, postmodern, feminist, and modernist theories “to construct an oppositional and transformative politics” which is dialogical in nature (p. 21). Giroux (1992a) departs from Freire in ideas around dichotomies, where Giroux understands multiple truths and circulations of power and oppression which are not universalizing. Through this lens I draw on Giroux’s works to show the fluidity of subjectivities and examine how “various cultural, social, and historical factors impact discourses and subjectivities” (Hagood, 2002, p. 259). Giroux (1992b) also helps to examine agency as complex and contradictory, where humans have agency within the multiple discourses, and that language is constitutive of the processes of meaning making and human agency (Giroux, 1992a).

Through an anticolonial feminist lens, I interpret agency “as never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted” (Davies, 1991, p. 51). I understand agency as constitutive of desire, which I interpret as productive “smart… purposeful, intentional, agentic… it can teach itself, craft itself, inform itself… make decisions… [and] strategize” (Tuck, 2010, p. 645). Although desire and agency are implicated by the discourses in which they exist (Davies, 1991), I interpret discourses as never having control of one’s subjectivities. Agency and our desires are part of the discourses we are constituted by, but we can disrupt dominant discourses and can shift or replace them (Davies, 1991). As explained by Butler (1995),

To be constituted by language is to be produced within a given network of power/discourse which is open to resignification, redeployment, subversive citation from within, and interruption and inadvertent convergences with other such networks.

‘Agency’ is to be found precisely at such junctures where discourse is renewed. (p. 135)

These shifts in discourse are possible through agency, where “structures are constituted through practice and practice can always be turned against structure” (Davies, 1991, p. 52).
William F. Pinar (1998, 2004) is a well-known postmodern curriculum theorist who helped to carve out a postmodern lens within curriculum studies in the 1980s and 90s. Pinar helps me understand curriculum broadly through currere, or knowledges unfolding and “the running of the course” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008, p. 515). Currere is an autobiographical self-report which takes into account the individual’s social, political, cultural, and historical lived experiences (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008). I also build on Pinar’s (1998) explanations of queer pedagogy, which “displaces and decenters” (p. 3) and uncovers how people who are marginalized in the current context are united in “their opposition to disciplining, normalizing social forces” (p. 10, from Seidman, 1993). Although not a literacy theorist, I build on these ideas to examine through literature the ways in which the participants subvert this disciplining and normalization which is rooted in white settler colonial discourse.

One scholar’s work who I utilize within newer critical literacy theories is Mollie Blackburn. Blackburn and colleagues have written much about LGBT-inclusive literature versus queer literature within and outside of classroom spaces (Blackburn, 2002, 2005; Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015; Clark & Blackburn, 2009), where “LGBT-inclusive discourses often reinforce heteronormativity and binary constructions of sex and gender” and queer discourses tend to question and “suspend sexual and gender identities rather than underscore them” (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015, p. 12). Blackburn’s research is based on feminist postmodern interpretations of identities as fluid and shifting and utilizes queer theory as a lens (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015). Blackburn’s ethnographic research from 2006-2009 focused on a book discussion group with 22 youth and 10 adults, where the group collectively decided on the various texts to discuss (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015). Out of this important research, Blackburn and colleagues have used the data in many different ways to show the importance of reading queer literature and reading literature queerly.

In one article, Blackburn & Clark (2009) utilize the data from the ethnographic study to instruct educators how to combat heterosexism and homophobia in classrooms. Blackburn and Clark (2011) use a Foucaultian analysis of transcripts from the ethnographic research of the book discussion group to identify liberatory and/or oppressive conversations to uncover the possibilities and limitations of LGBT-inclusive and queer discourse, concluding that neither is entirely liberatory or oppressive but have potential to be both. In another article, authors analyzed the texts selected over the 3 years of the study to determine what the qualities of queer literature are and how they are different from LGBT-themed texts (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth,
They did this through the utilization of and building upon Cart and Jenkins’ (2006) classification system, focusing on queer consciousness and community, but departing from Cart & Jenkins (2006) LGBT-themed approach, focusing on the ways that the queer literature did not underscore classifications and identities based on genders and sexualities, but questioned the labels and norms (Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth, 2015).

I understand and appreciate the importance of Blackburn’s various work on queer literature and book clubs. I also agree with Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth’s (2015) utilization and definition of the term queer, as a suspension of gender and/or sexuality classification which recognizes the fluidity and shifting nature of subjectivities. I depart from Blackburn’s work through my focus on the white settler colonial discourse, where Blackburn’s focus is on LGBT and queer (anti)oppression. Because of this, I found that throughout Blackburn’s works there was a lack of critique of the ways in which the white settler colonial discourse implicates marginalized groups outside of genders and sexualities, such as a racial analysis. For example, Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth (2015) focus on the genders, sexualities, and home lives of the characters portrayed in the books. While mentioning race when characters are Black, the authors tend to invisibilize the white race and take for granted whiteness. The authors do not take into account the racial subjectivities at play within the books and the discussion of the books. As 6 out of the 32 participants were racialized and/or biracial, I feel it is important to discuss the ways in which racialization cannot be pulled apart from genders and sexualities of the participants, and that in fact, understandings of sexualities and genders are always constitutive of race. Perhaps because of the time of publication, I also felt the authors tended to re-produce gender binaries through their discussions of male/female, his/her, etc. instead of creating a space for gender fluidity or an in-between, non-binary identifier such as ‘them’ or ‘they.’ However, this work is important in its understandings of queer literature and its possibilities.

In a recent article published in 2014, Blackburn looks back on past research and reflects on transphobic thoughts and actions through their time at the research site. In this reflection, Blackburn (2014) discusses racial dynamics that are interconnected with transphobia. In this article, the Blackburn also discusses a relationship with an African-American woman at the centre where the research was being conducted. Through this friendship, Blackburn (2014) reflected on her privilege as a white person and went on to explain through a critical literacy lens that privileged researchers doing this work “are challenged to act. We must overcome [immobilization]” (p. 55). This action, as explained by Blackburn (2014), should not be seen in
narrow terms, but includes large actions and “at personal and communal levels” (p. 55). As we all continue to build on our work, I follow Blackburn’s approach and will continue to reflect on the ways in which I can problematize my actions and be a more critical and inclusive researcher and educator.

I will utilize Blackburn, Clark, & Nemeth’s (2015) important work and definition of queer literature as “multiple, variable, and conflicting conceptions of sexual and gender identities… disrupt[ing] normative notions of sexuality, gender, families, and homes,” (p. 43). I extend this definition to include the multiple and shifting subjectivities, highlighting the way in which we are subjected daily by white settler colonial discourse, including the subject positions of race and other colonial constructions. I will explain the way in which I view this fiction as anticolonial counternarrative fiction in the “Why Literacy Theories?” section of this chapter by focusing on the ‘anticolonial’ aspect of fiction, instead of using a queer theory lens.

In an earlier research project, Blackburn did also discuss race at the centre. Looking at literacy performances, Blackburn (2002) explains a study across three years at a youth-run centre for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. The attendees of the centre were predominantly male and African American, and Blackburn analyzes data concentrating on a 14-year-old African American lesbian within the centre who shared a poem and video she created. I still feel as though Blackburn (2002) does not quite fully analyze the ways in which sexuality and gender are constructed through race and white settler colonial discourses in the US. The concentration on the participant’s sexuality invisibilizes how heteronormativity and homophobia are constructed through whiteness, homonormativity, and white settler colonial discourse.

Where Blackburn and I have similarities include our commitments to avoiding victim-centred research (Blackburn, 2002); our overlapping and sometimes contradictory use of postmodern and critical theories; and our use of book discussion groups, which I frame as book clubs. I will explain the ways in which I utilize postmodern and critical literacy theories in the last section of this chapter. Although my focus is on the multiple and fluid subjectivities which are constitutive of the white settler colonial discourse, I build on Blackburn’s important works that focus on gender and sexuality, to focus on the ways the participants subvert white settler colonial discourse through their reading practices.

The last literacy theorist I draw from is Dennis Sumara (1996, 2002). Sumara (1996, 2002) builds upon Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional reader response theory and sees the reader,
text, and context as co-emergent and reading as an “embodied action” (Sumara, 1996, p. 88). Sumara’s (1996) theory of embodied action considers the multiple positionalities of the readers and how they affect their reading processes. Embodied action examines reading as “social and cultural events” and accounts for the ways of knowing that pay attention to intuitions, hunches and gut feelings in between texts and bodies (Sumara, 2003, p. 88). Through this research, Sumara (1996) asks “what is the experience of living a life that includes the practice of reading?” (p. 1), rather than focusing on the texts’ meanings. During an eight-month study of a reading group including four women and Sumara, the author read and wrote with the participants and collected a “bricolage” of data using a variety of methodological tools, including interviews and reading group discussions (Sumara, 1996, p. 125). I utilize Sumara’s work as a starting point to examine how the participants interact with the fiction they read and negotiate their subjectivities through their embodied reading processes, as reading processes not only include “social and cultural events; they contribute to ongoing biological and evolutionary change” (Sumara, 2003, p. 92). Applying Sumara’s research on reading processes allows me to utilize an anticolonial lens while uncovering the processes “in the engagement between the text and reader,” (Sumara, 1996, p. 48), where people do not emerge from the world, but “co-emerge with a world” (Sumara, 1996, p. 102). Sumara’s postmodern thinking also reminds me that we cannot step outside of discourse and the research we take part in and analyze is always through the discourses we have access to.

Previous Research with/in Book Clubs

A literature review on previous research conducted with/in book clubs that are relevant to this project was quite difficult. There are not many studies that relate closely to my research goals. From my literature review, I found that much of the research done on book clubs are done so at the elementary level and often with a structuralist approach with the aim to improve literacy skills and/or content knowledge (Barajas, 2016; Heller, 2006; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2004; Turbill, McAuliffe, Hill, Burney, & Willetts, 2013). There are some studies that have pieces which are relevant to the research I aim to do, explained below.

Utilizing reader response theory and postcolonial theories, Suh and Hinton (2015) conducted six book club meetings with teacher educators and utilized grounded theory and coding to uncover the ways cultural and racial identities impacted the participants’ reading and
discussion of a multicultural text. The authors found that the participants, all of whom were racialized, engaged differently with the text and ranged from affirming to detaching their ethnic and cultural backgrounds from the text and characters. Although I will not be using grounded theory or coding methods, this research showcases how different experiences, histories, and subjectivities alter the way someone reads a text.

Another study that looks at the construction of identities of teachers is also relevant to my work. Looking at literary response groups that involved only teachers, Janzen (2015) explains how teachers’ identities are constructed through discourse and examined the interruptions of normative teacher becomings within the groups. Participants in this research project were asked to share their ideas of how the characters in three novels they read exemplified teacher characteristics. Similar to my work, this work draws on Sumara’s (1996) study to look at how reading and speaking about reading within a group alters and adds to the way one sees themselves and others (Janzen, 2015). This research also problematizes much research done on literature and literacy and does not seek a transparent or linear response to the ‘truth’ of the fiction read, but instead focuses on the “dynamic engagements, as well as social, collaborative and contested reactions to novels” (Janzen, 2015, p. 992).

Understanding the discussion group transcripts not as data, but as discursive moments, Janzen (2015) blends the novels read, transcripts, and field notes to read and write through the ways in which different parts of the texts gathered resonate more than others. The author examined moments when normative discourses were disruptive, which is called reading symptomatically. This act of reading symptomatically looks for significant moments of “anxiety, gaps, disruptions and discomfort” (Janzen, 2015, p. 998), and is similar to the way in which I engaged with the hot spots within my research project. Janzen (2015) also blends the multiple forms of data to make connections, which is similar to how I analyzed the data (explained in detail in the next section). Lastly, this research study recognizes the constitutive nature of the text, participants, and researcher in creating the moments to be interpreted and re-presented.

In another research project, Craig (2016), examines how the women in a book club developed their gendered sexual identities through reading and participating in the book club, through ethnographic observation, book club meetings, and interviews in the United States and Ireland. The author explains that the participants in the study used reading as a safe place to explore their sexual identities, which was most important in their adolescence. Craig’s (2016)
understanding of identity is dissimilar from mine, as the author views a ‘core’ identity as
attainable through navigating texts. What I find interesting from Craig’s (2016) study is how the
author explains that reading romantic novels “provided models of romantic expectations and
sexual behaviors” (p. 320) for the majority of the participants and that reading in adolescence
helped participants “figure out who they were, what sex was, what it meant to be sexual, and
how they could explore it” (p. 321). This is relevant in my work, as anticolonial counternarrative
fiction is often not available and is not mainstream, so the participants a part of this research had
similar experiences of ‘putting into words’ their subject positions and experiences of
marginalization that was not available to them before.

In Broughton (2002), the author explains the performances of four sixth-grade girls’
subjectivities while reading and discussing a novel about two adolescent Mexican children
immigrating to the United States in a book club discussion group. The author’s interpretation of
subjectivities understands them as fluid and changing with experiences, which is similar to my
understandings of constitutive subjectivities (Coloma, 2008). One of the author’s research
questions included “how might experiences of reading and discussing literature contribute to
these girls’ ongoing construction of subjectivities?” (Broughton, 2002, p. 2), which is similar to
my research question; however, this goal understands subjectivities as being constructed, as
though there is a progression or end goal.

In the research project, Broughton (2002), collected data from classroom observation,
book club discussions, individual interviews with the four girls and their parents/guardians, a
focus group interview with the four girls, and excerpts from the students’ response journals. The
author organized the themes that emerged from the data under two categories: the performance
of subjectivities versus the construction of subjectivities. The author found that

the girls’ experiences in the book club discussion group led them to reexamine their
views of themselves and others… [and] the girls openly discussed ways that they
believed they had changed as a result of reading and discussing the book together.
(Broughton, 2002, p. 26)

In addition to this, the author noted how the girls’ awareness of different topics and their own
personal values. Although my focus is not on the performance or construction of subjectivities,
this research is important in understanding how the experiences both in and outside of the book
club will change the way the participants see themselves. The research I intend to do will focus
on how the participants subvert white settler colonial discourse and in turn, how this impacts the negotiation of their subjectivities as individuals within the current context.

Although I have arrived at my research because of the exclusion of non-normative genders and sexualities available in the fiction selected in many English secondary classrooms (Ashcraft, 2012; Blackburn, 2005; Schrader & Wells, 2004), I do not focus on this exclusion. My aim is to look at the ways in which the participants in this study negotiate their subjectivities through reading the anticolonial counternarrative fiction, and how reading this fiction can create generative spaces for them to thrive, even within the white settler colonial state. Below I explain how I apply literacy theories in a way that allows me to do this research.

Why Postmodern and Critical Literacy Theories?

Subjectivities through Literacy

As explained previously, I view subjectivities as fluid and shifting, as well as non-transcendental, which means there is no ‘end goal’ or destination to arrive at. Although I depart somewhat from Blackburn and Sumara’s conceptualization of identities, as I see colonial subjectifications as central to subjectivities in the current socio-historical context, we agree that a person’s way of understanding themselves is consistently shifting and changing and is not transcendental in nature, but always a becoming. Becoming, not being, is a process with “no destination, no end point, no goal” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 87), where ‘becoming’ seeks to deconstruct the assumed stability of identity and, instead, sees subjectivities as always changing and always in-between (Sellers, 2010). Through postmodern literacy theories, I understand fiction to be one of the ways in which we negotiate our subjectivities. Building from Sumara’s (1996) explanations of reading as embodied action and co-emergent with the world, I examine subjectivities as they “mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write, and talk about” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 416).

Counternarratives

As a key aspect of my research, I will be focusing on counternarratives, a term borrowed from Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters (1996). Focusing not on queer literature, as
Blackburn and colleagues focus on, I turn my attention to anticolonial counternarratives, which are counter to the white settler colonial discourse, or the “‘official’ narratives” (Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1996, p.1). Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters (1996) focus on postmodern counternarratives, which they explain are a “critique of the modernist predilection for ‘grand,’ ‘master,’ and ‘meta’ narratives,” with a focus on the “stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledges and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated or forgotten in the telling of official narratives” (p. 2). Although I follow in this tradition of postmodern counternarratives, I label them as anticolonial counternarratives, to centre their specific anticolonial content and their opportunities through newer critical literacy frameworks. Through the anticolonial feminism I explained previously, and the understanding of agency as explained drawing on critical literacy theorist Davies (1991) and education theorist Tuck (2010), I see productive possibilities to subvert and shift discourses through anticolonial counternarratives.

I arrived at this understanding of anticolonial counternarrative fiction as being part of this research, after spending a lot of my time trying to find fiction which was not heteronormative or homonormative, from my own experiences of not reading queer fiction. Confirmed by current research on the topic, although there are many works of fiction highlighting characters with non-normative genders and sexualities compared to past publications, the majority of the fiction available for people’s consumption is written by and for white readers with white characters (Banks & Alexander, 2016; Durand, 2016; Garcia, 2013; Linville, 2016; Linville & Carlson, 2016), and often exclude female and gender queer or non-binary characters (Linville, 2016). After much intentional digging for authors and stories that highlighted characters with non-normative genders and sexualities, which was my initial interest in the research because of my own experiences, I pushed to find narratives that were anticolonial, in that they did not conform to what the white settler colonial discourse deems as successful or ‘normal.’ I decided against choosing the book for the book club however, and will explain this process in the methodology chapter.

In Marshall’s (2016) work, three picture book auto/biographies are explained as examples of counter-storytelling which are explained to:
a) recognize and refute stereotypes in popular cultural and media, b) share personal, family, community, and historic stories that counter these misrepresentations, and c) pose guiding questions that may lead to engagement in activism and resistance. (p. 87)

These stories allow for other worlds outside of the narrative of white settler colonialism and its discourse. Understanding anticolonial counternarratives as central to this process of subverting or refusing white settler colonial discourse comes from ideas that “storytelling is racialized, gendered, and classed and these stories affect racialized, gendered, and classed communities” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009, p. 138).

The Processes Between Reading

Through Sumara’s theory of ‘embodied action’ I examine how the text, subjectivities, and reading practices are constitutive of one another. The theory of reading I use is not about finding meanings within the text or what the text says, but examining what happens during reading processes or what the text does. In this theory, there is no reader/fiction dichotomy, but a complex reading process of not just the reader, writer, and text, but the memories, context, relationships, emotion, history, and so on that affect the way one reads (Augustine, 2010). My research aims to uncover the processes of reading and how this interacts with the participants’ negotiations of their subjectivities as well as the possibilities between the transaction between the text and reader (Rosenblatt, 1985). Drawing on critical literacy studies and postmodern literacy allows me to see how literacy is both social as well as “implicated in power relations and embedded in specific cultural meanings and practices” (Street, 1995, p. 1). Critical literacy helps to theorize the possibilities of refusal as “agents of change” (Simon & Campano, 2015, p. 479) through shifting dominant discourses and shifting “which discourses are dominant” (Janks, 2010, p. 27). As we will be meeting and creating relationships through the book club, Sumara (1996) also helps me to examine how community can be built through these reading groups. These processes ‘in between’ the reading are also related to the hot spots or affect within the research, explained below.
Hot Spots and Affect

Language, literacy, and education scholar MacLure (2013a) explains “hot spots” within the research as moments of disruption or “productive disconcertion… that undermine the analyst’s imperial self-assurance” (p. 172). I utilize this method of data collection and analysis, which will be explained in more detail in the next chapter. To focus on hot spots means to focus on the gut feelings, and unsettling/uncomfortable or intense moments, where the concentration is on what happens in these moments: where do these feelings come from and what do they do? These hot spots are moments of abstraction that “resist translation into codes and significations, but at the same time seem to demand this” (MacLure, 2013a, p. 173). This concentration on hot spots is constitutive with the theory of affect, which was explained in the anticolonial feminist section of this chapter. Affect is explained as those moments that cannot be named and is the in-between processes of what emotions do (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Building on these ideas of affect, from anticolonial theorist Sara Ahmed (2004b, 2010), hot spots create a nameable moment within the data. Bridging these two theories allow me to see how these uncomfortable moments or gut feelings are constitutive of the discourses we are embedded in, which will be explained in more detail within the methodology chapter.

Anticolonial Feminist Literacy Theoretical Framework

Within anticolonial feminist theories there are some theorists who view the world through a critical paradigm. In a critical paradigm, there are assumptions that a ‘true’ identity is possible and innate (Lather, 2006). It also sees reality and truth as subjective and constituted by power and knowledge and the goal of some critical theorists is often one of emancipation (Lather, 2016). This places emphasis on the individual and their role in changing the discourse, rather than focusing on the discourses in which we are constituted by/within. In a postmodern paradigm, there can never be a ‘true’ identity and subjectivities are always in process and becoming (Lather, 2016). There is no ‘reality,’ and ‘truths’ are always socially constructed through language which is unstable (Lather, 2016). Utilizing both a postmodern paradigm and the concepts from anticolonial feminists allows me to examine the ways in which the participants negotiate their subjectivities through the processes of reading fiction, which includes the current white settler colonial context and discourse and the way that power operates and is continuously
exercised within the white settler colonial state. As explained previously, I have borrowed from anticolonial feminist scholars, building on postcolonial and decolonial research. The anticolonial feminist theory I imagine utilizes a postmodern paradigm and the goals of the research are critical in nature. Below, I will explain how I merge anticolonial feminist theory and literacy theories to imagine a research project through a postmodern lens.

How and Why Will I Use It?

My theoretical framework bridges the two frameworks that are explained in detail above. Through the research project, I asked the research question: **how do five women of colour and one Indigenous woman negotiate their subjectivities during processes of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction?** In order to do this, I followed two main goals of this research project: 1. Examine how reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction can help facilitate the negotiation of subjectivities and 2. Examine how reading fiction that is not white settler colonial in nature can create generative spaces for people to thrive, even within the current context.

To use the anticolonial feminism theory, I described above, means to also incorporate postmodern theories, through the use of postcolonial and decolonial theories which incorporate critical and postmodern thought. Anticolonial feminism allowed me to: examine my positionality in the research; purposefully recruit marginalized groups within the current white settler colonial state; deconstruct the power and knowledge within the white settler colonial discourse; utilize a desire-based research framing; and use affect theory as a method of collecting and interpreting the data. The use of literacy theories, as described above combining postmodern and critical lenses, means I could: examine constitutive subjectivities in postmodern terms through anticolonial and postmodern feminist Roland Sintos Coloma (2008); understand anticolonial counternarrative fiction through postmodern and critical theories; interpret reading as an embodied action and allows for possibilities to shift discourse; and focus on the hot spots as framed through affect theory (Ahmed, 2004a, 2010). Below I describe these differences and similarities of the frameworks in detail and how they work together in a compatible way for this research project.
Reading as a Process

For this research, it is necessary to bridge these two theories in order to examine what discursive strategies the participants negotiated during the processes of reading and during the discussion of the reading process. Concentrating on the affect, embodied action, and hot spots within the research allowed me to show the ways in which the participants negotiated their subjectivities during the process of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction. Reading these anticolonial counternarratives impacted the ways in which the women negotiated their subjectivities, as our subjectivities are constantly shifting and changing depending on our experiences. This is a key contribution of this research, as it examined the ways in which reading anticolonial counternarratives can open the possibility of a shift towards an anticolonial framing of subjectivities and subversion of white settler colonial classifications. This also bridges the political projects of both anticolonial feminism and literacy theories to critique the white settler colonial discourse we are constituted within.

Power, Knowledge, and Discourse

Using an anticolonial feminist literacy framework allowed me to view power through a postmodern lens. I see dominant discourses as reinforcing power structures in our current white settler colonial context; however, I see the importance in examining the way that power circulates and is not possessed by any one person or group of people. This research intentionally shifts the attention to the ways in which power circulates and the ways in which marginalized groups work against and refuse dominant discourses. Although we are always working within discourse, we can use the discourse to speak against marginalizing processes, a truly anticolonial feminist and critical literacy endeavour. Although within the discourses available, I explain how the women use anticolonial counternarrative fiction to create a new consciousness and more liveable lives by shifting discourses.

Agency and Anticolonial Counternarratives

As explained previously, I understand agency and desire as purposeful, and although never free from the constitutive nature of discourses, enable people to practice persistence and subversion efforts, which can shift and replace dominant discourses (Davies, 1991; Janks, 2010).
Agency can be seen as productive and complex, where there is always refusal (or persistence) within discourses (Tuck, 2009). Therefore, I interpret agency and desire through a postmodern lens, as explained previously, and see agency and desire as key to this research, as the participants read anticolonial counternarrative fiction to subvert normative, white settler colonial fiction. I also interpret these acts of subversion as part of the participants’ process of thriving. Although constituted by current white settler colonial discourse, people can find ways to thrive and subvert the dominant discourse.

I purposefully encouraged the participants to select anticolonial counternarrative fiction to read, which bridges the political efforts of the two frameworks. In practice, I used postmodern literacy theories to examine how the fiction, participant, and their subjectivities are constitutive of one another, through Sumara’s theory of ‘embodied action’ (1996). The choice to read anticolonial counternarratives is the anticolonial feminist starting point of the research, but the concentration is not on what the text says, but what happens during the reading process and how this interacts with the negotiation of the participants’ subjectivities.

Participant Selection

Through an anticolonial feminist literacy framework, I also carefully recruited the participants in ways that did not centre whiteness. The goal of this research was to examine these reading processes of anticolonial counternarrative fiction through the racialized and Indigenous participants’ perspective, in order to examine the productive and imaginative ways they negotiate their subjectivities through the fiction we read. To purposefully recruit and make central the experiences of racialized and Indigenous women, meant decenring whiteness within the current discourses.

Self-Reflexivity

Both anticolonial feminist and literacy theories helped me to remain self-reflexive through the research and remind me that I view, interpret, and record this research through my particular lens using the discourses available to me. They reminded me that in the current context I have multiple and shifting subject positions, some of which hold power within the white settler colonial state. As I am the researcher in the project, and one who was working with racialized
and Indigenous women, I must continue to be diligent in being self-reflexive of my privilege and my lens in which I view the data while always being cognisant that I can never be innocent as a white settler on stolen land.

Through this theoretical framework, I was able to reach my goal, which was twofold: 1. Examine how reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction can help facilitate the negotiation of subjectivities and 2. Examine how reading fiction that is not white settler colonial in nature can create generative spaces for people to thrive, even within the white settler colonial state.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Why Use a Feminist Deleuzian Methodological Framework?

To answer my research question, how do five women of colour and one Indigenous woman negotiate their subjectivities during processes of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction, I used a feminist Deleuzian methodological approach (Coleman, 2009; Ringrose & Coleman, 2013), which is rooted in qualitative and postmodern methodologies and my theoretical framework explained in the last chapter. I used this methodology as a purposeful move away from structuralist ways of knowing that aim to obtain ‘the truth’ (Fawcett, 2008) and to distinguish language from ‘reality’ (Butler-Kisber, 2012; MacLure, 2011). With this methodology, I did not aim to seek a ‘truth’ from the data collected, but aimed to ask difficult (Pitt & Britzman, 2003) or troubling (Lather, 2007) questions of the data. What I mean by this is that I aimed to look at the strategies the participants negotiated in order to examine their subjectivities in the moment within the current white settler colonial context. Seeking to answer difficult questions means that I focused on the ways dominant white settler colonial discourses constitute subjectivities, while also examining the ways participants subverted these dominant discourses. It also signifies my efforts to bring non-discursive experiences into the discursive, or through language re-presentation through the analysis of ‘hot spots.’ A constant tension through my research process was this attempt to describe the non-discursive, affective experiences, which can never fully be re-presented through language. It is also important to look at the difficult questions I asked of my self and my analysis of the data, as a white, cisgender researcher, working with racialized and Indigenous women.

Part of this methodological framework is rooted in Deleuze and Guattari’s (2014) theory of assemblage. Initially developed as a counter to the Hegelian concept of totality, assemblage theory sees each assemblage as being created of many heterogeneous parts that interact to create properties of a new whole that is not seamless (DeLanda, 2006; Deleuze & Guattari, 2009, 2014). Assemblages are in between strata and a rhizome. In the realm of strata, we are bound to structure, classification, subjectification, and identity labels (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). While this is the extreme structural aspect of this world, there also exists rhizomatic thinking, which erodes the stable, makes ‘illogical’ connections, is non-discursive, outside of subjectification, and is without beginning or end and only sees middles (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). Assemblage
theory allowed me to interpret the data as having “no roots, no starting place, no sequence, no ending place; only multiple sources, interruptions, interceptions, foldings, mergings, partings, multiple entry ways” (Tuck, 2010, p. 638). Assemblages are in-between spaces that allow for an understanding of the world as being both made up of discursive and non-discursive aspects, which will be explained in greater detail when I speak about recording the hot spots in the research. Incorporating assemblage theory into my methodology is a political act. Turning away from structural forms of knowing and data collection, I used assemblages to connote the constantly shifting, fluid, and multiple ways we negotiate our subjectivities. It allowed me to see all of the women a part of this research as multiple, differently racialized, gendered, with different education and experiences, family lives, and geographical locations (past and present), which all affect the way the live in the world. Assemblage theory also allowed me to see the data through a ‘both/and’ lens which interprets subjectivities as constitutive of our current contexts and prior experiences and not as binaries, which is shown through Kiara’s and Min-seo’s being ‘in-between’ in Chapter Five. To use assemblage theory means that I also examined the data as shifting and never final, never universal, and never telling a ‘whole’ story or experience.

This methodology is anticolonial and feminist in nature, as it sought to examine how the discourses “work to materialize the coercive norms of patriarchy and gender” (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013, p. 127) as well as sexuality, race, and Indigeneity, and aimed to subvert white settler colonial, patriarchal classifications. This framework contextualizes my self as a cisgender, queer woman and OISE student as part of the ‘group,’ who interviewed other past and present OISE students who were cisgender women, some of whom were not heterosexual, and all of whom identified as racialized or Indigenous. As I included only racialized and Indigenous folks as participants, we have different experiences and ways of becoming in this world. As they shared their experiences, I constantly kept in mind that I was both/and insider/outsider and researcher/researched, and call attention to these subject positions throughout the dissertation in order to dislodge conventional, patriarchal, white settler colonial research (Coleman, 2009). This framework allowed me to recognize my role in the research and what my own experiences, knowledges, and subjectivities as a queer, able-bodied, white settler woman from a working class family not only brought to the research, but constituted the research (Coleman, 2009; Macoun, 2016).

As a white, cisgender researcher, I am both/and insider/outsider and research/researched. Although I felt I could relate to the group as all were women who were past or present OISE
students and some were not heterosexual, I remained an outsider and a person of privilege within the current white settler colonial state. In order to ensure I did not reinforce the power relationships within the current white settler colonial discourse, I purposefully used a feminist, anticolonial lens in all aspects of this research. However, I view this research project similarly to Lather (1991) in that no research is value-free and although I am a white settler, I aimed to create a project that is “explicitly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society” (Lather, 1991, pp. 51). As explained previously, I remained self-reflexive of the privilege I hold as a white cisgender female in the current sociopolitical context, while recognizing again that I can never be innocent as a white settler. Throughout the research, I constantly troubled the lens that I viewed the world through and negotiated my positionality as a white settler. In order to do this and to be conscious of the power dynamics, I purposefully created participant engagement in the project. Explained in detail in the methods section of this chapter, I ensured those participating in this research selected the texts we read and they felt were representative of anticolonial, counternarrative fiction; the participants were the centre of the book club discussions and shared, while I listened; they decided how and in what form they responded to the fiction; I met with each person one-on-one to discuss the data and asked they share their input and perspectives of the data collected; and I analyzed the data through mapping processes which do not conform to the colonial and structural methods of representation of research. I also recruited the participants through this anticolonial feminist lens in order to de-centre whiteness and the perspectives and experiences of white people. However, it is still my lens that dominated the research project and I was the one that asked the majority of the questions in the book club and one-on-one meetings. This is important to note, as again, this is one small version of the narrative and through my particular lens as a white settler woman.

Using a feminist Deleuzian methodology allowed me to conduct this research in a way that is compatible with my anticolonial feminist literacy theoretical framework. How the research was conducted cannot be separated from my theoretical framework (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013), as the “methodology should never be separated from epistemology and ontology (as if it can be) lest it become mechanized and instrumental and reduced to methods, process, and technique” (St. Pierre, 2014, p. 3). Through developing my theoretical framework to conduct my research, I have (and continue to) develop the lenses in which I see the world, and I have not only learned about the theory I explained in the last chapter, but have conceived the research in terms of this theory. One cannot take apart their theory and practice, and this explanation of my methodological framework is really an explanation of my practice through the
lenses I viewed the research. These theories I have combined have enabled me to “theorize my own life” (St. Pierre, 2001, p. 146), and ways I can help deconstruct and refuse white settler colonial discourse. Using a feminist Deleuzian framework enabled me to dig deeper into the white settler colonial discourses in which we are situated that are always impacting the way we negotiate our subjectivities.

This methodology allowed me to map the becomings of the participants’ constitutive subjectivities through the process of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction, and helped to interpret how the participants navigated their gendered, sexualized, and racialized subjectivities in the moment. Through the meetings I asked: how does reading anticolonial counternarratives en/dis-able certain negotiations of subjectivities? This helped examine the ways they subverted normative subject positions through their reading practices. In order to do this, I also asked: how does reading this anticolonial counternarrative fiction create generative spaces for these racialized and Indigenous women to thrive, even within the white settler colonial state? Asking for racialized and Indigenous people’s perspectives and experiences de-centres white experiences, often seen in research.

Again, I was not seeking a ‘truth’ of this data, but have mapped partial experiences that emerged through the data. As explained earlier, a postmodern lens in this research interprets truths as multiple and shifting. To state that there is no ‘truth,’ but multiple, shifting perspectives which are constituted by the discourses in which we are embedded in, means to turn away from colonial and structural assumptions of ‘reality.’ To examine the partial experiences re-presented in the data brings attention to the ways that truths are socially constructed and situated. Examining these partial experiences meant examining the ways in which the experiences were constitutive of the white settler colonial discourse, but also the ways in which people subverted this dominant discourse.

I also see this research as immanent, and see reading as an immanent practice, not a practice of transcendence. Immanence and transcendence are opposing views of reading, learning, and success in general. White settler colonial discourse favours transcendental thinking, where each task is accomplished and there is an end goal to attain, often seen in education and literacy research. It is related to the ‘acquisitive’ thinking that dominates western discourses (Kulago, 2016). Transcendence is related to obtaining or acquiring knowledge and ‘truth.’ I understood both reading and the research through a lens of immanence, not transcendence.
Immanence is a non-acquisitive way of viewing reading and research, in that reading and research are not a means to an end or aim to attain a ‘reading level,’ but part of a process of connecting and creating knowledges and experiences. Immanence means that there is no ultimate end-point to attain, but constant becomings. Viewing the data and research through a lens of immanence is an anticolonial feminist act, in that it allowed for individual experiences to be connected in various ways to the whole, through horizontal connections, instead of the common, structural and colonial hierarchal, vertical connections (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013). This allowed us to enjoy in the book club without any end ‘goal,’ but the women negotiated their subjectivities and had conversations about the ways they read the two books. This immanent and rhizomatic lens of the research and reading processes are counter to the linear, structural approaches to research and reading. I interpret fiction through this lens, where it is not a place where people obtain knowledge, but reading fiction is a process of creating knowledges, experiences, and realities. Like all experiences, it is part of the process of becoming. Through the immanent lens of the research, I asked what these texts do, not what do they mean.

This framework allowed me to see the research rhizomatically, through immanence rather than transcendence, or dynamic rather than static interpretations (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). In other words, it allowed me to see and create new ideas that are fluid, changing, generative, and multiple. Creating a research project that allowed for me to see and create ideas that are fluid and changing was an important and anticolonial feminist task. Viewing our relationships, experiences, subjectivities, and data as fluid and changing is counter to structuralist, transcendental ways of thinking and viewing the world and research. Utilizing a feminist Deleuzian methodology allowed for the data to be both generative and multiple. Explained in detail in the ‘Data Analysis and Representation’ section of this chapter, this methodology allowed me to interpret the data as always generative and multiple. Through the lens of immanence, the research journey created knowledges and allowed for multiple and differing interpretations of the data. This is counter to transcendental forms of research, which seek to make conclusions and generalizations of the data and research experience. It also takes into account not only what is being said within the data, but allowed me to focus on the affect or non-verbal communication that occurred during the research. As explained previously, it is not trying to understand any ‘truth’ or ‘reality,’ but “explore the partial and located experiences I am told in the research without searching for what these experiences might ‘really’ mean but also without neglecting to consider the conditions under which these experiences are produced” (Coleman,
2009, p. 72). In the next section, I will explain how I used this theory to uncover affective knowledges and hot spots.

My goal within this feminist Deleuzian methodology was to map what reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction does. Ultimately, this framework allowed me to see how reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction took place within current white settler colonial discourses, and what this meant for the negotiation of the participants’ subjectivities, in this moment. As explained by Ringrose and Coleman (2013), “a means of mapping the relations in desiring machines… is a methodology of looking differently at connections” (p. 125). I will explain in detail my process of mapping later, but in short, my process of mapping allowed me to map the data in an immanent not transcendental way, which allowed for a making and re-making of connections of the data “horizontally, immanently, rather than (only) as a result of vertical hierarchies” (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013, p. 125).

Utilizing a Feminist Deleuzian Methodological Framework to Uncover Affective Knowledges

Working with the group, I examined the spaces between them and my self to interrogate what happened in these in-between spaces (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007). As mentioned previously, the goal of my research was to examine what the texts do, not what they say. Understanding reading, not as a transcendental act with an end goal, but as an immanent way of connecting to experiences and knowledges helped to examine the negotiations of subjectivities as constantly becoming through our various experiences (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). This methodology allowed me to uncover the ways the participants were subjectified through white settler colonial discourse, which aimed to place meaning to their subjectivities, while they also subverted these subjectifications through a negotiation of their rhizomatic, affective subjectivities during their reading practices (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). In other words, within the current white settler colonial discourse, certain subject positions are available and made liveable, but these do not tell the whole story of a person’s experiences and their becomings through their multiple and changing experiences. This is shown in detail in Chapter Four, through Carolina’s becoming a more liveable version of a bilingual-racialized-immigrant-woman.

Through anticolonial feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed’s (2004a, 2010) work on affect, I understand the ‘hot spots,’ as explained by MacLure (2013a, 2013b), as key to this research. As
explained by Deleuze and Guattari (2014), there are non-discursive elements in this world which are not subjectified, or cannot be named. Affect can be seen as non-subjectified or non-discursive, as it is a pre-social or pre-conscious. These affects, or the gut feelings and in-between emotions and reactions is what I focused on within the data. I label these, as MacLure (2013a) does, as ‘hot spots’ within the research. These disruptive moments within the data are important as they are moments of “productive disconcertion… that undermine the analyst’s imperial self-assurance” (p. 172). Mapping these hot spots prioritized the analysis of the relations between affects, which enabled the opportunity to transform and open up the data (Jackson, 2013) and brought attention to the instability of the data (Wyatt, Gale, Gannon, Davies, Denzin, & St. Pierre, 2014).

I paid attention to those “things that gradually grow, or glow into greater significance than others, and become the preoccupations around which thought and writing cluster”; however, always going back to the data in a different time, with different experiences will create different items of interest or ‘hot spots’ (MacLure, 2013a, p. 175). In order to find these ‘hot spots,’ I created field notes which aimed to capture these affective intensities through language in the moment. Of course, these were always partial and incomplete re-presentations of the affective knowledge in circulation. I created these field notes during the book club discussion meetings, one-on-one meetings, during my own reading process, and during the analysis process. To try and name these intensities or hot spots was an ongoing difficulty of the research. In order to ensure the participants were also involved in the process of trying to name these intense hot spots, I asked them to also note these affective knowledges in their journaling processes and asked them about the hot spots in our one-on-one meetings. These experiences of intense affect are more than just a ‘feeling,’ but are part of a “prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation of diminution in that body’s capacity to act” (Massumi, 2004, p. xvii). Of course, this is all to say that analyzing is never complete, but “there is a radical possibility in the unfinalised” (Jackson, 2013, p. 123). Trying to name these hot spots from non-discursive experiences into discursive form was a constant tension in the research, which I aimed to alleviate in part through poetry re-presentation, explained in the last section of this chapter.

Examining the data by concentrating on the hot spots allowed me to interpret the data as always becoming, in motion, and part of/in the world (Jackson, 2013). I mapped the partial experiences that glowed in the research, in order to examine the interactions in-between the data and through the processes of reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction. This allowed me to
examine the middles, not the beginnings or endings (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). It also allowed me to examine my influence and constitutiveness of the data as both creation and interpretation and to blend my theory with my practice in the book club (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). In the last section of this chapter, I explain how I did this mapping through the concentration of hot spots in the data, which was collected through the participants’ journaling of their affective experiences, as well as my own journaling and field notes of my perception of the affective knowledges in circulation in my own reading process, during the book club discussions, and during and after the one-on-one meeting.

Participant Recruitment

In May 2017 I received ethics approval to recruit youth participants for the research study. I distributed posters (see Appendix A) to the 519 Community Centre, Planned Parenthood Toronto, Sherbourne Health Centre, many Toronto Public Library locations, First Nations House, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Youth-focused homeless shelters, various youth community centres in the downtown core, over 150 community centres across the GTA, the YMCA, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, many open Facebook groups, and I also created an event page which I circulated on Facebook. I chose these places through the guidance of friends and with the knowledge that racialized and Indigenous youth who have non-normative genders and/or sexualities frequent these places.

Initially, I aimed to include between three and six secondary school students who: 1) were between the ages of 14 and 18; 2) identified as female or gender-nonconforming; 3) identified as having non-normative sexualities and/or genders; and 4) identified as racialized, a person of colour, and/or Indigenous. I wanted to recruit youth between the ages of 14 and 18, as this is the average age of a secondary school student. Including secondary school students was my goal, as this age is a very important time of our life and it was my experiences of non-representation within fiction in my youth brought me to this research. Unfortunately, after four months of intensive recruitment activities, I was unable to recruit any youth that fit the criteria. I reflected on this and the recruitment process and realized that I had been naïve to assume I could become in relationship with marginalized youth, when I do not have any ties to the community. I wanted to still focus my research on racialized and Indigenous women and gender non-conforming folks as to not centre whiteness, but decided to recruit current and past University of
Toronto/Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE) students, as OISE is a community I belonged to as a graduate student. I altered my ethics to state I would be recruiting current and past OISE students who identify as women or gender non-conforming and as racialized, a person of colour, and/or Indigenous. My amendment to the ethics application was approved in September 2017 and I began recruitment the same month. I put posters up at OISE (see Appendix A) and created a Facebook event which I shared with Facebook friends and very quickly received contact from six interested participants (within 2 weeks). All of the people that took part in this research identify as women, racialized or Indigenous, and are current or past OISE graduate students. There were two women that contacted me that were not racialized or Indigenous, which I did not accept to be a part of the project. In addition to this, there was one additional person that wanted to take part in the research, but could not attend any of the meetings because of scheduling conflicts, so was not included in the project.

I purposefully recruited women and gender non-conforming folks (although only women-identified folks joined) who are from differently Indigenous, racialized, and sexuality subject positions to examine the varying ways the white settler colonial discourse affected the ways in which they negotiated their subjectivities during processes of reading fiction. It is evident that there were power dynamics at play, as I am a white, cisgender settler woman who was working with five women of colour and one Indigenous, Cree-Italian woman. Although I am a white settler and can never experience the kinds of marginalization the participants negotiate in the white settler colonial society, I continued to be self-reflexive during the research project and the privilege I hold in the current socio-historical context. As these women are marginalized by white settler colonial discourse in specific ways, it is important to focus on these experiences, rather than centring my own and other white experiences.

Methods

I used some ‘traditional’ forms of qualitative data collection, alongside this feminist Deleuzian framework because I may exclude both participants and readers if I depart too far from ‘acceptable’ forms of research (Strom, 2015). That being said, the way in which we enacted these more ‘traditional’ methods was unique, as I will explain each one and how the processes were anticolonial and feminist below. In order to subvert the structuralist, colonial way of collecting and analyzing data, which gives importance to credibility, triangulation, and truth, I conducted this research in a way that worked for the group and the group was comfortable with.
Below, I explain the methods used in the research project: a book club discussion group, journaling, one-on-one meetings, and field notes. Having these approaches for collecting different moments allowed for different ways of knowing to emerge and facilitated different conversations and views of the reading processes. The goal of collecting the moments in this way was to gather: 1) the strategies the participants negotiated in order to examine their subjectivities in the white settler colonial discourse; 2) how reading this fiction en/dis-abled certain negotiations of subjectivities; 3) how the participants subverted normative subject positions through their reading practices; and 4) how reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction created generative spaces for them to thrive and persist.

Book Club Discussion Group

The largest part of the data collection came from the book club discussion groups (Blackburn, 2012). Book clubs allow for people to talk about the fiction they read, in a way that allows for a collective sense-making process (Kovach, 2009). Utilizing group discussions allowed a different discussion between the participants that could not be had during one-on-one interviews (Kovach, 2009). The community dynamic of the book club really helped enhance the conversation around the thought processes and feelings around the participants’ reading processes (Jarvis & Barberena, 2008). Experiencing a book club context together also allowed for a different understanding of not only the book, but the way we viewed our selves and others in the settler colonial context, which changes based on group dynamics and subject positions (Broughton, 2002; Janzen, 2015; Sumara, 1996). The purpose of the book club discussion group was to have conversations about the fiction we read, what the reading process was like, how it impacted each person, if the women viewed the process of reading this fiction as able to subvert normative subject positions, and how the women felt their subjectivities changed during reading processes. These ‘open’ conversations are counter to rigid, colonial ways of data collection and allowed for participants to enjoy the research process through engaging in a book club. I specifically chose book club discussions as a method to ensure the participants enjoyed the research project and were able to receive back from it. Conducting interviews with people as a method of ‘extracting’ data is very colonial and does not consider how the participants are benefitting from this project. Please see Appendix D for the guiding questions I developed for each meeting.
Prior to the first meeting, I emailed the six participants with instructions to send me any food restrictions they had and any book title(s) that they would like to read in the anticolonial counternarrative book club group. I found summaries of each book that was shared and shared these in our first meeting with the six members. However, before we discussed the book we would read, we discussed our positionalities and what brought each of us to the space. We also had a discussion where each person explained how they understood anticolonial and counternarrative fiction in this first meeting. This was for community-development so that people could feel more comfortable sharing in the space. To ensure everyone understood the research process and process of consent, we also went over the written consent form aurally. Please see Appendix B for the Information Letter and Informed Consent form. After we got to know each other, it was in this meeting that the women decided to read *Native Speaker* (Lee, 1995) and meet two times (half way through the book and at the end of the book) through conversation and consensus. They also determined that the book club should last about one and a half hours each time we met. I set the dates of each meeting after emailing each person to find a date that worked for everyone. I decided to do this as people did not have their schedules with them in the meeting and it would take a lot of time.

We met as a group about one month after our initial meeting after having read half of *Native Speaker* and we met again a month after that to discuss the book after completing it in its entirety. At the second meeting where we discussed *Native Speaker*, I asked the women if they would want to read another book together, as we discussed some of the negative, colonial aspects of the book through one-on-one conversations and within the book club. Everyone agreed and was excited to read another book together. At the end of the meeting, I showed a list of five books I thought fit the genre of anticolonial counternarrative fiction and asked the group if they would want to read one of these, or if they would want to read something not a part of the list I created. A few of the women instantly gravitated to *The Marrow Thieves* and were excited at the idea of reading a young adult fiction. So, the women decided they would all like to read *The Marrow Thieves*.

*Native Speaker* Summary

I’d like to pause to explain the two books, which will explain in part why we decided to read a second book together for the research project. *Native Speaker* was written by Chang-rae Lee who immigrated to the United States when he was a young child from South Korea. The novel follows the main character and narrator, Henry Park, who was born in the US, but whose
parents were born in South Korea. The narrative explains Henry’s life in the US and the many ways he aims to assimilate into the American society to become a ‘true American’ or ‘native speaker.’ Henry shares many life events related to his subject position and the complicated issues of assimilation and racism throughout his child and adulthood. Henry is married to a white woman and is a spy, and the story centres on his relationship with a Korean-American politician who he has been hired to spy on. Henry’s tactics of assimilation are always met with the realization that although he is almost a ‘native speaker,’ he will always be seen as Other because of his race, culture, and behaviour. Near the novel’s close, Henry leaves his job as a spy but before doing so shares information with the spy organization which results in hundreds of people being deported. The way in which he does the colonizer’s work, along with the way in which he speaks about women throughout the book, was a tension brought up in the book club and will be discussed throughout the data analysis. Some of the members did not view this novel as an anticolonial book, but more of a counternarrative, as it was a genuine portrayal of immigrant life in the US and all of its complexities. As not everyone really connected with the text, I wanted to try another text that I felt was more anticolonial, which is what brought us to The Marrow Thieves.

The Marrow Thieves Summary

*The Marrow Thieves* was written by Cherie Dimaline, who is from the Georgian Bay Métis community. In this book, we read through the narration of the Métis main character Frenchie in his journey in running from recruiters, building community, and fighting against colonialism. This Indigenous-dystopian narrative, although speculative fiction, has many parallels to reality, and is almost a story of what will happen if settler colonialism continues on its path in this Southern Ontario context. Because of intense environmental degradation due to capitalism and greed, the population becomes very sick in their bodies and minds, and non-Indigenous people lose their ability to dream. The settlers realize Indigenous peoples still have the ability to dream and determine through experimentation that the key to solve their dreaming problem is extracting Indigenous peoples’ bone marrow. The settlers in power develop schools/hospitals, eerily similar to residential schools, in order to ‘harvest’ the bone marrow from Indigenous peoples.

In this fast-paced book, we learn about the many ways in which Frenchie and the other Indigenous peoples across many Nations survive while being hunted by recruiters. Recruiters are those that hunt the Indigenous peoples and bring them back to the institutions where they will be
murdered for their bone marrow. Frenchie builds love and family in a group of Indigenous people on the run, who is led by Miigwaans, an Anishinaabe man who we learn lost his husband to recruiters. Through their survival, the group becomes a family and shares what brought them to the place. The oldest member of the group and elder, Minerva, is captured by recruiters and the group creates a plan to save her. It is through this that the group realizes that the key to defeating the settlers is in Minerva’s singing, which destroyed the school she was being held captive in. Although there is much hardship, abuse, and death in *The Marrow Thieves*, the narrative instills a type of hope and shows how traditional healing, community, and persistence can overcome colonialism.

Choosing the Books

There are many different methods of choosing a book for book clubs (Sedo, 2002). Some researchers select the text for the readers (Heard, 2015; Heller, 2006; Janzen, 2015; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Turbill, et. al., 2013), some researchers allow readers to collaboratively select the text from a list of options through a vote or by surveying readers (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), and others allow the readers to choose any book they would like and read individually to bring back to the collective group (Blackburn, 2002; Harland, 2010). As explained by Ooi and Liew (2011), readers often select books depending on their mood and their desire to find new everyday life environments, which I tried to honour in this research process. For the initial book club, I wanted to ensure the women had the power to decide what they read. As a white settler researcher, I wanted to ensure I was cognisant of the way I negotiated power in the group.

I came to the decision to have the participants choose the first book, with a lot of thought and care. I had difficulty deciding whether I would choose the book, choose five and have the group vote on one, or have each individual choose their own. I decided, as an anticolonial feminist act, for the group to decide what book we read collectively, or if they would like, to each read a book of their choice. Nobody in the book club wanted to read individual books and they all decided they would rather read the same book to discuss it together. If I had chosen the initial book or had the women choose from selected texts, there would be an assumption that they would not choose a book that ‘worked’ for this research or was not an ‘anticolonial counternarrative’ fiction and I do not think the same community could have been developed. Behind these assumptions of not choosing the right text is also an assumption of the participants as not knowledgeable or capable of making the right choice of book in order to explain how they can subvert white settler colonial normative subject positions.
After developing community in the group and getting to know the women, I felt it was okay for me to offer suggestions for our second book club book. I had developed trust from the group and I felt that they believed I valued their input in the research. It was only after this trust was established that I brought the list of five books to the table for them to choose, while also leaving the conversation open to select other texts outside of this list. As explained, the women collectively and excitedly selected *The Marrow Thieves*, as the text we would read for our second book club book. The way in which I compiled this list of the five books was somewhat organic. I searched online for book lists that included the genre ‘anticolonial’ and scoured book lists that were not only antiracist, but spoke against settler colonialism. In addition to *The Marrow Thieves*, I also shared *Islands of Decolonial Love* (L. Simpson, 2015), which was a book recommended by one of the book club members for our introductory meeting and includes short stories and poems by the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and author (and whom I draw on extensively throughout this dissertation). I also included another young adult fiction *Love Beyond Body, Space, and Time: An Indigenous LGBT Sci-Fi Anthology* (Nicholson, 2016), which includes short stories by and about LGBT Indigenous peoples. I included another book of short stories from a social justice perspective, *Octavia’s Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* (Brown & Imarisha, 2015). The women were not excited about reading short stories though and wanted to be fully immersed in a longer, more detailed novel/narrative. The last book I suggested was *The Salt Roads* (Hopkinson, 2003), but it was the lowest rated (according to goodreads.com rankings) and the group seemed very excited about the possibility of reading *The Marrow Thieves* together, as it had just been awarded the Kirkus Prize (US-based award) and the White Pine Award (Ontario Library Association award). This, combined with the fact that it was a fast-paced young adult fiction in comparison to the complicated and long narrative of *Native Speaker*, allowed for the choice to organically be determined.

Overall, the book club met five times for between one and a half and two hours each time, which was determined by the women in the book club. We had our introductory meeting as explained, the two meetings for *Native Speaker* as explained, and then we followed the same schedule meeting after one month for the half way point and then one month after we finished *The Marrow Thieves*. I purchased the books for all participants and delivered them to each person about one month before we met to discuss them at the half way point. I also brought dinner to each meeting, as sharing snacks is a common practice in book club groups. This will be discussed more in Chapter Six: Reading for the Development of an Anticolonial Community of
I will also discuss how the space of the book club, although within the colonial institution of OISE/The University of Toronto, became a different feeling in the book club space with the women, food, and conversation. I reimbursed all members of the group for their transportation costs getting to/from OISE.

Initially, I decided to video record the book club meetings. I thought that this would be the best way for me to gather data, especially for the non-verbal communication. I felt that to ‘see’ these moments of dis/comfort and intense affect could only be ‘verified’ if it was video recorded. After having a conversation with my thesis supervisor, Dr. Heather Sykes, we came to realize that trying to collect this information through video could disallow the data from being obtained because of the insertion of the video camera as an invasive tool/machine. It did not make sense to insert a colonial tool of intense surveillance into an anticolonial feminist project/space. Bringing a video camera into the room would change the dynamic and it favours the visual in affect, when what happened in the room was felt deeply in the body. Assuming that the video camera would bring ‘verification’ of experience is also counter to the theoretical framework I utilized, as it assumes a truth, where no matter what tools or ‘verification’ processes were enacted, it is still through my lens that the data was collected and analyzed. I did audio record all book club meetings and one-on-one meetings and transcribed the audio. I sent all of the transcripts to the participants and they verified that the information was representative of what they shared. I also shared the initial poem in Chapter 4 with Carolina and the initial poem and discussion in Chapter 5 with Aadhya to ensure they were comfortable with my representation of their subjectivities and what they shared.

Journaling

I asked the participants to submit reading journals after finishing each of the books. The participants were not restricted in the amount or type of writing they submitted as a part of their journals. I encouraged them to write descriptively in a way that they felt comfortable with, which could include autobiographical journaling, writing poetry, drawing, painting, collaging, and any other form of expression they would like. I also encouraged them to write in the book’s margins and in their journal or art-form as they read the book, so that they could reflect on the process in the moment. The goals and flexibility of this journaling process were discussed in the first meeting and I provided each person with a notebook to write in (while also noting they could use something else if they preferred). Five of the participants submitted journals via written prose
and one participant, Samantha (pseudonym) submitted audio journals of her reflections during her reading processes. Allowing the participants to submit journals in whatever form they were comfortable with aimed to subvert rigid rules of ‘journaling’ and allowed the women to decide what and how they reflected on their reading processes, rather than prescribing the process of journaling from the researcher in a position of power. This again allowed for an anticolonial feminist way of conducting the research.

In our initial book club meeting, I explained to the participants that the goal of this journaling process was to record their feelings as they read the book, how they felt the book was affecting their subjectivities, and how they felt their subjectivities and experiences were affecting the way they read the book. I provided them with guiding questions they could choose to use or not (see Appendix C). They were also encouraged to discuss any moments of disruption, uncomfortableness, or ‘gut feelings’ during their reading processes. These journals were collected as part of the analysis process, but also allowed for a self-reflexive opportunity for the participants to work through their experiences and/or emotions during their reading processes (Wyatt, Gale, Gannon, Davies, Denzin, & St. Pierre, 2014). I also took part in this journaling process to record my own thoughts and experiences during my reading of the two books. As examined earlier, this focus on aiming to record these feelings and processes of negotiating subjectivities is an anticolonial feminist choice, as it does not seek a ‘truth’ or ‘conclusion,’ but an examination of the processes during the reading of anticolonial counternarrative fiction.

One-on-One Post-Book Club Meetings

When we finished each of the books, I met with each person individually to bring my analysis and re-presentations of the data to them. I met all six participants after the first book for between 40 and 120 minutes. After reading the second book, I met five of the six participants for between 35 and 120 minutes (I will explain the missing participant shortly). Meeting one-on-one worked as a check-in process, where they could see the mapping process I initiated and include their thoughts, changes, additions, or concerns about my re-presentation of the experiences (Kvale, 2007; Morgan, 2008). This was also a chance for the participants to include anything they felt was important that I had missed. I also used these one-on-one meetings as an opportunity to dig deeper into the hot spots that arose during the book club discussion. I used these one-on-one meetings to ask the women about the book club process, the hot spots, and how
they felt it impacted them. Although these meetings were somewhat casual conversations, they were organized similarly to semi-structured interviews. The main goal of these one-on-one meetings though was to check in with each person individually and allowed the women to be included in the decision making of where the research focused. Allowing the participants access and participation to the data collection process was an important, anticolonial feminist choice. Please see Appendix E for guiding questions for the one-on-one meetings.

After reading *The Marrow Thieves*, I collected all of the journals from the women but had a complicated encounter with one of the participants. In February 2018, after our last book club meeting, I asked Thuy (pseudonym) if she was finished writing her journals and she explained that she could give me the journals that Friday. I told her I could come on the Sunday (I had my nieces with me that weekend) and she said that she may be able to type them before then and send them to me via email. I replied that she could do either, whichever she was most comfortable with. That Saturday, Thuy messaged me and explained she could send the journals via email instead of meeting in person the next day. I asked if she was sure, as I did not mind coming and she replied that it is no problem and she would send them the next day. I did not want to push Thuy about the journals because I knew she was busy with her program at OISE, so I waited two weeks before messaging her, as she did not send the journals via email. She did not reply to my text message or subsequent email I sent. After waiting a couple weeks, I checked in again and told her I did not need the journals, but wanted to check to see if everything was okay. We had developed a friendship through the book club and one-on-one sessions, so I genuinely wanted to ensure she was okay (whether or not her hardship, assuming she had them, were due to the journaling). I never heard back from her. I sent her the transcripts in September 2018 and again asked her to let me know if she wanted me to take her input out of the research (this was something I mentioned in an email that I sent her in March). Although I did receive initial consent, unfortunately I did not hear back from Thuy after reading the last book. Because of this, as well as the missing one-on-one meeting after the second book, Thuy’s voice is not prominent in this dissertation. I have shared a few moments in the data that Thuy shared in the book clubs and her journals, but as I could not check in with her, I did not concentrate any sections or poems around her reading processes.
Field Notes

During the research process from May 2017 when I started recruitment until the process of writing the chapters, I completed field notes throughout the research project (Brodsky, 2008). These field notes became both an aspect of the research I analyzed, as well as its own form of reflection and analysis during the research process (Augustine, 2010), where I wrote during the recruitment stage, during and directly after all of our meetings, as well as during the analysis process. These field notes were an important aspect of the mapping process within the analysis, as it highlighted hot spots in the research moments, as well as started the process of making connections between the different forms of data collection (i.e., book club discussions, one-on-one meetings, etc.).

The field notes that I recorded during the book club discussion groups noted any intense hot spots that I perceived during the discussions. As explained previously, the Deleuzian-inspired understanding of affect I utilized in this research project recognizes the hot spots in the research as,

visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally \textit{other than} conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion--that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability. (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 1)

I see affect and the hot spots in the research in a similar vein as Deleuze, where affect is not synonymous with emotion, but comes before it, and it is this affect that shapes the body’s response and emotion/emotional reaction. This means that I aimed to ‘catch’ these moments to bring them into language through my reflection. These field notes also helped me keep record of my own thoughts, feelings, and reflections during the research process, which helped to understand how they are interconnected in the research and hot spots (Brodsky, 2008). As explained previously, this intentional focus on affective knowledges was an anticolonial feminist act, which gave importance to these knowledges outside of language and called attention to the partial, always incomplete nature of collecting data/conducting research.

The Members of the Book Club

Here I will describe the members and the community that was developed in the book club. This is a difficult process, as the subjectivities of these women continue to shift and
become and everything I write here is one part of a much larger story. Describing the women to introduce you into the research may help guide the reader, but it is important to remember that this introduction to the women is partial. I bring the women into this chapter to share a little bit about who they were becoming in the first meeting we met. I started the first meeting by explaining the first meeting was just to get to know each other and the goals of the research. I also explained that I wanted their feedback into what they want the book club to look like or what they wanted out of the book club. I then asked people to introduce themselves with their name, preferred pronoun, and what brought them to the space.

Me: So, yeah, let’s start out with that, so I’ll start. My name is Shawna and I go by she/her pronouns.

Min-Seo: Hi, my name is [Min-Seo] I go by she. I joined this book club or I decided to join. I recently finished my thesis on identity and this is fairly close to what I researched on and I had a privilege to work with Shawna during my graduate years and I know how awesome she is (laughs), so that’s why I’m here.

Me: Oooh, thank you!

Thuy: I’m [Thuy]. I use she/her pronouns as well. I’m here because I’m very interested in writing and what gets published, mostly because I’m a writer as well and I’m interested in reading more books that have better representation.

Aadhya: I’m [Aadhya]. I’m she as well. And the reason I’m here - I think curiosity. I’m very interested in your objective of this project having experienced some of it myself, so you know delving more and listening and hearing and reading more, was just my curious intake on this.

Me: Thank you.

Kiara: Hi, I’m [Kiara]. My pronouns are she and her. I don’t know how to articulate this, I’m sure I’ll figure it out over the next couple of months (laughs). I also did some work on identity specifically more with the LGBTQ community in my graduate research and
focusing on creating safe spaces for children who may be identifying or questioning, and one of the ways that a strategy that was identified by all of my participants was to make those identities represented in the classroom and through school community, so it kinda hit the nail on the head. But I’ve kind of been grappling with my own identity throughout my graduate work. I did my undergrad in comparative literature in 16th century, so I think I’ve always been reading the work of people who I don’t identify with and I didn’t really I couldn’t put a name on that feeling of tension until I started graduate work and learned the terminology and discourse around it. I was like oooohkay, this is what it is, so I’m going through that and I don’t know, I thought it’d be a nice time to talk to some people that might feel the same way.

(during this talk from Kiara, people nodding, agreeing)

Carolina: My name is [Carolina] and I also go by she or her, and I joined for a couple of reasons. So, actually where I work they have an immigrant women’s book club that I always wanted to join (laughs) but I couldn’t join it and it’s sort of similar to this. It’s not a research project, but it’s sort of similar in terms of like they’re all reading books by non-white women and it’s also racialized women, so that would appeal to me and then I saw your call and I was like ‘oh my god! It’s another one! Yes!’ and then also because I’ve worked with you, Shawna before and I think you’re awesome, as well.

(laughs)

Carolina: [Min-seo] said. And also because umm as [Thu-thu]

Thuy: [Thuy]

Carolina: [Thuy], sorry I’m just going to write that down. I’m terrible with names.

Thuy: You can call me [Thu].

Carolina: It’s okay. As [Thuy] said, my interest is also in this lacking of representation and like Kiara said, when I was growing up, all the books I read did not have people like
me in it, so I feel pretty strongly about this, about the idea of reading yourself in the media around you so that’s also why, so yeah.

Samantha: Hi, sorry I was a little bit late. I’m [Samantha]. I go by she/her. First I wanted to take this on cause I love Shawna (laughs) and then a couple of the other reasons are, actually one of the main reason I went to OISE is because I wanted to study to be a sex therapist, but through a variety of different lenses and so that’s what my research is focused on is sexual pleasure in different forms, but right after I finished my course work I got hired to the [Indigenous organization], and so I’ve done a lot of travelling and work with them and the number of stories I hear even through them as they sort of try to grasp, especially the younger ones who are fresh out of high school, they’re trying to grasp themselves through literature and stuff that they’re reading and those kinds of stories, along with stories from the communities that they come from and stories of sexual violence and all those other things actually really made me start thinking about the way that I’ve come to identify, through the things that I’ve learned and so, this kind of felt like, sort of fun, but sort of like, oh this is gonna be a little bit challenging-

(a few members: mmhmm)

Samantha: feeling that I really wanted to jump on this year, so thanks.

Me: Thank you. Thanks everyone and thanks for all the love.

Through the book club meetings, one-on-one meetings, and journals submitted by each person, I got to know each of them a bit better. Explained in much more detail in the following chapters, each person came to the space from very different subject positions and experiences. Of course, my understanding of each woman’s subject positions and character is again partial and through my lens as a white settler and queer woman.

To give you a partial idea of how these women are perceived in the world, which impacts their own subjectivities and experiences of marginalization, I will explain each person now in the order that they introduced them selves in the meeting. Part of this information came from an initial questionnaire I asked the potential participants to complete so that I could ensure they met the criteria for the project. Each person responded through email and I use their framings of their
subject positions. Although I share this information which includes many labels, it again is partial and only part of who they are, which is constantly changing.

Min-Seo identified as a female, heterosexual, Asian/Korean and was 30 years old when she joined the book club. Her family immigrated to Canada from South Korea when she was younger. Min-Seo chooses not to share the age when she immigrated to Canada, as she has felt intense judgement and bias around placing an age to her arrival. Min-seo graduated from OISE with a master’s degree. Next was Thuy, who turned 25 shortly after the research began and was the second youngest of the group. She identified as a bisexual, Vietnamese, born in Canada, cis female. She was completing a master’s degree at OISE during the research project. Thuy was the quietest of the group and left the research after our last book club meeting, as explained previously. Aadhya introduced her self next. She was the oldest of the group at 45 and had a wise way of speaking in the group. Aadhya identified as a heterosexual, human, Canadian Indian (from India), female and immigrated to Canada when she was an adult about 25 years ago. She received her second master’s degree from OISE, and was working on a third during the research project. Kiara introduced her self next and was the youngest of the group at 24. She identified as a hetero, Canadian/Western and Persian, cis female. She was born in Canada, grew up west of Toronto in a predominantly white neighbourhood, and graduated from OISE with a master’s degree. Next, Carolina identified as a 33 year old latinx female (from Venezuela) with a sexuality that was “not strictly defined yet.” Carolina immigrated from Venezuela for her undergraduate degree and because of political reasons, elaborated in the next chapter. She graduated from OISE with a PhD during our research project and was teaching at a nearby university. Last was Samantha who introduced her self after coming in late. Samantha graduated from OISE with a master’s degree and would travel in from a town outside of Toronto, as well as juggled multiple jobs. Samantha identified as a pan and/or two-spirit (although “the label doesn’t matter so much”), Italian and Plains Cree/First Nations woman. She was 25 when the research started and is now pursuing her PhD outside of OISE. Again, although I share the different subject positions of the women, their histories and personalities can never be fully explained. These descriptions are a small aspect of their becomings.
Analysis and Re-Presentation

Mapping the Different Moments

Utilizing a feminist Deleuzian methodology allowed me to deconstruct the binaries within the current white settler colonial discourse and allowed for a ‘both/and’ thinking that understood the participants in non-binary ways and as “constantly being constituted, through experience and the relationships between the past, present and future” (Coleman, 2009, p. 64). I interpreted the experiences of the participants as having no "beginning or end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 263) or a constant, immanent becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 2014). Through the research process, I collected ‘data,’ which I often call moments or experiences, as they only tell part of a story and show the ways in which the women were constantly shifting, changing, becoming through their experiences. I focused on the reading processes of women who are racialized and Indigenous students and alumni of OISE, which includes many different histories, subject positions, and knowledges melding together and apart. These subject positions are energy/movement that get limited in particular ways because of classification systems that force it into a body/significance in certain, constricting ways of interpreting them. For example, my aim to recruit women and gender-nonconforming folks who identify as racialized and Indigenous, is representative of the way in which I interpret genders, sexualities, and races as constitutive of one another. In the white settler colonial society, a racialized person with a non-normative gender and/or sexuality will be classified or subjectified in ways that are different from a white person with a non-normative gender and/or sexuality.

This methodological and theoretical framework allowed me to map the immanent becomings and individual ways of knowing versus these collective/broad ways of subjectification (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). This is a feminist anticolonial act that created a research project to subvert the white settler colonial discourse.

I understand this research project as not just ‘collecting data,’ but sharing experiences with the members of the book club, which allowed me to build relationships and community with them. As explained previously, these relationships have continued post-data collection. The word ‘data’ is based on a positivist epistemology and history, “based on terms like reliability and validity… [and] perpetuates the myth that objective observers can make the world visible through their methodological practices” (Denzin, 2013, p. 355). I have understood my task in this research project as recording parts of the experiences we shared together and aimed to create
meanings and knowledges through analysis and re-presentation, which will continue to be in process and is always partial (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). The analysis was not something that I enacted on the experiences ‘post-data collection,’ but began before recruitment even started and will continue becoming as I look back and forth between theories and the data post-dissertation. There is no ‘end’ to the analysis, but a continual opening up of the knowledge we created in the book club. As explained previously, my aim was not to interpret what the text or participants ‘really meant’ through language, but what they were doing and how they were being in this world through the moments we shared together and they shared with me (Taguchi, 2012).

By seeing the research recorded as partial and continually becoming, I refused to enact an “analysis that treats words (e.g., participants’ words in interview transcripts) as brute data waiting to be coded, labeled with other brute words (and even counted)” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 715). I purposefully mapped my data, instead of tracing or coding it, as understanding the world as being able to be ‘coded’ enacts an imperial power (St. Pierre, 2016; Weaver & Snaza, 2016). Mapping as opposed to tracing processes (static and linguistic organization which classifies), ensured that I did not rely on structuralist definitions of difference (Jackson, 2013). In order to do this mapping, I blended the data from the different sources (i.e., book club discussions, field notes, participant journals, one-on-one meeting discussions, etc.) onto different, rhizomatous concept maps/documents, which showcased the multi-directional, always-becoming relationships between and among the data (Alvermann, 2000). Starting with the hot spots that arose, I went back and forth between what was said in the meetings and journals, what I felt/explained in my field notes, how I felt going through the data, as well as the theories that I concentrated on in each of the three data chapters. Through this mapping different sources together, I created knowledges about some of the ways in which the white settler colonial discourses that the participants are a part of are constitutive of their subjectivities (but as explained in the data chapters, this included acts of assimilation and subversion).

Conceptualizing subjectivities as in-between spaces, always becoming, and between affective experience and subjectifications allowed subjectivities to be understood as constantly becoming and being negotiated depending on the experiences one is negotiating (Jackson, 2013). The process of mapping the various forms of data allowed me to create “an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014, p. 21), and was a purposeful, feminist, anticolonial approach to examining the process of reading counternarrative fiction. This way of doing research allowed me to understand that “meaning is uncertain,
contingent, not present, not yet, but always to come, never brute” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 224). It also allowed me to concentrate on the hot spots within the data.

In order to create these non-hierarchical, rhizomatic maps, I used both pen and paper and word documents to combine the different forms of data. I analyzed the data through these mapping processes by looking at the affective knowledges or ‘hot spots’ and connections “made and re-made horizontally, immanently, rather than (only) as a result of vertical hierarchies” (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013, p. 125). I created multiple documents to blend the data according to the hot spots that arose in the data. Not only naming these hot spots, but analyzing my perceptions of these hot spots “allow[ed] affect to be effectively analyzed—as long as a vocabulary can be found for that which is imperceptible but whose escape from perception cannot but be perceived, as long as one is alive” (Massumi, 1995, p. 97). In mapping these hot spots, I included ‘life destroying’ (also known as subjectifications/categorizations) and ‘life affirming’ (also known as moments away from normative subjectifications/categorizations) hot spots (Bonta & Protevi, 2004). This allowed me to uncover the complicated ways in which the members of the book club were being subjectified and also subverting subjectifications.

This experimental way of mapping the data allowed me to put my theoretical framework ‘to work’ and allowed for an analysis that is non-linear, non-hierarchical, and allowed me to examine the ‘middles’ (Alvermann, 2000). This process of mapping also allowed me to decipher between the subjectifications and the subversions of these acts of labelling through language (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). In each data chapter, I focused on different theories which could speak to the hot spot that is being discussed in the chapter. In Chapter Four, I view the hot spots through Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Coloma (2008), and Sumara (1996, 2003) to understand the becomings during the reading process. In Chapter Five, I primarily utilize the works of Coloma (2008), Anzaldúa (1987), and Sumara (1996, 2003) to understand the hot spot which included the act of self-reflection and trust. In Chapter Six, I combine the works of Sumara (1996, 2003), Ahmed (2006), Mohanty (2003), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011, 2017), and Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014) to understand the anticolonial community of care developed, which was another hot spot in the research process. This mapping of the data allowed me to go back and forth between the different forms of data (i.e., transcripts, journals, field notes, etc.) and theories, and allowed me to map connections that are not only ‘there’ but what might be or how these connections could be made differently or create new connections (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013).
Focusing on affect and hot spots within the data collection and this mapping analysis process “challenges and offers an alternative to the Cartesian traditions, which reify cognition, reason, and distance with a more proximal, contingent, and bodily form of thought” (Springgay, 2011, p. 67). Mapping different experiences on top of and between each other showcased how the experiences are interrelated and that affects link up with other affects—that affects are not benign or innate and given, but co-produced through proximal encounters—then, how we understand affect shifts from something passively bound to the body to an event that is becoming. (Springgay, 2011, p. 79)

These hot spots or affect signify the in between spaces of known and unknown, and what drew me and others to feel these intensities signified a mutual “‘affection’ that constitutes ‘us’ as, respectively, data and researcher” (MacLure, 2013b, p. 229), where these intensities were in the bodies, data, and analysis. This way of doing research subverts colonial forms of doing research and questions the assumptions of what ‘counts’ as research.

Mapping the data means that I did not code my data, even though that pushes me “outside the qualitative research norm” (Augustine, 2014, p. 752). Analyzing the data without coding it enabled a different kind of analysis, which showcases the multiple, endless truths that arose from the data. It also shows how the data is always moving and can never be finalized (Jackson, 2013). Coding aims to “neatly categorize and subsume difference into schemas of representation… [which] can neglect singularity, texture, and affective complexities” (Ringrose & Renold, 2014, p. 773). Although coding does have its purposes, it also reinforces a logic of representation which “categorises the world and establishes hierarchical relationships among classes – genus and species, category and instance, and so on” (MacLure, 2013a, p. 164-165). This logic of representation has helped to structure the world around us, as we understand it today; however, when using coding in qualitative research, it is often done as a way to search for common themes by categorizing complex conversations, while ignoring much said (or not verbally said) within the data (MacLure, 2013a).

Coding is not compatible with my theoretical and methodological frameworks. Coding aims to create order or “systems that are never culturally or politically innocent, and which are by no means restricted to human or intentional activity” (MacLure, 2013a, p. 167). Coding also positions me, as the researcher, in a position where “researchers code; others get coded,” which
does not “disturb the essentially colonial relation of researcher to subject – problems that have troubled qualitative inquiry for decades” (MacLure, 2013a, p. 168). Lastly, coding subjectifications and subject positions that are interpreted through the white settler colonial discourse, aims to explain that which is already explicable (MacLure, 2013a). By mapping, I have experimentally drawn, written, and grappled with both the linguistic subjectifications and subversions, as well as the (non)linguistic occurrences and affect within the research.

Although I did not code the data, I chose which data to include in the data chapters that I thought ‘glowed’ and were representative of the hot spots. Of course, this is problematic in that I have chosen and put these affective experiences and subject positions into language; however, I have been conscious of this and concentrated on the “gut feelings [that] point to the existence of embodied connections with other people, things and thoughts, that are far more complex that the static connections of coding” (MacLure, 2013a, p. 172). I also remained self-reflective during the process of my own biases and always went back to the theory and my political commitments to the women in the book club. Through this process of mapping those hot spots which refuse to be coded, I also questioned the language I used in these mapping processes. I must re-present the data in this dissertation, but there will always be things left unsaid or things that cannot be said or re-presented through language, which is true of any research. As explained by Denzin (2013), “Meanings are always in motion, incomplete, partial contradictory. There can never be a final, accurate, complete representation of a thing, an utterance or an action” (p. 354). I did try to alleviate some problematics of the research by doing two things. Firstly, I asked the participants to share their own understandings of their affective knowledges and interpretations of the hot spots throughout the research process. This helped to ensure it was not only my own interpretations of the hot spots within the data. Secondly, I re-presented parts of the data through poetry. This will be explained further in the next section, but it helped to refuse and subvert the colonial language we are bound by. That being said, one can never truly re-present experiences and although I share my interpretations, it is one version and in one moment of the research which constantly shifts and changes, as I shift and change.

I feel this experimental form of mapping is in line with an anticolonial feminist theoretical framework. As explained by Barad and Latour, “it is time now to invent, not critique” (Lather, 2016, p. 126), which is also in line with Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg researcher and activist Leanne Simpson’s (2011) pedagogy of creating and disseminating important narratives, rather than critiquing researchers that have come before. I focused on the becomings,
experiences, and subjectivities as a way to showcase how the participants thrive and persist in and subvert and refuse white settler colonial discourse.

A similar mapping process was enacted by Jackson and Mazzei (2012), when they mapped purposeful silences throughout their data sources to showcase how purposeful silences were produced by desire (p. 86). In order to do this, they made connections between different forms of data and between participants and their theories. In another project, Augustine (2010, 2014) used a mapping process of ‘assemblaging’ and writing as analysis to blend theory and the participants’ transcripts among and between each other. In this process, Augustine (2014) explained that “data analysis was putting different and unrelated data into relation with theory in unplanned and unexpected ways” (p. 752). My analysis process is similar to Augustine’s (2012, 2014), as I have written through the data collection process as explained in the methods section, and I have used these notes as data and as analysis. My analysis process is most like MacLure’s work on hot spots (2013a) or spots that ‘glow’ (2010) in the data. As explained previously, MacLure’s work on hot spots looks at the affective intensities in the research experiences to make connections that may not otherwise be made. This research subverts coding methods and uncovers the hot spots in the research to make connections between different forms of data, theory, and writing.

Putting the Tracings on the Map

To ensure that I fought the constant pull back into binary, colonial thinking, I put the tracings onto the maps and continually questioned the assumptions and conclusions I made in the data chapters to inspect “the breaks and ruptures that become visible when the more stable tracing is laid upon the always becoming map” (Alvermann, 2000, p. 117). This process of putting the subjectified tracings onto the maps or questioning any connections I re-present helped to ensure that I constructed a subversive feminist anticolonial knowledge and re-presentation, “rather than merely propagate[ing] the old” (Alvermann, 2000, p. 117). It also allowed me to continue to question my interpretations of the data, as “we are still weighed down with old beliefs which we no longer even believe, and we continue to produce ourselves as a subject on the basis of old modes which do not correspond to our problems” (Deleuze, 1988, 107). Because I am the one analyzing the data, I cannot separate my self or experiences from the connections I
make. What I created has been en/dis-abled by my own views and beliefs that I negotiate, or my ‘lenses’ through which I viewed the data and the world as a white settler.

Overall, this methodological framework I have described is understood through my theoretical framework, which is unique to my selves, past, present, and future. It is also important to note that the way I interpret Deleuze and this feminist Deleuzian framework will not be the same way that you interpret Deleuze or a feminist Deleuzian framework, “for they have inevitably entered into our very different assemblages” (St. Pierre, 2001, p. 150). The goal in using this methodology is to subvert colonial ways of doing research and to think about the research in multiple ways through the process of making multiple connections and focusing on the hot spots. In mapping the different forms of data to make connections, I focused on the hot spots in order show the differing ways the participants: negotiated their non-normative subjectivities through reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction; utilized strategies to negotiate their subjectivities and subverted normative subject positions and white settler colonial discourse; and the ways in which they are persisting and/or thriving in the current context.

Utilizing Poetry in Analysis and Re-Presentation

Poetry gives me life
It fills me up
so I can breathe out love

Poetry mends my gaping wounds
so I go on

Poetry constructs the puzzle
that are my tangled thoughts
It creates sense and care
in a sense-less
and care-less world

Poetry refuses to be trained, tamed,
put into your structured
way of knowing and
aesthetics that make sense
to you
Poetry is life
life without the rules
with the healing
continues becoming

- Poem written in April 2016

Above is a poem that I wrote in April 2016 after seeing an inspirational poet, Rupi Kaur, read works from a recent publication, *Milk and Honey* (2015), at a poetry reading. In my life, poetry has given me the space to express myself in ways I could not do otherwise. It gives me the opportunity to rearrange the words in a way that may not make sense to the reader, but it feels right to me in that moment. For me, poetry is a space that I can be creative with language so that I can express my self, emotions, and experiences, in ways that are not always linear or ‘logical.’ I have never been officially trained in poetry, and although recommended to me when explaining my intention to use poetry in my doctoral research, I have resisted the idea of being ‘trained’ in poetry. For me, to be trained in poetry is to reinforce the white settler colonial discourse and its rules behind language. I believe that I can write poetry in a way that expresses my thoughts and emotions without taking courses to train me to write in certain styles of poetry. I believe this ‘untrained’ desire to write poetry has assisted me in creating poetry with the data in a more anticolonial way. I consider poetry to happen in an in between space of thought and emotion. It is in this in between space that helped uncover some of the affective knowledges that were present in the research. It is in these in between spaces, without the worry of ‘proper grammar’ that I was able to dig deeper into the data and connect experiences through poetry.

I used poetry in both the analysis and re-representation process, as explained by Douglas First Nation member (Southern Stl’atl’imx) and scholar Peter Cole because it allows us to “play” with white settler colonial English (Cole, 2002, p. 449), and it allowed me to share the data in a more anticolonial, non-binary way as informed by my anticolonial feminist literacy framework. Specifically using poetry allowed me to “say what might not otherwise be said” (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p. 637), as I was not bound by traditional rules of writing. Utilizing poetry in my research project is a political act, as it subverts and disrupts the dominant white settler colonial discourse by offering new questions and new ways of thinking about social issues (Barone, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2012; Norton, 2011). Poetry makes possible different ways of thinking that are not necessarily linear, compartmentalized, or confined by traditional syntax, and allows for a greater
accessibility to wider audiences, compared to traditional research that is often more prescriptive (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Cole & Knowles, 2008; Richardson, 2002).

The use of poetry re-presentation is not new to qualitative research. In 1982, researcher and anthropologist, Toni Flores, used poetry as a form of “self-therapy and reflexivity” in re-presentation (Butler-Kisber, 2012, p. 143). There are two main types of poetry re-presentation: found poetry and generated poetry. I use found poetry to re-present the data, which is “the rearrangement of words, phrases and sometimes whole passages” (Butler-Kisber, 2012, p. 146). Creating poetry from the data allowed me to write with the words of the participants “in ways that honor their speech styles, words, rhythms, and syntax” (Richardson, 2002, p. 880). Within found poetry there are two types: treated and untreated. Untreated poetry conserves the same grammar, order and meaning as in the original and treated changes the transcribed language in a new but systematic way (Butler-Kisber, 2012). In the poetry I share in the three data chapters, I use untreated poetry, but the words are cut out of context, so I also checked in with the participants to ensure that the poems I created re-presented their words in a way they were comfortable with (Firmin, 2008). I also used generated poetry through the research process, which is “when researchers use their own words to describe an interpretation discovered in research with others” (Butler-Kisber, 2012, p.158). This ensured I continued to be self-reflexive, which helped me to uncover affective experiences during the research process.

Using poetry as re-presentation and as a self-reflexive act “in this role is a form of epistemology” (Oughton, 2012, p. 74). As Freire (1997), quoted in Leggo (2012) states, I am eager to “produce forms of knowledge that do not exist yet” (p. 380). The act of creating poetry from the data and through the analysis process helped to re-present affective knowledges that arose in the research to create a new form of knowledge. As explained by Laurel Richardson (2002),

Poetry’s task is to re-present actual experiences – episodes, epiphanies, misfortunes, pleasures; to retell those experiences in such a way that others can experience and feel them. Poems, therefore, have the possibility of doing for social research what conventional social research representation cannot. (p. 887)

Using poetry in my research process allowed me to uncover the affective knowledges and hot spots in the research in a way that could not be possible through ‘proper’ sentence or essay writing. Although I will never be able to fully describe the affective knowledges in the research,
I feel that poetry aided in this process of trying to put these affective experiences into words. Writing poetry can be an anticolonial act, which is utilized across many nations, societies, and cultures.

Poetry can and has been an act of colonization. The English language and the reinforcement of its rules in its British form have and continue to dominate the elementary and secondary school curriculum in ‘Canada.’ However, I disrupt the idea that poetry comes from the ‘western’ world, and showcase how poetry can and has been an anticolonial act. Utilizing poetry and song as an act of resurgence is something Indigenous scholars and activists Peter Cole (2000, 2002) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2015, 2016) showcase in their work. It is also used in many racialized writer’s work throughout Turtle Island, as an anticolonial act and in some cases as an act of decolonization. Leanne Simpson (2016) recently released an album with songs, spoken word, and poetry, which the scholar explains, “is a record of tiny stories of light, of fight, and of Indigenous freedom” (para. 3). This album and corresponding book (L. Simpson, 2015) is an example of how poetry can be an anticolonial and decolonial act. Leanne Simpson (2016) explains, “I like to fall into the intimate moments of Indigenous life and amplify the richness, the warmth and the intelligence of our communities and the worlds we live in. I want my people to come out of this album feeling better than they went in.” (para. 3). Leanne Simpson showcases anticolonial poetry in this album, as well as in two books of poetry and stories, Islands of Decolonial Love (2015) and This Accident of Being Lost (2017). The poems, stories, and songs in these books are an important example of how an artist can use the English language to enact a decolonial narrative.

In the poetry compilation, “Languages of our Land: Indigenous Poems and Stories from Quebec/Langues de Notre Terre: Poèmes et Récits Autochtones du Québec”, Wendat, Innu-aimun, Cree, and Algonquin writers create poems that write a different, unofficial Canadian history (Ouriou, 2014). Uncovering issues of colonization through poetry, the writers remember history through an anticolonial lens to construct a decolonial narrative. In another compilation book that highlights five Asian American poets, the author explains that “minority poetry can contribute importantly to American (and English-language) poetry” (Wang, 2014, p. xix). The writer explains that poetry written by racialized people “is almost always read as secondary to the larger (and more ‘primary’) fields and forms of English-language poetry and poetics” (Wang, 2014, p. xx). Through this book, the author explains that the interpretation of any poet’s work must take into account the poet’s racial subjectivity, as well as the political context, in order to
ensure that “one must never forget what one is fighting against” (Wang, 2014, p. xxiii). It is my goal that the poems created through this research project describe an anticolonial and decolonial narrative of the participants’ varying experiences in the current context.

A scholar and activist Peter Cole (2002) also writes anticolonial and decolonial thought through poetry. In Cole’s (2002) work, the author writes,

the practice of academically certified punctuation distances me from my sense of space time and natural speech patterns including translated ones separating me from my connection with the earth and its natural rhythms the a priori presumption being that the written word is of paramount worth the assumption being that the mechanisms of codification and transliteration of our rhythms periods commas semicolons have anything (whatsoever) to do with our paralinguistic choreographies to thus delegate the orality of my nation and its transcription to a place removed from equal symbolic even orthographic consideration is to put us in our place illiterates illegitimates iterati (p. 449)

The author speaks of many issues within various works and speaks of the issues of English, as enforced with British rules. Cole (2002) explains that writing in a poetic voice allows language to sing, dance, and play, and shows how stories are themselves interpretations (p. 91). I hope that the use of poetry within this project showcases the participants’ stories, through their own words, in an anticolonial way which disrupts the colonial rules of English. Part of a poem, Emergence, says beautifully,

Beyond the silence
a forgotten stanza
reminds me of my childhood

I will search for peace
here close by
so close
to my soul

I know everything
about the candour of trees

I hear
what they try to silence

I learned to young
to lend an ear

Who can own
the Earth

One cannot kill
poetry

It withstands all
for us

(Laframboise, 2014, p. 97)
Chapter 4: Reading as an Embodied Experience

Reading as an Embodied Experience Through Poetry

The Experience of Being Bilingual

It informs your sense of self

English
my tongue feels tight

Spanish
navigating this borderland space
my tongue feels really loose

You’re not a native speaker
othered
listening to [your]self
false speaker of language

Pay attention
to the way that I’m moving my mouth
up here in your teeth, tight tongue
so that the words come out correctly

Embodiment
the way that you move and think
and the way that it sounds
and the way that it moves in your tongue

And my son
how do you build this relationship to language
thinking that it was like… a coat that [you] could take on and off
[it’s] how we live in it
and
how it lives in our bodies

It’s beautiful
as opposed to a story of struggling/deficit in English
I read myself in something
[and it] allowed me to be more me

I start each of the data chapters with a poem. Reading the poem and letting it sit with you will allow you to experience the data in a much different way than explaining the data through prose or theory, as explained in the previous chapter. It is also important to note from the outset that “the meanings readers evoke are not located in the text or the reader, but in the engagement between the text and reader” (Sumara, 1996, p. 48), so each person that reads this analysis will experience it differently. This points back to the methodology and framework which does not see
one truth or ‘finding,’ but understands what I have written here as partial and constantly shifting. I begin each data chapter with a poem as an anticolonial act, as the poem has an impact that prose does/cannot have, but the impact I experience with the poem will be different than the impact you will have. The experiences from the book club and from reading the books still linger in my body. The poem above was constructed from the words of one particular participant Carolina⁴, Chang-rae Lee (the author of Native Speaker), and both. The Experience of Being Bilingual was described by Chang-rae Lee in Native Speaker as a Korean and English speaker and by Carolina as a Spanish and English speaker. However, the poem/data brings in so much more than only those two voices. Of course, there is my own interpretations of the experiences and the ways I was impacted/experienced affective intensities as a white settler, but also what each book club member brought with them – their experiences, readings, lives. I focus this chapter on the experiences of Carolina because her specific journey of becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman was an intense hot spot I perceived (MacLure, 2013a) throughout the research process. As I read this poem, my tongue still tingles as I remember how impactful the descriptions Chang-rae Lee wrote had on Carolina and her embodied reading experience.

This poem showcases the hot spots within Carolina’s experience of reading Native Speaker. Each of the six women in the book club had very different experiences reading each of the books. For some/many reasons, this is the hot spot that still lingers – still makes me stop and stumble on these parts of the data. The poem aims to share parts of Carolina’s journey, from explaining the embodiment of language and reading and their links to subject position, to the marginalization of being ‘Other.’ It also highlights Carolina’s connection to the book through her own son’s current and future experiences as a bilingual Spanish-English speaker in a settler colonial context. The poem ends with Carolina’s hopeful outlook of the experience of this in-between space and the persistence/thriving in these becomings through these conversations. The poem can be felt as a partial view of Carolina’s experience, through her and Chang-rae Lee’s words. I do not wish to analyze this poem, but let it linger in/with the reader.

⁴ Carolina, as well as all names and identifying information have been changed in all chapters to protect the participants’ anonymity.
Carolina’s Becomings

In order to describe more fully Carolina’s experiences and the hot spots in the research, I will describe Carolina’s experience of reading Native Speaker through an interpretative narrative and weave in theoretical understandings to make nonsense of the interpretations or what is not said through language. Focusing on Carolina’s experience reading Native Speaker as an intense hot spot allows me to showcase the power reading has to Carolina’s body and becoming. Native Speaker, although a story of a Korean-American, heterosexual male who is a spy, made an intense impact on Carolina because of the connections to their experiences of becoming bilingual-immigrant. Through examining Carolina’s reading process closely, I will show in this chapter how Carolina understands her becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman through the embodied reading process. Through these processes, Carolina resists simple understandings of becoming bilingual and through this embodied reading experience, Carolina destabilized molar understandings of being a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman and understood through a lens of persistence a new more liveable understanding of becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman. In addition to these large/meta understandings of becoming ‘bilingual,’ ‘immigrant,’ ‘racialized,’ ‘woman,’ I will explain Carolina’s molecular grappling with becoming a bilingual speaker of Spanish-English, a displaced immigrant-settler, and a Latina-Venezuelan woman who does not define her sexuality.

Becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman is an ever-changing process for Carolina and is situated within her experiences and contexts. Being a Spanish-English speaker in a settler colonial state of Canada also brings with it specific relationships to power. Carolina moved to Canada from Venezuela in 2003, shortly after Hugo Chávez was forced from his position as president by a coup, and after returning to the position remained president through political upheavals such as a national strike. With an unstable political and economic environment, Carolina took the opportunity to continue her education in Canada, as it was more in line with her private-school American education she had received in Venezuela. As a person identifying as a woman and later as a Latina woman (after arriving in Canada), Carolina’s subject positions are entangled in complicated histories of colonialism and the politics of Mestizaje in Venezuela, with Spanish, African, and Indigenous (possibly Wayuuu and Caribes) family roots. These complicated histories and subject positions are contextual and operate
differently depending on the context Carolina is in. As a Latina woman in Canada, Carolina understands the complicated relationship she has to the land as she has had to ask the “nation state for the permission to live here permanently… [which] brings up questions for [her] in terms of where [her] politics are, but then the things you have to do in order to survive that’s tied up in [her] own displacement and the idea that [she’s] here because [she] can’t be in [her] own land” (Carolina). So, although Carolina’s subject positions are quite far from the main character’s in *Native Speaker* who is a Korean-American heterosexual man, through this chapter I will show how she connected to the narrative of language as embodied through their experiences of becoming bilingual-immigrant.

The story of *Native Speaker* follows the main character, Henry Park, who is an American-born, Korean-American. Throughout the story, Henry strives to become a ‘native speaker’ of English or a ‘true’ American. As explained in the methodology chapter, Henry is a spy who infiltrates other racialized people’s lives and businesses as he is trusted as a racialized, Korean-American man. Although the plot is quite colonial, there are many aspects of the book that resist simple explanations of marginalization and colonialism. The aspect of the narrative that really impacted Carolina was the way Henry experienced the embodiment of language and the way he described the experience of being bilingual. In the novel Henry explains,

> I thought English would be simply a version of our Korean. Like another kind of coat you could wear. I didn’t know what a difference in language meant then. Or how my tongue would tie in the initial attempts, stiffen so, struggle like an animal booby-trapped and dying inside my head. Native speakers may not fully know this, but English is a scabrous mouthful. (Lee, 1995, p. 233)

This complicated, culturally constitutive understanding of language allowed for a more liveable, understandable version of living a bilingual life that Carolina really connected to. Through Carolina’s embodied reading process, she continued becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman through destabilizing molar understandings of marginalized identities to create a more liveable life.
Plugging in Theories

In this chapter, I construct a specific version of the happenings of the research, related to the embodiment of language and reading. The poem at the beginning of the chapter is one way of telling a specific version of the research project. In the next section, I alternate between explaining specific versions of the research through a narrative interpretation and plugging in theory to make nonsense of these interpretations. All of these re-presentations of the research are based upon the epistemologies and ontologies that the research project has developed, my own shifting lenses as a white settler, and the people involved in the project. It is not just the lens in which I look upon the data, but the ways in which the data was collected and constructed with the women that created these meanings and reflections. The questions I asked the book club members and the space that was created was based upon different becomings for each participant in those moments and continue to shift as I look back at the experiences. It is also important to note again that how you, the reader, experience this narrative will be different than how I have written/recorded/interpreted it, as it is through your own interpretations and becomings that you read this dissertation. The poem at the beginning of this chapter showcases the affect in/through the book (club) through the words of Carolina and Chang-rae Lee. The explanation of the research constructed in the next section gives much space for the voices of Carolina and a snippet of Samantha and Thuy, to explain their different experiences of the embodied reading process. I weave in the voices of my theoretical framework through this chapter (of course they were already there through the research project) to complicate the ‘easy sense’ and make ‘nonsense’ of the data to complicate and uncover what is (not) said through language. According to Deleuze as explained by Mazzei (2013), “it is only out of nonsense that thinking can occur” (p. 106).

Making Nonsense with Theories

In order to make some nonsense of the data, I ‘plug in’ another “literary machine” into the data, as explained by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), “when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work” (p. 4). I weave together the prose narrative I construct below and plug in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) becomings, Coloma’s (2008) constitutive subjectivities, and Sumara’s (1996)
embodied action to complicate the narrative and to continue becoming and shifting with the data, or to make ‘nonsense’ of the data through mapping these theories and data on top, beside, and through each other. Although I focus on the three theories in this chapter, my framing and understandings of the research are grounded in my theoretical framework that helps understand the socio-political, settler colonial context through the anticolonial feminist literacy theoretical framework (explained thoroughly in Chapter 3). Therefore, although I focus on becomings, constitutive subjectivities, and embodied action, the creation and interpretations of the data are through the lens of the theoretical framework, which sees reading as a process and understands the agency and the current white settler colonial context through a postmodern lens.

In order to make nonsense of the data there needs to be “a decentring of the subject, of my self as researcher, and an interpretation of experience must occur” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 106). This means “becoming undone that demands a giving of ourselves up to a straining of language” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 106). I cannot only rely on the language in the data, but I will “take up new language as prompted by Deleuze and Guattari” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 107). This means going beyond what the women in the book club are saying and not trying to “figure out what [they].. ‘mean’” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 107). Therefore, I use ‘becoming’ (Coloma, 2008; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and ‘embodied action’ (Sumara, 1996, 2003) to ask questions of the data in order to “open up (undo) rather than foreclose meaning” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 107). It is important to remember that how I interpret the data is still through my lens as a white settler researcher and the way I re-present the research in these chapters is one way of many that could be used.

As explained by Sumara (2003), a theory of embodied action accounts for the ways of knowing that pay attention to intuitions, hunches and gut feelings in between texts and bodies. Sumara (1996) explains how people do not emerge from the world, but “co-emerge with a world” through processes of reading (p. 102). Embodied action is a theory of reading which understands that “knowing is not limited to what is available to perception that is noticed, but is also influenced by the vast amount of information that is perceived by the biological body” (Sumara, 2003, p. 91). This means that the reading process does not only include “social and cultural events; they contribute to ongoing biological and evolutionary change” (Sumara, 2003, p. 92). I see this as interconnected with ideas of becoming and affect, as explained by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Coloma’s (2008) constitutive subjectivities. Also, similarly to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) understanding of assemblages, Sumara’s (1996) understanding of reading is not just vertical in that it includes the engagement with just the text, but reading is horizontal
in that it includes “multiple texts of already lived and current experience” (p. 107) through “the relations among readers, texts, and the contexts of reading” (p. 132).

The way in which reading is an embodied process is inseparable from affect. Deleuze (1990) explains, “That bodies speak has been known for a long time” (p. 285). As explained in the theoretical framework chapter, these affects and/or becomings are also constitutive of power relationships. Focusing on Native Speaker and Carolina, it is important to understand that Carolina’s experiences reading the book are contextual, within the particular society and discourses. As explained by Deleuze and Guattari (1987),

To every relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness grouping together an infinity of parts, there corresponds a degree of power. To the relations composing, decomposing, or modifying an individual there correspond intensities that affect it, augmenting or diminishing its power to act; these intensities come from external parts or from the individual's own parts. Affects are becomings. (p. 256)

Carolina’s becomings were seen in the research through affective intensities and are situated within the settler colonial context. As a Latina woman from Venezuela who does not define her sexuality, Carolina has a very complicated relationship to Canada, the land, and the state. As a Spanish and English-speaking racialized immigrant, Carolina is marginalized by the state; however, she is also implicated within settler processes as she lives and works on stolen land. The complicated history of Spanish colonization across Turtle Island means Carolina’s subject position as both a Spanish and English speaker are tied to complicated, long histories of colonization of the Americas. Native Speaker also complicates simple understandings of assimilation and colonization, and although it tells a somewhat colonial tale of a corporate spy, there are spaces within the novel that resist the molar, colonial narrative/norms through its explanation of the embodiment of language and grappling with assimilation/resistance of white settler colonial discourse. Within these spaces of molecularity/resistance to the molar, I explain how Carolina connects to these resistances to the molar in an embodied reading process and I also show how she continues becoming in these middles within and in contrast with the molar. I explain how these resistances to the molar produce a “breaking apart” (Jackson, 2013, p. 120) of the molar into a molecular becoming of other worlds, which creates new, more liveable possibilities/futures.
Resisting the Molar – Territorialization, Deterritorialization, and Reterritorialization

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I understand processes of subjectification through the terms: molecular, molar, territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. To understand the world through particular, complex, and fluid experiences is molecular. Molecularity allows for complex and contextual ways of becoming that resist stereotypical, grand, whole narratives of being. Molar ways of understanding subject positions are based on stabilizing discourses that aim to fix becomings into pre-existing grand narratives or categories (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013a). These molar discourses are based on “large structures, or identities categories” (Jackson, 2013, p. 117) and aim to territorialize becomings (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013a). Territorialization is the process within structures/discourses where language is used to signify/subjectify/interpret subject positions. Territorialization is the process where things or people are organized in ways that have meaning through language and aims to place static meaning onto subject positions. Deterritorialization is the space where these static understandings of subject positions are renegotiated and where becomings have space to resist the static, molar subjectifications. This deterritorialization happens through affective intensities and begins before the discursive, where bodies feel the discomfort and change before it can be named or brought into the discursive. Before the subject position is subjectified it is before discourse until it is imagined and named. When it is imagined and conceptualized, it comes into the discourse and it becomes reterritorialized. None of these processes are ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ and are always both/and, as language and discourse continues to shift and reimagine different, more liveable ways of becoming through different contexts.

The becomings apparent in Carolina’s reading process are interconnected to the theory of assemblages, which are always in process – a verb, not a noun, similar to becoming. On one side of an assemblage is the molar or strata, where there is intense organization and signification, and on the other is the body without organs/molecular or rhizome, where there are intense flows without subjectification. It is within the molar that subjects are territorialized and reterritorialized, and it is within the molecular that subjects are deterritorialized or are in the process of a re-imagination outside of subjectified frameworks. A reterritorialization is not necessarily negative, as it also makes a life more liveable – it can give subject positions meaning. Before we can name or classify things outside of what is already subjectified there are moments of deterritorialization, which occurred within the pre-discursive experiences of the embodied
reading process with Carolina. It is through the resignification these new possibilities of what it means to be a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman, that Carolina reterritorializes the subject positions of bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman to make a life that is more liveable.

These moments of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization are embedded within the process of reading and my understandings of reading as embodied. The process of reading is felt in the body – it is embodied. Within this process of embodied reading, processes of de-re-territorialization occur as well. Throughout this chapter, I explain how in some moments of embodied reading, moments of deterritorialization occur, which is when Carolina is in the process of re-imagining her becomings. Before she can describe these changes, she feels them in her body in ways that are pre-discursive – before language, explained in more detail next in these moments of feeling a “light bulb” or “tingling” in the body. The feeling of recognition or excitement is in the body before it can be described which is part of this process of deterritorialization. When Carolina re-imagines a more liveable life and puts into language these new possibilities or understandings of becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman, she reterritorializes molar understandings of these subject positions into a more liveable life.

Reading as an Embodied Experience Through Narrative and Theory

I get goosebumps when I think back to the affect in between us in the book club. The excitement emanating from Carolina felt contagious. “What I loved about the writing was the way that, and I don't even know if I can even articulate it, even though he does, but it's the way that he describes language” (Carolina). I can still hear the tone in her voice - surprised, content, excited, thankful, and somehow light. Carolina explains the process of reading this experience that was close to her own as a ‘light bulb’: “when I was reading Native Speaker, there was moments of recognition that feel literally like a light bulb in your head, right?” She elaborated on this light bulb, connecting it to the embodiment of language when she said, “and the way that it sounds, and the way that it moves in your tongue and the way that you embody it, that for me was so beautiful.” Language is embodied and when Carolina read something that articulated her embodied experience as bilingual, it showed how reading is also an embodied experience. Carolina shows the impact the reading process has on her body through her tone, body language, and the language she carefully chooses when she shares her experiences of reading the book. From my field notes, I explain,
I can feel her connection to the text (Native Speaker) and this really impacted her. Carolina explains an ‘a-ha’ moment where she relates to the character’s ‘paying attention’ to the words and the way that she moves her mouth when speaking different languages. Native Speaker has moved her – this story has changed her and allowed her to see her story and relatedness in words.

Native Speaker impacted Carolina and the way she viewed and could explain her experiences of being a bilingual Spanish-English speaker, and these experiences of being bilingual impacted the way she read and was moved by the book.

Through these moments of recognition to these experiences, Carolina explains how language is an embodied experience. The description the author shares of how language feels in your mouth really impacted Carolina – her body, her becoming. During the process of reading, she explains a ‘light bulb’ in her head when she recognized the narrative as being close to her own. The way that the author explained how language was embodied was impactful for Carolina as she saw her subject position as a bilingual immigrant in the character’s journey. Until this point, Carolina was unable to put into words the way that this experience ‘felt.’ It is through this ‘putting into words’ that Carolina continues becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman in this in-between space. In the last one-on-one meeting, Carolina explained that representing this third space of being in-between two cultures as a space to inhabit was really powerful for her. This reading one’s experience in the text did something to her body. Carolina tries to put this experience of the reading process impacting the body or pre-discursive experiences into the discursive by explaining the feelings as a “light bulb,” “excitement,” “tingling,” “your heart rate quickens,” and feelings of “persistence.” Reading these experiences changed the physiology of her body – her body shifted and moved, becoming through the reading process. It is through this ‘putting into words’ and its affects on/with/between Carolina’s body, text, and context that I understand reading and language as embodied experiences, and that these experiences cannot be pulled apart from becomings and affect.

Reading and Becomings

Carolina brought up the impact of language and identity in all of the book club meetings she attended and within her journals. For me, this was a hot spot. Reading Native Speaker did
something for Carolina in her body – in her becoming bilingual-immigrant. It gave new language to Carolina’s experience in the world. Carolina explains this process,

when you've put in words something that I have always experienced and never had someone articulate it and so well in words, I have never been able to put that experience like that feeling of what being bilingual means in in the way that he was able to articulate that, like the experience of being bilingual.

Although she believed and understood the links of language and identity before reading *Native Speaker*, these experiences reading the book helped her articulate this in a way that highlighted the importance of the embodiment of language to her identity. Carolina elaborated in the second book club meeting for *Native Speaker* when she explained, “it links to identity and to identity formation and how important that is and to culture, but the way that he really drew it to the way it feels in your mouth I thought was really fascinating.” This is really important, as Carolina explains that “one of the biggest parts of the experience - of my experience, in being an immigrant in Canada has been bilingualism.”

This ‘being’ bilingual-immigrant is not just about speaking a language outside of the dominant white settler colonial English but how it feels in your body, and as Carolina explains,

in my adult life, I have thought about language as a really important part of my identity … because I feel like people already look at me and the way I present and make assumptions about what language I speak, but even thinking about it in terms of something that really is tied to not just my identity but also my way of existing in the world has been really interesting.

By reading about and giving language to her experiences as a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman, Carolina speaks against the dominant white settler colonial discourse’s aims to create a molar, static idea of who she is. However, as explained by Coloma (2008), the way people see Carolina and her contexts will also impact the way she sees her self. Although Carolina understands her subject positions in particular ways, “the process of subjectification is an ongoing and situated negotiation of self-naming and being named by others that relies on visible and non-visible markers of difference and is implicated in power relations” (Coloma, 2008, p. 20). Carolina’s subject positions become important in her adulthood when she moved into the colonial space of Canada, as her becomings are in opposition to the white settler colonial
norm/dominant. She is viewed as ‘Other’ by the dominant white settler colonial discourse, which in turn alters her experiences and views of her self. Language becomes a visible marker of difference for Carolina because of how she is viewed in the white settler colonial context. The language that Carolina speaks is in/through her body and is visible – as a marker of ‘difference’ from the white settler colonial norm of British English. As Carolina becomes older, she embraces this difference and understands this interaction of seeing and being seen through the embodiment of language.

Carolina is able to embrace these differences through her embodied reading process. She explains that, “when I was reading Native Speaker, there was moments of recognition that feel literally like a light bulb in your head and sometimes those moments made me pause cause I had to think about what I was recognizing.” These intense moments with Carolina of recognition, the desire of/for recognition, and the affective intensities of these moments within the book club space are all constitutive of the power relationships of the settler colonial context. Carolina had never read this experience of the ‘feeling’ or embodiment of being bilingual before, and in reading this it allowed for life affirming (molecular) moments of possibilities – a more liveable understanding of becoming. These moments of “Becoming [are] a constant, fluid process of changes, interactions and transformations that work to destabilize molar forms and relations” (Jackson, 2013, p. 117, emphasis in original). It is through these becomings that other possibilities are conceivable – new imaginings of becoming bilingual were created for Carolina which were impacted by how she felt she was seen in this novel as a bilingual-immigrant. This could be explained as a process of territorialisation-deterritorialization-reterritorialization as well as the process of constitutive subjectivities. Carolina lives and works in the white settler colonial context, where ‘molar’ discourses aim to stabilize her identity, which can also be described as territorialisation. In reading Native Speaker, Carolina was able to destabilize the molar understandings of what it means to be bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman (deterritorialization) and through the embodied reading process and pre-discursive lingerings, light bulbs, and other sticky affects, Carolina understood in a new way these becomings of bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman through her new understandings of language as embodied. This allowed for a reterritorialization or new way of understanding her own subject positions, creating a space for persistence and thriving. Her subjectivities continue becoming and shifting depending on the context, language, and assemblages she is part of.
Recognition, ‘Putting into Words,’ and Thriving

Carolina had a strong connection to the character and felt recognized in the book. She explained how these experiences of recognition and embodiment are important, as “language lives in our bodies not just in our heads” (Carolina). It is through this understanding of language living in our bodies that brought Carolina to understand language, subject positions, and power as being connected:

once you feel excited about something that is in you, instead of feeling that something is a negative thing cause you're different, I think that's a really important powerful thing, and I think being able to then name your reality allows you to be more self reflective about it and I think that's also powerful in terms of being able to reflect on your experience instead of just having it go by unnoticed, and it allows you to see that other people are also experiencing that, so you're not alone, and maybe it allows you to share it with someone else who will also be like, yes! that's totally what it's like! you know, and create community, which is beautiful, so, in all those ways I think you can thrive [through reading counternarrative fiction]. (Carolina)

Putting the experience of being a bilingual-immigrant into words not only reminds Carolina that she is not the only one experiencing these ways of being outside of the dominant white settler colonial ‘norm’ or discourse, but allows her to connect with others with similar experiences to create communities.

Reading *Native Speaker* gave Carolina recognition of her experiences as bilingual and, an excitement of seeing something that I recognized, and [the excitement] was particularly around embodied language piece, that when I would read it and I'd be like, I know what that feels like, and it would be like (breathes in sharply), you know, and then it would be like a sense of recognition that I found really exciting. (Carolina)

In one example, Henry, the main character in *Native Speaker*, is reminded that he is not a ‘native speaker’ of English by his soon-to-be-wife.

“You mean it it’s my face.”
“No, it’s not that,” she answered… “Your face is part of the equation, but not in the way you’re thinking. You look like someone listening to himself. You pay attention to what
you’re doing. If I had to guess, you’re not a native speaker. Say something.”
“What should I say?”
“Say my name.”
“Lelia,” I said “Lelia.”
“See? You said Leel-ya so deliberately. You tried not to but you were taking in the sound of the syllables. You’re very careful.” (Lee, 1995, p. 12)

In a book club meeting, Carolina read this passage aloud and explained,

I was like ooooh! That to me was one of those ah-hah moments when you're like, I've done that. I know when I speak I have to pay attention to the way that I'm moving my mouth, so that the words come out correctly.

Carolina pushes these ideas further to explain that this reading one’s experience in fiction “can help you thrive and I think it's because the first time I read myself in a piece, in a book, I remember it was like validating my whole existence” (Carolina). She explains, “I think it's finding someone that articulates it for you, and you're like (breathes in), that's it!” Until reading Native Speaker, Carolina had access to language that described these in between experiences, described next. However, in reading Native Speaker, Carolina is given the tools to explain the embodiment of language and the specific experiences of being bilingual-immigrant.

This recognition of Carolina’s experience goes beyond the intellectual and becomes an embodied experience of the recognition of becoming. Carolina explains it is,

the feeling of reading something that describes you, and you're like woah! and that tingling or that excitement, and realizing that I had never really read that before or felt that way before while reading, I think that's the difference [of reading a counternarrative book] is that there is a bodily response when you're reading something and you feel so connected to it cause it's not only on a intellectual level. Intellectually I can understand a Eurocentric experience in the world cause it's everywhere, but… your heart rate quickens a little bit cause it's so tied to something that reminds you of your own experience and how you have felt before and to see someone put it into words, was so reaffirming of like yes this is how it feels to live between two cultures or I'm not the only one that felt this way, actually so many people have felt this way, there's a whole literature a whole movement of people who have written about it, so that was really exciting.
Reading a work of fiction that represents Carolina’s subject positions or ‘validates her existence’ is a much different embodied experience of belonging and becoming, compared to reading Eurocentric fiction. As explained in the theoretical framework, this Eurocentric fiction that is common in ‘western’ schooling systems is a particular canon that acts as a tool of continual colonization (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015) and reinforces discourses and histories from white, English (British), heteropatriarchal lenses. It is this recognition of her experiences that differ from the Eurocentric, white settler colonial norm that moves into Carolina’s everyday life, where she feels a becoming and belonging in an in-between space as a powerful experience.

Trying to understand why reading her experiences of bilingualism was so powerful for Carolina, she explained to me that,

I think [reading something that represents you] gives you those tools to talk about it, it gives you those tools to understand it, that language to understand it, to be like okay that's what it's called, this feeling that I've been having forever, right, I remember when I first read Anzaldúa or Moraga That Bridge Called My Back and I was like woah! (laughs) blew my mind, and it gave me the words to talk about this idea this feeling of living in between cultures and not really belonging and having to be that bridge for your family, all that kind of stuff, really put it into words in ways that probably I wouldn't have come up with those words my self, and I think that's really important, cause it reaffirms it, all of a sudden it's like yes, this is a real thing… I think when you don't have a word for it it's hard to validate it I guess… if you don't even have a word for it then how can you imagine it. (Carolina)

Although not fiction, Anzaldúa and Moraga put into words Carolina’s experience in ways that allowed her to have new language to imagine and communicate her feelings about her experiences of being between two cultures. These ‘tools’ given to her by Anzaldúa and Moraga, and most recently Lee (1995) about her experiences of being bilingual-immigrant in the book club, allow Carolina to imagine new possibilities of becoming a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman in Canada.

Recognizing her experiences as bilingual-immigrant in fiction gives Carolina the ‘tools’ to imagine a more liveable life outside of a white settler colonial discourse. Carolina speaks about these ‘tools’ when she connects it to bilingualism when she explains,
I think if you have never read anything about being bilingual or coming from a household that speaks another language, I think reading something like this would give you those tools to be like, woah, that's what I'm feeling, and if then you have someone to talk about it, to be like, okay you know, how is he trying to I don't know if you would use the words approximate whiteness but you know, thinking about marginalization or oppression or like hating yourself, being able to talk about that, like having those words I think would be super powerful to be like, wait maybe this self loathing that I'm feeling is really about this that's happening, it's about this marginalization and it's not about me hating my language, it's about the world making me hate it for being different, so I think it would be so powerful, everyone could read this book (laughs), all the schools (laughs).

Carolina says a lot about *Native Speaker* and the book club experience in this short excerpt. Here, she explains how it is not only the book that gave her tools to speak about the embodiment of language, but also talking about the experience with other people in the book club also helps to understand her experiences. Although Carolina connected deeply with the experience of language in the book, she recognized that Henry as a Korean-American was trying to approximate whiteness. She complicates this analysis to link this to the experience of self loathing/hating your self or your language as a product of this push to approximate whiteness through processes of marginalization. She explains that reading this book could give her the tools to understand that she does not hate her language, but the world is trying to make her hate it for being different. This reimagining the complicated feelings related to her becoming bilingual-immigrant are connected to another assemblage (in this case a book) that shifted her constitutive subjectivities to create a more liveable life. In the last chapter, I will go into further detail about how coming together around the table impacted the six women and their reflections on the book, but Carolina’s experience with *Native Speaker* was especially impacted by the coming around the table, as it opened her eyes to the problematics in the book, such as sexism. For Carolina, the problematics of sexism could be subdued, as putting these experiences of marginalization of bilingual-immigrant into words was productive and gave her access to more liveable ways of imagining her future and becomings.

Being able to give name and space to these experiences and identities has given Carolina a space to grow and continue becoming in ways that do not conform to the white settler colonial discourse. Reading *Native Speaker* allowed Carolina to see this in between space as a place of empowerment and Carolina explains,
instead of feeling, I think before I could put a word to the in between space, I felt like I was being pulled in two directions, or you were straddling a fence, you know, you feel like you're here but not here, and there but not there, and it's sort of like a feeling of incompleteness in a way, of not belonging, and so once you see the third space, the in between space as a space that you inhabit, I think it takes away some of that incompleteness because actually I'm in a whole other space where these people who are here and people who are here don't have access to it, and I can navigate it, and so I think it made me feel super special and powerful in that way, and having something that is like a power that other people don't have access to. That's a really cool thing to realize.

(Carolina)

Connecting to these other assemblages gave language to Carolina’s experience and provided these tools of creating a space for thriving and becoming in a space of power that “other people don’t have access to,” who are part of the white settler dominant culture. Putting Carolina’s experiences as a bilingual-immigrant into words provided her with new imaginings of her experiences that came from a place of power and agency, rather than deficit or difference.

This ‘putting into words’ puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of recognition through language and discourse. It is through reading Native Speaker, that Carolina explains she is given the ‘tools’ to describe within the discourse what her experience is like as a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman, which creates possibilities for her to thrive. Without language, Carolina explains it is hard to imagine outside of the molar. Carolina explains in a way how this process of reading gives her tools for agency – to create new becomings or possibilities that are more liveable. However, complicating this understanding of representation, I would argue it is not an easy solution of representation, as it is not just representation that matters. Through the research, it was evident that each reader, where they are reading, and how they digested the text matters and depended upon the individual assemblages they are linked in. It is not just the text, but what happens to/with the reader and the text that matters during the process of reading.

Reading the Same Book, Within Different Assemblages

Carolina wasn’t the only one to feel recognition in the body while reading one/both of the book(s). Another member of the book club, Samantha really connected to and felt recognition
with the second book we read, *The Marrow Thieves*. Samantha is the only member in the group that is not visibly racialized and identifies as Plains Cree/First Nations and Italian, pansexual and/or Two-Spirit, and uses feminine (she/her) pronouns. Samantha did not enjoy reading *Native Speaker* and was only able to finish the book by listening to it through an audio book, which will be discussed in further depth in the next chapter. She explains that she felt “disconnected” and “I got to the end of the book and I was like, wow, I really don't like this book at all, just for obviously a number of different reasons.” When explaining the reasons why she didn’t feel connected to *Native Speaker*, she explained that she felt like she “was reading the book of a colonizer” and noted that “in *Native Speaker*, considering the whole thing came back to colonialism, I didn't really see a ton of subversion in that other than the fact that it was a minority character that I guess subverted, the power oppression that was sort of placed on him.”

Reading *Marrow Thieves* was a much different experience for Samantha compared to reading *Native Speaker*. She explains that she could really see her self “reflected so much in these characters in *The Marrow Thieves*. ” She went on to explain that,

a book like this realizes that I know this I know this internally, but the work that I want to do… this book has kind of made me appreciate that interest a lot more, and it's also made me realize that it's my interest… my knowledge around that field, my comfort in talking about very difficult things, my ability to empathize without being an empath, these are all very very powerful things that I can use to help Indigenous women who have experienced sexual trauma in ways that other people couldn't even touch, and so this book makes me realize that maybe that's the strength that I'm bringing into this resistance.

For Samantha, reading *The Marrow Thieves*, allowed her to reimagine her future as a sex therapist, specifically working for and with other Indigenous women to reclaim their sexualities and sexual agency through healing practices.

Similarly to Carolina’s experience reading *Native Speaker*, Samantha’s experience reading *The Marrow Thieves* shows how reading is an embodied process. Samantha explains that “there was a number of parts in the book where I physically felt nauseous, because it felt so full circle.” Going further, Samantha explains when reflecting on her audio journal,

sometimes I was just like, this is kinda soothing, and then in my little voice note, I could hear my voice cracking a little bit, cause I was super affected… there were some
moments in that book (The Marrow Thieves) where the emotions that I've sort of felt about the way people in general have come to treat Mother Earth and the way that we've come to view connections between all these different people and our environment and just connection in general, the book was giving me new kinds of language to describe those relationships, which was a really powerful thing for me because I didn't have a lot of that language growing up, so to see it kind of written in this fictitious, but very feelingly non-fictitious setting was powerful, very powerful.

Giving new language to experiences that were similar to their own allowed for a recognition of the experience and gave the tools for Carolina and Samantha to think of their experiences in a more liveable way – to create new possibilities and ways of becoming in deeply embodied ways. This is very important in education, as Samantha’s encounter with Native Speaker was much different from The Marrow Thieves because of her subject positions, family history, and political commitments. Another member of the book club, Thuy also felt this same rejection to the main character, Henry, in Native Speaker.

A third member of the book club, Thuy, identifies as Vietnamese, born in Canada, and as a bisexual woman. Her strong critical and feminist readings of Native Speaker made her experience much different than other members in the group. Thuy also brought with her a writer and literary critic lens and has a lot of experience reading counternarrative fiction. When speaking about the experience of reading Native Speaker, Thuy explains that instead of breaking down stereotypes about Asian immigrants, “[Native Speaker] makes you feel like you're kinda conforming by reading this novel.” Thuy explained her dislike of the main character Henry and even explained that “this novel is a tragedy.” Thuy was the most vocal about the colonial and heteropatriarchal aspect of the novel and explained how all of the women in the book are described “like they’re objects.” Although Thuy didn’t like the book, she did still explain that because of the aspects of “language and identity, it’s still a very important book.” Overall, Thuy felt a rejection towards the book and the way that it reinforced a ‘model minority’ stereotype of Asian immigrants.

Through this rejection, Thuy also had an embodied reading experience as she continues becoming Vietnamese/Canadian-bisexual-woman, and through these frustrations thought “about how [she] would write it differently.” In Thuy’s journal, she writes,
There’s just something about the way straight men write women that always puts me off. I’ve noticed that no matter the race of a male author, if he doesn’t truly sympathize with women as a feminist, then he can’t write women as anything other than objects. It sucks because I want to like this book. I want to relate more to Henry because he’s Asian but I can’t… I wonder if it’s because he’s Korean-American and I’m Vietnamese-Canadian. Is it a male vs. female thing? A blatantly heterosexual vs. bisexual thing? A weird aversion to marriage I have? Is it the fact that there are so many nuanced ways to write an immigrant families experiences that I’m not seeing? I feel the intersectionality of these experiences make me have high expectations for this book and I get disappointed when they are not met.

I could relate deeply with Thuy’s reflection and critique of *Native Speaker*, as I had similar uncomfortable feelings while reading the book. Although I come from a different positionality as a queer white settler, I was often repulsed by the sexism and heterosexism in the book. Although Thuy wasn’t impacted in the same ways as others in the book club while reading either of these books, she explains that she has

> read books where it feels like that book has captured exactly what you're going through and you're like oh I don't feel so alone anymore, and you want to keep going on with your life, or you read books and you realize, hey it's not just the white male narrative about lovers.

Thuy actively tried to relate to the character because of his positionality as Asian with immigrant parents (which is the same as her own), but struggled connecting because of the way the character treated women and continually strived to assimilate into whiteness. Through her readings of other counternarratives such as *Hero* (Moore, 2009), *Salt Fish Girl* (Lai, 2002), fan-fiction stories, and feminist queer tv shows such as *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, Thuy imagines other more liveable possibilities of her “intersectional identity” as Vietnamese/Canadian-bisexual-woman.

Even though Thuy did not feel a connection to *Native Speaker*, reading the book and having conversations about the book in the book club did something to her becoming. Thuy explained that as a writer, she reads books like this and thinks about how she as a writer would write the story differently. Thuy explains,
when I read things nowadays, if it’s by a (laughs) heterosexual, cis person, I just criticize everything in the book and try to take that in as knowledge of how I want to write things, or if I read things written by other people about queer representation or Asian representation, sometimes it’s great and sometimes it doesn’t quite hit me yet and I try and think of why it doesn’t hit me yet, so that I can try to write things- cause I feel like the more media we get out there written by ourselves with us represented, the more authentic the voice becomes because we need various stories, not just the one story that kind of tokenizes us.

Adding to this, Thuy explains that it is important to read books that represent you because it moves into your everyday life. She explains,

when you feel isolated and like you’re not represented with a voice, you don’t want to do anything cause you’re either afraid or you’re apathetic, but the more you read where you see yourself in fiction in terms of in a protagonist that changes things, it makes you want to change things, and maybe you don’t put down the book and go, ‘I’m going go change the world’ the next day, it’s a gradual process where the more you read the more you want to re-write certain things if they’re not that great and the more that you want to see more representation, so other people can gain that confidence.

Thuy’s experience of reading *Native Speaker* helped her build her understanding of what literature is needed and encouraged her to write stories that represented her experience as a Vietnamese/Canadian-bisexual-woman.

Carolina, Samantha, and Thuy all had very different experiences reading the books because of their own subject positions and assemblages they are a part of. Their embodied reading practices were impacted by the way they connected to the characters or not, but in all cases, they continue becoming through identifying or thinking of why they did (not) identify with the characters and stories. The embodied reading process is complex and is constitutive of the reader’s own becomings, as shown through these three diverse experiences.

When thinking about the way in which the books did (i.e., bilingual-immigrant, Indigenous, etc.) or did not (bilingual-immigrant, Indigenous, male-heterosexual, etc.) represent each of the women in the book club and how they were able to negotiate their subjectivities through these reading processes, drawing on the understandings of Deleuze and Guattari’s
(1987) assemblage theory, helps to sort through my understandings of becoming. When thinking
about the book, explained by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as its own assemblage, they explain,

As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in
relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as
signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what
it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit
intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and
with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A book exists only through
the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine; what is the relation (also
measurable) of this literary machine to a war machine, love machine, revolutionary
machine, etc.—and an abstract machine that sweeps them along? (p. 4)

It is evident that Carolina, Samantha, and Thuy are positioned differently in the settler
colonial state of Canada. As they read Native Speaker and The Marrow Thieves, they
experienced very different becomings because of their constitutive subjectivities and the
assemblages or ‘machines’ they are in relationship with. This points to the importance to also
think about how no book will represent every person, but that we can have conversations about
who is (not) included and what the problematic aspects of a novel are (i.e., sexism as is the case
in Native Speaker). Although there were problematic aspects of Native Speaker, it did still have
value and can be used as a tool to subvert white settler colonial discourse.

Mirroring Hickey-Moody’s (2013) conversation about art, works of fiction have “the
aptitude to change a body’s limits... [and] can readjust what a person is or is not able to feel,
understand, produce and connect” (p. 88). However, the way a body is affected by/with these
reading processes will depend on what assemblages the reader is already a part of. The

nonhuman becomings extend subjectivity and connect subjects to society in new ways.
They are ‘nonhuman’ because, although an affect is an embodied change, a readjustment
of personal ‘limit’ or capacity, it is not produced in relation to another person but rather
in relation to the material product, the work, an artist [author] has been involved in
creating. (Hickey-Moody, 2013, p. 88)

Understanding the embodiment of reading through Deleuze and Guattari, Sumara, and Coloma,
allows us to think through the ways our bodies and subject positions are impacted by/with the
reading of a book is dependent upon the individual and where they are in their own journey, assemblages, and constitutive subjectivities.

Reading as Resistance and Thriving

The way the participants describe the possibility for other ways of being because of the ‘putting into words’ of their experiences in fiction is countered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). When speaking about language, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain “Language is not life; it gives life orders… Every order-word… carries a little death sentence—a Judgment” (p. 76). These ‘order-words’ are representative of the ‘social’ aspect of language or subjectification and are “always already legitimated by institutions” (MacLure, 2011, p. 999). Going back to Carolina, when Carolina reads the experience of bilingualism as being an embodied experience, it is not just the language on the page that creates an intense stickiness during the reading process, but the embodiment of the reading process and Carolina’s past and present experiences of being subjectified within the settler colonial context as a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman. As explained by Deleuze and Guattari (1987),

Language in its entirety is indirect discourse… [and] in no way supposes direct discourse; rather, the [direct discourse] is extracted from the [indirect discourse]… Direct discourse is a detached fragment of a mass and is born of the dismemberment of the collective assemblage. (p. 84)

I understand this experience Carolina has with reading the bilingual-racialized-immigrant character as rubbing against/conflicting with the direct discourse, ‘order-words’, prior understandings and stereotypes of what it means to be a bilingual immigrant of colour, creating a new, life-affirming understanding of this subject position for her self. Reading Native Speaker creates a new, liveable version of bilingual-racialized-immigrant (or order-word) that renegotiates or reterritorializes the dominant, white settler colonial molar understanding of the subject position through her positionality as a Spanish-English, Latinx-Venezuelan woman. This is both physical and not-physical in that it both changes the body and the body visually stays the same (however it can be categorized differently through this transformation). Explained by Bonta and Provetti (2004),
An incorporeal transformation is brought about by an order-word… an incorporeal transformation assigns a body to a different assemblage… this active element of incorporeal transformations means they do not represent bodies, but ‘intervene’ in them. (p. 99)

Reading and connecting with *Native Speaker* was an intense embodied process for Carolina and allowed for new understanding of becoming a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman that gave her new possibilities and ways of understanding her experiences as powerful and embodied.

Carolina is able to ‘play the game’ of settler colonial norms in order to survive within it, such as obtaining Canadian citizenship and a Canadian passport, but within these acts, there are “lines of flight [which] are immanently created, forming passageways for (temporary) escapes, transformations, becomings” (Jackson, 2013, p. 115). Carolina is subverting colonial discourse by being within it and creating these new, liveable narratives of being both in and outside of the culture, or as Coloma (2008) describes, “being both/and – also meant being neither one completely” (p. 24). Carolina explains that,

instead of feeling… I was being pulled in two directions… of not belonging… once you see the third space, like the in between space as a space that you inhabit, I think it takes away some of that incompleteness… I'm in like a whole other space… [it] is like a power that other people don't have access to, and that's a really cool thing to realize.

Through explaining the reading process, Carolina reimagines this being positioned as ‘Other’ by the white settler colonial discourse to embracing this ‘Other’ space that is not accessible to the white settler colonial subject as an empowered space of agency through shifting the discourse. Carolina subverts white settler colonial discourses which deny her access to the dominant norms and takes up this space where she feels belonging and which the white settler subject cannot access. As explained in the theoretical framework chapter, agency is “never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted” (Davies, 1991, p. 51). This shifting the discourse or molar, order-words of becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman creates possibilities for a new way of being that first deterritorializes and then eventually becomes reterritorialized. As explained by Deleuze and Guattari (1987),
The fact that there is no deterritorialization without a special reterritorialization should prompt us to rethink the abiding correlation between the molar and the molecular: no flow, no becoming-molecular escapes from a molar formation without molar components accompanying it, forming passages or perceptible landmarks for the imperceptible processes. (p. 303)

Although putting into language experiences outside of the white settler colonial discourse helps create possibilities for life-affirming order-words, it is not just that representation that will create contentment or equity. There is an entanglement of feeling represented in the reading process that of course produces something different—more liveable than reading a work of fiction that reinforces white settler colonial discourse. However, these reading processes are complex and the reader’s becomings were constitutive of not only the book, but also the book club, and their own lives/experiences in and out of the book club. As explained by Hickey-Moody (2013), “Our subjectivity is the embodied accumulation of our actions” (p. 82). Throughout their prior reading experiences and some within the book club, when the women did not feel represented in the characters or stories, they still went through processes of becoming, through feelings/actions of anger (Thuy), dismissal (Samantha), and comparing narratives which will be elaborated on in the next chapter. Whether it is reaffirming or refusing ways of being, the women negotiated their subjectivities in differing ways through the reading process depending upon the assemblages they were a part of.

**The Constitutive Embodiment of Reading and Language**

Carolina’s reflections, connections, and imagining other worlds has taken a new form in her adulthood, as she reflects on the past. She explains how her past would have been much different if she were given the tools to explain her non-heteronormative experiences. Carolina explains this through a narrative of her close female friend in middle school:

when I was in middle school, I was also really bullied because I had a really close girl friend, like you do in middle school, and they would call us lesbians and bully us about being lesbians even though we weren't, but I feel like at that moment if I had had access to other kinds of… realities that weren't heteronormative, that would've really helped me to process what was happening, cause even now… I look back and I think there was something there, I think that was my first love, but I didn't have the words to think about
a woman that way because also Venezuela's so Catholic, like a lot of Latin America, so homophobia is so rampant, so normalized, it's really gross, but you don't see it when you're in it right, it's the water (laughs), you're just swimming around in this polluted water, you don't even know, and I think being able to access realities that were different and had words and people even if they were fictional that were different, would've been… I think it would have been life changing if that had been there.

Recounting this experience in middle school, Carolina puts language to how she now understands her relationship to another girl in her youth. Through reading fiction and non-fiction texts, she feels she has been given the tools to make sense of these non-heteronormative experiences, just like her bilingual-immigrant experiences explained earlier. She explains reflecting on this experience of being bullied and not being able to conceptualize her relationship that,

it's incredible how powerful someone giving you the language to things is, it's like Freire, if we can give people the language to see their oppression and imagine other worlds, imagine other realities, then we can transform it. (Carolina)

This putting into words was very important for Carolina. Carolina’s ability to make sense of and connect these words to her experiences is constitutive of her own subjectivities and assemblages she is plugged into. The way she relates to Native Speaker is much different now than it would have been during her high school education in Venezuela. I will go into much more detail about the non-linearity of time/learning/reading in the following chapters, as each of the participants explained this process and how they read the books in this book club is much different than how they would have read the books in high school.

Subverting White Settler Colonial Discourses through Embodied Reading Practices

In reading Native Speaker, Carolina continues becoming. She negotiates her experiences and subjectivities through her reading process to create other possibilities of living, persisting, and thriving in this ‘in-between space’ as a bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman that the white settler colonial subject does not/cannot access. As she reads these ‘tools’ that explain her experience as a bilingual-immigrant, her body changes – her heart rate quickens, she breathes
sharply, her eyes brighten – this reading creates possibilities to think about her life and future a little bit differently – a more liveable life. This becoming is not a linear process and the becoming each person in the book club negotiated takes place within the world, not beyond the world, as “they take the world with them – into the future” (Massumi, 1992, p. 105). Carolina had these particular becomings with *Native Speaker* because of the assemblages she is connected to. While Carolina was reading, she was connecting to the bilingual-immigrant experience and re-understanding what this means through the narrative. Her understanding of becoming shifted and became a source of pride. Although the plot of *Native Speaker* is quite colonial, in that the main character is a spy and there was sexism throughout the novel, there were molecular moments within the book that subverted colonial discourses. Carolina connects to these molecular moments that subvert colonial understandings of being bilingual-immigrant and becomes excited through the reading of this new possibility of explaining the embodiment of language – of becoming bilingual. Other members of the book club did not have the same or even similar experiences when reading *Native Speaker*. Two other book club members, Kiara and Min-Seo, could relate to the racialized, immigrant narrative of their own or their parents. However, the intense level of stickiness did not apply, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Carolina’s becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman will continue. As she learns and shifts her understandings of her own becomings, her reading processes also shift the way she thinks about her past and her implicatedness in colonial process as she lives on stolen land. Explaining her relationship with her close girl friend in middle school in the context of Venezuela, Carolina finds new words and possibilities to explain the relationship she had from her current assemblages. For Carolina, putting things into words – into language – gives her tools to create possibilities, a more liveable life. Shifting her understanding of this relationship to her “first love” was only possible for Carolina through her life experiences and development of language through her reading process. Explained by Coloma (2008) as constitutive subjectivities or Deleuze and Guattari as the assemblages Carolina is connected to, putting new language to these experiences creates new possibilities for Carolina. Looking back now at the children that teased her for being a “lesbian,” she finds agency in the acknowledgement that although she did not have the words then, it was her “first love,” and that reclaiming that view of the narrative allows for life affirming possibilities.
The corporeal affects or becomings are “the action by which something or someone continues to become other (while still continuing to be what is)” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 177). Carolina was and is an immigrant-bilingual-racialized-woman and how she understands this becoming will continue to shift throughout her experience in the world. The feelings of power and possibilities Carolina felt through reading *Native Speaker* became stronger throughout the book club in the way that Carolina described them and were connected to self-reflection, explained in the next chapter, and community in the last chapter. Carolina was impacted not just by the words on the page, but she felt these becomings constitutively through her own relationships with self, others, society, and her experiences. This is important within education research, as educators should provide opportunities for students to read books that allow them to ‘put into words’ their subject positions. It is also important that students feel comfortable reading these texts in the classroom. The meaning of the book and how Carolina embodied the reading was based not only on her own perceptions but were impacted by the perception and action of others in the book club (shown in the last chapter), which inevitably alters the way one engages with the text and feels this embodiment of reading. It is through these actions of molecularity, to deterritorialize or subvert the white settler colonial understandings of ‘being’, that Carolina was able to continue her process of becoming in more life affirming ways. However, “both the molar and the molecular share a deterritorialization in that they are both becoming” (Jackson, 2013, p. 120). Carolina showed throughout the book club how she continued becoming away from the molar or white settler colonial discourse, whereas Kiara straddled between her desires of becoming molecular and molar which will be shown in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Reading as a Tool for Self-Reflection and a New Consciousness

Trust Ourselves
We are taught
not
to trust ourselves
but
I learned a lot of things
about me
and
I was so right
I was SO right
I should have trusted myself
I saw the pattern
that’s what the learning did
that opening of eyes
I need to trust myself

This poem was created by the words of Aadhya. Aadhya was the oldest participant, and had many experiences reading as a heterosexual, Canadian Indian, both in India and in Canada, and with many different education experiences within science, math, and social sciences. This poem shows Aadhya’s process of self-reflection through the reading process. This process of self-reflection was another hot spot that arose in the research process, but through an experience Aadhya shared in the first book club meeting to discuss Native Speaker. As explained in the methodology chapter, the first meeting before we read books was to get to know each other and the research. Coming into the space after reading half of the first book, the women around the table shared intimate details about them selves and their experiences. In the beginning of this chapter, I share Aadhya’s story that she shared with the group to show not only the trust that was developed around the table, but the trust Aadhya developed in her self.

Near the very end of the book club meeting, Aadhya shared that she had experienced sexual violence when she was younger. Explained from my field notes,

There were two very intense moments during the book club meeting. The most intense was when Aadhya shared that she was raped. She explained how reading a book like this
could help her find her self as an individual – her personality and identity. She then explained that being conscious was part of this process of identity formation, but it was painful. She had suppressed the experience of being raped, and when getting to know her self, she was able to allow this experience to surface. She completely blocked out this experience for years, but reflecting on this allowed her to understand her own techniques for survival. She felt that if she read a book like this, it would have allowed her to work through this experience earlier. It would have allowed her to “put those things into words… because the more you know yourself as a person, the stronger you feel” (Aadhya).

Reading *Native Speaker* was very impactful for Aadhya. During this first book club meeting to discuss *Native Speaker*, I asked the group how their earlier life experiences may have been different if they read a book like this, which represented some of their subject positions and experiences of marginalization. Aadhya explained that growing up in a colonial education system in India suppressed her critical thinking, and it was not until her graduate studies at OISE that she could begin, as she explains “finding myself as an individual, my own personality and identity.” She explained,

where I come from, which is very heavily affected by the whole colonial system of education… that system in a way systematically blocks you [from critical thinking], you don’t go there, forget about nurturing it.

She attributes her graduate education to the development of her critical thinking, which allowed the past experience of sexual violence to surface. She explained that suppressing the experience was her technique of survival, as she could not put it into words. After gaining confidence and critical thinking skills, she explained that she was able to put it into words and explained that,

If I would have read this earlier, it would have helped me put those things more into words because the more you know yourself as a person, the stronger you feel… We are taught not to trust ourselves… So when I see my markers throughout my life, it’s like, I was so right, I was so right. I should have trusted myself… I saw the pattern, that no, I think I need to trust myself, I need to trust myself more. This is valid, no this is very valid… That’s what the learning did for me and if I had something like this probably that opening of eyes could have started a little bit earlier.
Aadhya’s experience of sexual violence is entangled in histories and processes of colonialism, patriotism, imperialism, war, racism, sexism, and classism. From the Portuguese, to the Dutch, British, and French, there is a long history of colonialism in India. The long-lasting impacts of British colonialism has meant severe law reforms that have and continue to impact women in India, as these laws ensured that India follow England’s strict patriarchal and colonial values (Chitnis & Wright, 2007). The British colonial rule’s aim was to ‘civilize’ the people in India through a racialized, gendered, and classed logic, and the sexual violence brought by colonial rule intersects with the caste, gender, and race inequities that are part of India’s history (Patil & Purkayastha, 2018). Sexual violence enacted on women continues to be a major issue in India and is linked to colonialism, class, “capitalism, politics, caste” (Patil & Purkayastha, 2018, p. 1964), and state sovereignty (Osuri, 2015). As argued by Patil and Purkayastha (2018), global north understandings of “Indian rape culture” ignore colonial legacies and continue to reproduce racist, colonialist constructions of “sexually violent and barbaric Indian men” (p. 1961); however, there are realities of sexual violence in India which are linked to the Hindu-Indian state’s commitments to war, imperialism, patriotism, and goals to further its capitalist economy (Osuri, 2015). Through India’s complicated colonial and imperial history and present, British colonial legislation as well as Hindu-majority patriotism still impact those bodies deemed to be ‘anti-national’ (such as women, Muslims, Sikhs, Kashmiris, the poor, etc.) (Osuri, 2015).

Aadhya, although she does not discuss the ways in which sexual violence is constitutive of these processes explained above, names the ways in which critical thinking was not encouraged while she was in school in India. Through legacies of British colonialism, the school system ignored local and marginalized religions, cultures, and languages, based on a rote memorization model of British curriculum (Rahman, Ali, & Kahn, 2018). Through the education system and society, “Britain established institutions to justify and secure colonial rule, and used force to curb any challenges to its rule” (Rahman, Ali, & Kahn, 2018, p. 20). This meant a concentration of British curriculum and pedagogies, while ignoring the many local and diverse languages, religions, cultures, and histories across India. It is through coming to a country and taking part in a graduate degree on stolen land that Aadhya reflects on her past in critical ways to put words to her experience of rape in the context of India.

The poem created at the beginning of this chapter by Aadhya’s words is one hot-spot that was part of a larger hot-spot throughout the book club: self-reflection. Through this chapter, I examine the ways in which Aadhya, Kiara, Min-Seo, and Samantha navigate this process of self-
reflection through their reading process using the theories of Coloma (2008), Anzaldúa (1987), and Sumara (1996, 2003). Although each person had particular ways of negotiating their own processes of self-reflection and connections to the books, I show how the women shared in the process of building trust in themselves through a ‘putting into words’ their subject positions and experiences of marginalization during the reading process. I will then explain how this building of trust through this putting into words their subject positions and experiences of marginalization creates a ‘new consciousness’ (Anzaldúa, 1987), which helped develop this trust in their subject positions outside of the white settler colonial discourse which favours the white, male, heterosexual narrative and sees ‘the Other’ through simplified, static understandings. Lastly, I will explain how this new consciousness outside of the white settler colonial discourse creates opportunities to subvert white settler colonial discourse and helps to persist and thrive in spite of it.

Plugging in Theories

Through Coloma’s theory of constitutive subjectivities (2008), I look through the data to understand how the participants’ acts of self-reflection through their reading processes are constitutive of the contexts they are in and the ways in which each person is “simultaneously speaking-for herself and being-spoken-of by others” (Coloma, 2008, p. 11). Through Coloma (2008), I understand the ways in which these self-reflective processes are part of the process of subjectification, which incorporates this speaking for them selves and being spoken of by others, through “visible and non-visible indices of difference and is mediated through the citation of socio-historical discourses” (p. 12) and “is implicated in power relations” (p. 20). Understanding Coloma’s (2008) theory of constitutive subjectivities helps to examine the ways that the self-reflective process “mobilizes discourses that are specific to particular contexts… socio-cultural, historical, and geographical contexts” (p. 20). The ways in which the women reflect on them selves are enabled by the “available socio-historical discourses that regulate positions and meanings” (Coloma, 2008, p. 21). This helps me understand and theorize ‘trust’ in the particular socio-historical context and how reading a narrative that shared subject positions and experiences of marginalization with them allowed for a ‘putting into words’ a new understanding of their subject positions outside of the white settler colonial discourse.
The trust built by each individual member of the book club and the trust built between the members of the book club is a specific, contextual, politicized trust. It is not white trust and is not a trust that depends upon white settler colonial discourse. The trust developed through the reading of the two books allowed new language to be learned that explained their subject positions, feelings, and becomings that the women did not access before through spoken or written language. Through Coloma (2008), I understand that through the reading of *Native Speaker* for Aadhya, Kiara, and Min-seo, and *The Marrow Thieves* for Samantha, allowed for a putting into words subject positions that allowed for a deep sense of trust in their own positionalities. As explained by Coloma (2008),

subject positions are constructed through a process of self-identification and interpellation by others that mobilizes discourses that are specific to particular contexts. My subjectivity is not only a dynamic construction of how I label myself and how others perceive me, but also dependent upon the discourses used to make sense of these subject positions that are grounded within particular socio-cultural, historical, and geographical contexts. (p. 20)

Putting words to their becomings that are outside of the white settler colonial discourse and norm allows for a new way of explaining their own subject positions. What I mean by this is the women have many experiences reading fiction from a white, male, heterosexual, often settler perspective. Reading a novel from the perspective of, in the case of *Native Speaker*, a racialized, immigrant, bilingual perspective created a narrative that Aadhya, Kiara, and Min-seo could connect to in deep ways because of their own navigations and becomings of racialization, family experiences of immigration, and bilingualism. For Samantha, reading *The Marrow Thieves* created so much excitement of this ‘putting into words’ ideas, feelings, and becomings that are outside of the white settler colonial discourse. Reading *Native Speaker* allowed Samantha to put into words and connect with the characters in deep ways because of her own subject position as a Two-Spirit, Cree-Italian woman. Through this chapter, I will explain how reading *Native Speaker* for the three women (Aadhya, Kiara, and Min-seo) and *The Marrow Thieves* for Samantha, aided in a self-reflective process because of these connections that allowed them to trust their subject positions outside of the white settler norm or way of understanding them.

Coloma’s (2008) theory also enables me to examine the in between spaces, as this theory “offers a way out of debilitating dichotomies that bisect one’s subjectivities, and instead provides
a potential to construct a tentative and jagged coherence out of seemingly contradictory and competing positions” (Coloma, 2008, p. 21). All six members of the book club spoke about being in this ‘in between’ space and processes of marginalization within the white settler colonial context. Again, through Coloma (2008), I understand how ‘putting into words’ helps the women trust in their in between becomings and experiences of marginalization as being ‘valid,’ as explained by Coloma (2008),

One’s claims to a subject position are filtered through discourses that validate or cancel such assertions. In short, there is no a priori subject. The process of subjectification, even the constitutive approach, has to contend with the available socio-historical discourses that regulate positions and meanings. (p. 21)

Reading a narrative that explains these similar experiences of marginalization as their own helped the women to put words to this that they did not have before, and some realized that this feeling of being in between is very common, which helped develop a feeling of trust in their own negotiations of this feeling.

To understand what is happening in this in between space, I draw on Anzaldúa’s (1987) theories of borderland and ‘new consciousness.’ Drawing from Coloma’s (2008) understanding of “being both/and – also mean[s] being neither one completely” (p. 24), I understand Anzaldúa’s (1987) borders and borderlands as similar to the ways in which the women felt their own in betweenness. Through Anzaldúa (1987) I understand that,

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them… [and that] A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. (p. 25)

Through this understanding of borders and borderlands and drawing on Anzaldúa’s (1987) ‘new consciousness,’ I examine the ways the women break down the attempted binaries placed on them, which try to force them “to be only one or the other” and instead, trust this in between space through the reading process. However, it is important to note that Anzaldúa’s (1987) theory cannot simply be transposed onto this research project in the context of Toronto with five of the six women not a part of the complicated histories of mestizaje.
I borrow from Anzaldúa’s (1987) work to show that although differently experienced, these complicated, colonial histories are similar, as they aim to marginalize groups of people in order to maintain power structures. Anzaldúa’s (1987) powerful work also helps to understand the ways in which the women trust themselves and how this trust develops a ‘new consciousness’ outside of the white settler colonial discourse. Although the self-reflection or “conscious awareness… is painful because after ‘it’ happens [one] can’t stay in the same place and be comfortable” (p. 70), it allows for non-binary, ambiguous becomings as she is “no longer the same person [she] was before” (p. 70). Explained by Anzaldúa (1987), “Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious” (p. 70), and instead of seeing the in-between or liminal space as a space of unknown or deficit, Anzaldúa (1987) helps to frame the process in a way that fosters a “plural personality… nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else” (p. 101). I will show how the development of a new consciousness helps the women to trust themselves and this helps them to subvert white settler colonial discourse, and persist and thrive despite it.

Through these theories of Coloma (2008) and Anzaldúa (1987) I draw on my theory of reading, developed in the Theoretical Framework chapter. Similar to the last chapter, I heavily draw on Sumara (1996, 2003) to understand a theory of embodied action to understand the ways that reading are constitutive of our subject positions and subject positions are constitutive of our reading processes. Put another way, our subjectivities “mediate and are mediated by the texts they read, write, and talk about” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 416). The way each person reads is constitutive of their socio-historical context, which also echoes Coloma’s (2008) understandings of subjectification. As the women engage in the novels, their subjectivities are continually becoming with their new ways of conceptualizing their subject positions. This new information is also filtered through the memories, context, relationships, emotion, and socio-historical context of each reader (Augustine, 2010). As the women connect and relate to the book(s), they are drawing on their past from their present contexts and positionalities, which points to the ways in which there is no truth or reality, but constructions of experiences based on the unstable and fluid language available (Lather, 2016). The processes of racialization, immigration, bilingualism, colonialism, and so on that each participant has and continues to experience in different ways impacts what they bring and take from the books we read in the book club. Because of white settler colonial discourses that oppress Indigenous, racialized, a non-binary peoples in Canada (Finley, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Morgensen, 2015), the women have not had
many opportunities to read fiction outside of this white settler colonial perspective. It is because of this and the ways in which the women’s bodies are subjectified that they have particular responses and connections to the text, which I will explain throughout the chapter as a self-reflection process that builds the trust they have in their positionalities outside of the white settler colonial norm. It is through building this trust that a ‘new consciousness’ develops, which allows for revolutionary change not part of the white settler colonial discourse (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), as they subvert the dominant white settler colonial discourse and make new ways of becoming through their new consciousness.

Aadhya’s Self-reflection

What allowed Aadhya to share with a group of women she had just met that she was raped, when she had only been able to put it into words for her self recently? I asked Aadhya in our one-on-one meeting what allowed her to share with the group that she was raped, but she could not verbalize it. Aadhya explained, “I don't know [what allowed me to share] when I was in the group - god knows, I don't even remember what it was- what triggered it and I was able to just say it.” Through this section and chapter, I will show how Aadhya and the other women felt a sense of trust in the women around the table. As five of the members of the book club were women of colour and one of the members was Indigenous, a deep sense of trust outside of the white settler colonial discourse could be developed. A few of the women discussed how connecting with other women of colour and an Indigenous woman meant that a lot of things need not be said – there was a mutual understanding of marginalization in the settler colonial context. Kiara explained it, “coming around the table with a group of women who are minorities in their own ways made me feel that I wasn't alone and all these anxieties and fears that I have of about what's going on in the world right now.” Samantha explained, “reading a book about a minority in a group of people who are minorities I guess it's a lot more comfortable for me.” Developing community, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter, was very important in this book club and the women’s reading processes. And who was around the table really mattered contextually and politically. Explained by Carolina, “when it's a group of women, I think that's really powerful too… I think that there's something special around it only being women that was really special, and I think it changes your readings and your experience of reading something.”
Although I was in the room, the fact that there were five women of colour and one Indigenous woman meant that the women could develop a deep sense of trust not only in each other, but in themselves. I did create the research project and although I listened much more than I spoke in the book club meetings, I still guided the questions and conversation. The data that came out of the research project is particular to not only the women’s subject positions, but my own. Although I am a white settler researcher, the women trusted me in the details they shared of their experiences. I believe they trusted me because of my anticolonial commitments and goals of the research and this shows how white settler researchers and educators can enter these conversations in productive ways (explained in more detail in the last chapter). However, the research project may have been much different with an Indigenous or racialized woman leading the research. This being said, the dynamic of the book club was anticolonial and comprised mostly of racialized women, which created an intentional space (explained in more detail in the next chapter). Reading a book that they could connect with and coming around the table with other women who are marginalized in “in their own ways” (Kiara), meant that the book club space became an anticolonial space where the women could speak outside of the white settler colonial discourse. Aadhya felt comfortable sharing this and unloaded the experience of rape into the room of other women that could hold that and relate to it, being women who are minorities and many of them also experiencing different forms of sexual violence. As Aadhya continues to negotiate her subject positions, others in the book club and their interpretations, conversations, and the affect that circulates in the room will also impact Aadhya’s subjectivities. Being a part of a space where she could share this traumatic experience of rape was allowed by who was in the group and the affect that circulated within it. The space had already been labeled as an ‘anticolonial book club,’ comprised of my self, five women of colour, and one Indigenous woman, and the conversations already developed were speaking of similar experiences of marginalization because of race, ethnicity, gender, and language. The six women chose to be a part of the book club to discuss anticolonialism and dedicated their time to reading a book a discussing it. They enjoyed the process so much that we did end up reading the second book (The Marrow Thieves) and we continue to meet today outside of the research. What created the group was a lot of intentionality – women who are marginalized and who want to be a part of an ‘anticolonial book club.’ It was not only racial or cultural identifications, but political commitments and intentionality. I think these were parts of what allowed Aadhya to explain for the first time with others that she was raped.
When Aadhya shared that she was raped, the affect was very thick and sticky in the room. Aadhya’s sharing came out of a conversation, speaking about critical thinking. After Aadhya shared her experience and linked it to trusting herself, Kiara had to leave and the energy in the room shifted. Kiara stood up and said:

Kiara: thank you and thank you for sharing, that was really power- I've also been in that position and--

Aadhya: I've never told this to anyone

Kiara: yeah

Aadhya: (laughs) it's like oh my god

Kiara: you're very brave

Me: yeah

Kiara: you're very brave

Me: thank you

Kiara: thank you, yeah

Aadhya: oh my god I can't believe it

Kiara: I'm gonna be the hugger

(laughs)

Me: we're all huggers

Kiara: yeah

(Kiara hugs Aadhya)

Aadhya: yeah, I was very young at that time, I didn't know (laughs)

Kiara: hang in there, okay we'll see you next time
Me: kay, yes, that's okay, thanks bye

Kiara: bye

Min-seo: I do find it empowering to label and name the experiences and emotions. My psychologist actually told me to do that and I think I wasn't, I was never really good at that, cause it's hard to identify what it is that you're feeling, right, first of all, and to name it, to label it, I think that's even more difficult, it was a lot of self reflections that I did. That I actually had to do that I'm still working on, and it's really helpful, and I thank you so much for sharing, I know that it's not easy to share that kind of personal piece, and I am glad that you felt that it was a safe place to share.

Aadhya: (breathes out)

(laughs)

Aadhya: that's why, you know, that was a big big learning for me

Carolina: yeah

Me: but I think you're so right, I think that and we teach this in the teacher training program, to be good teachers, you have to know yourself

Carolina: mnhmm

Me: and I think for me, like my goal in this life is to know myself and it's really it brings so much peace

Min-seo: mnhmm

Me: to really truly understand yourself and be at peace with yourself, so thank you for - I could really relate to that too, so thank you for sharing, yeah. So I think yeah, I think I don't know if you all agree, but reading these sort of book, like help you to know yourself

Carolina: mnhmm

Min-seo: mnhmm, definitely, yup

Carolina: mnhmm
The recording device was turned off directly after and we all said good bye and hugged Aadhya and thanked her for sharing with us.

Later, through one-on-ones with each of the members of the book club, it was evident that this was felt around the room and many of the women could relate to the experience of sexual assault and the feeling of not trusting one’s self. When speaking to Carolina about Aadhya’s comment that “we are taught not to trust ourselves,” the feelings came flooding back into the room, “Yeah, I remember when she said that and everyone was like (hits fist on table) mmmhmm! All of us were like oh yes! So true, yeah!” (Carolina). The fact that Aadhya linked this feeling of not trusting her self to her experience of sexual assault was so powerful for the group and for my self in a deep way. Explained in my field notes,

I could feel a strong connection, relatedness, and care to Aadhya around the room. The affect was intense and I could feel the energy rise. The women felt her and could understand her experience as a gendered person on such a deep level. This experience affected the whole room. And then she continued and explained how if you know yourself, you feel stronger and it felt like she was speaking my experience.

The dominant, patriarchal discourse across the globe has impacted the way the women in the book club see themselves and the way that they feel they have been socialized to trust themselves. Reading a narrative that shows a character with subject positions outside of the white settler colonial norm, and through the lens of a racialized, bilingual, immigrant, allowed the women to connect with and remember that their experiences of marginalization are not solitary and are part of larger systems of oppression. What really allowed for trust to be developed in her self, for Aadhya, was the critical thinking that she discussed earlier, which allowed her to subvert the patriarchal discourse she has been embedded in since birth (first in India and now in Canada). Coming around the table with other women who have similar experiences, especially with intersections of race, allowed there to be a further layer of trust developed between the members and they developed a familial type of care (shown with everyone hugging at the end of the meeting, and described further in the next chapter). This also allowed for trust to be developed in each member, as they were continually reminded that the women around the table also have similar experiences of marginalization.
Reading a novel that she could relate to the subject positions and experiences of marginalization allowed Aadhya to get to know her self better. As explained by Aadhya, this getting to know your self is part of the process of trusting your self,

I think it for me [reading something I can relate to] enforces the things that I think about in terms of the character. It just makes me more conscious about things that have been subconscious. So whether it's race, whether it's being an immigrant, whether being a woman, so all those different things, it just helps me enforce all of them and say hmm, I think I understand.

When Aadhya read *Native Speaker*, she could relate to Henry’s experience of being racialized, his family being immigrants, and the way women were treated in the book as sexual objects. Reading this narrative aided in Aadhya’s process of self-reflection and becoming conscious of her experiences through an anticolonial lens allowed her to trust in her subject positions outside of the normative white settler colonial norm or narrative. Learning about her self through reading about a character that was marginalized (through the lens of an author who is racialized, bilingual, and an immigrant) was a very powerful experience and can aid in this process of Aadhya trusting her self.

Learning how to trust her self, as explained by Aadhya, is part of a process of learning about her self. In the meeting, Aadhya went on to explain that part of the suppression of her rape was connected to this teaching her not to trust her self and that she is now getting to know her self better. She explained,

because I learned a lot of other things about me, I'm like oh my god I can do things like this. So if I would have read this [*Native Speaker*] earlier, it would have helped me probably put those things more into words. Because the more you know yourself as a person, the stronger you feel.

Again, reading *Native Speaker* allowed a putting into words the ways in which the larger, white settler colonial discourse is continually reinforcing marginalization of those who are not white, male, and British-English speaking. This self-reflection and putting into words these experiences of marginalization can help develop a trust in her own experience as being valid and actually common in the colonial context. This trust and putting into words can create new possibilities for imagining her own experiences, which has developed a ‘new consciousness’ outside of the white
settler colonial discourse, where Aadhya now feels she can trust her self and her experiences as valid. Aadhya explained that she should have trusted her self and maybe she could have if she saw her own experience as being valid. She explained again that, “I think I need to trust myself. I need to trust myself more. This is valid… if I had something like this [Native Speaker], probably that opening of eyes could have started a little bit earlier.” Aadhya reflects on her experiences and through the process of reading Native Speaker, explains that if she had read an experience close to hers earlier in her life, she would have been able to process and put into words the traumatic experience of being raped, and as a result would have learned to trust her self more.

Understanding this process through Coloma and Sumara help to examine how Aadhya’s connections to the text and subject positions of Henry and the women in the book are contextual and were always impacted by not only how she saw her own experiences and subject positions, but how she was seen. If given the ‘tools,’ as explained in the last chapter, to explain her subject positions and ways in which she was marginalized, she would have been able to create new meaning to her subject positions. This re-interpreting the rape and finding ways to trust her self can allow for what Anzaldúa (1987) explains as a ‘consciousness awareness.’ The self-reflective process or understanding the experience is painful, but after facing the experience and learning to trust her self, there is growth and she is “no longer the same person [she] was before” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 70). Reflecting on their experiences and their subject positions by reading a book through the lens of a racialized, bilingual, second-generation immigrant was a very powerful tool for the women in the book club, but was also very individual as each experience with the book was enacted through a “process of individuation determined by actual and specific differences, multitudinous influences and chance interactions” (Stagoll, 2010, p. 75).

I reflected on the individual experiences of self-reflection and each person’s experience of connecting to the experiences of the characters, or not which will be explained later. When asked about reading a book with a character with similar subject positions to her own, Aadhya explained,

At that time I was just in my little grey area, where I wasn't sure if it's just me thinking or if it's normal, or are other people think the same way, like that level of discomfort… if you are abused, you think it's just you… but it's not until after you find out that it's not just you, there are many others, then you start to see things in a very different way… you see things in a very very different light.
This reflecting on her experiences of marginalization and realization that other people have had a similar experience helps her to see things differently, a new consciousness. For Aadhya, it is not just reflecting on her self, but other people and their experiences that helps this getting to know her self. She explained, “I think that's what it will do to me, that I will be much more conscious about their experience and my experience and everyone's experience, which might be quite different.” Seeing in words her similar subject positions and experiences of marginalization and overcoming obstacles in spite of marginalization created an opportunity for growth and self-reflection, and although each experience is unique, this is always in relation to others and their experiences, and also the way each member of the book club’s perceived understanding of them self affects the way others view them. Through reading, a self-reflection and self-relational process occurred and as Aadhya created a new consciousness, she began to trust her self and her experiences more.

**Being In Between**

This process of self-reflection through reading similar subject positions and experiences of marginalization was strong for a few members of the group. One of the strongest hot spots within the process of self-reflection was related to being in an in between/liminal space. Although in a much different context, some of the experiences of ‘living in between’ were similar to Anzaldúa’s (1987) theory of la mestiza, where the participants’ explained feeling as though they are living in between two worlds. As explained by Anzaldúa (1987), “a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (p. 25). Those that occupy the borderlands are the ones who are in between, hybrid, and who are expected to abide by the expectations of ‘both sides’ (Anzaldúa, 1987). The women a part of this book club were not in this context, so the theory of la mestiza cannot be transposed onto their experiences, but many of the thoughts explained by Anzaldúa (1987) resonated with me and the women’s feelings of being ‘in between.’ Throughout the book club, this feeling of being in between and “neither one completely” (Coloma, 2008, p. 24), continued to arise in the book club conversation. By reading an anticolonial fiction that is not through the white settler colonial discursive lens and understands this in between space deeply, a few of the women could really relate to Henry’s subject positions and embrace their own feelings of being both/and. Through reading *Native Speaker*, the women developed a new trust in their own subject positions that
were explained outside of white settler colonial stereotypes and could see them as valid, which helped to develop a ‘new consciousness’ of their subject positions (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Aadhya experienced this feeling of being in between not only as an Indian Canadian, but as a mother, employee, and friend. She explained,

I feel *that* all the time [*being in between*]… whether I'm at work, whether I'm at home, not so much at home, but yeah, you know depending on who comes in and who I'm talking to, whether I was back in India, whether I'm here… when you are there, then you are Canadian, when you are here you're Indian - you're never the normal.

Digging deeper into this, Aadhya further explained these feelings of ‘not belonging,’

It feels like everyone around me is so connected and everyone is better than me. That's always the theme… Whether here in Canada as an immigrant, still trying to kind of find your grounding, trying to relate to India and not-India, Canada and not-Canada.

Being in between for Aadhya meant that she never felt as though she was “the normal.” Being seen as Indian when she is in Canada and Canadian when she is in India has made Aadhya feel as though she is in this in between space. These feelings of not belonging are complicated, as only certain bodies can ‘belong’ to the dominant white settler colonial subject. In the Canadian context, the white settler colonial discourse ensures those who are not white are subjectified into an ‘Other’ category. As explained by Thobani (2007), this othering is an explicit goal of multiculturalism policy, which allows the white settler subject to be seen as the original inhabitant of Canada. This ‘multiculturalism policy’ became official Canadian policy in the 1960s and 1970s, which created an allusion that the white settler colony had been transformed into “a multiracial, multi-ethnic, liberal-democratic society” (p. 144), but this was adopted only after white privilege was fully entrenched in practice and policy which allows the British and French to be seen as the “real subjects” of the Canadian state (Thobani, 2007, p. 145). The Canadian state continues to reproduce discourse that imagines ‘the nation’ to be “homogenous in relation to the difference of cultural strangers… the stranger is nevertheless fetishized as the origin of the difference” (Thobani, 2007, p. 145). The white settler colonial state displays its ‘inclusion’ of immigrants as being benevolent and tolerant, but this is always done so “on the nation’s terms” (p. 159) and multiculturalism policy defines who and what the ‘Other’ is through the white settler colonial discourse (Thobani, 2007). It is through this white settler colonial
multiculturalism policy that worked in line with the “reconceptualization of the nation’s relations with Aboriginal peoples” (Thobani, 2007, p. 174), where the state refused to support Indigenous communities in their attainment of education and employment because in doing so, the state ensured the Indigenous peoples could not increase their power and voice for self-determination (Thobani, 2007). It is these very purposeful policies that continually reproduce ideas of who is a ‘true’ Canadian citizen and who is ‘Other’ within the context, simultaneously making those who are racialized hyper visible and invisibilizing Indigenous lives and histories (Thobani, 2007).

Although Aadhya spoke about these feelings of in between or not feeling ‘good enough,’ she was very secure in her self and confident in who she was and how she presented her self to the world in many of the conversations we had. Perhaps because she was the oldest, or perhaps because she explained that as a stubborn girl who constantly fought against the beliefs she was not as beautiful because of her darker skin, she became strong and secure in her self. However, she still felt as though she was not ‘normal.’ She spoke about this confidence in a wise way where she understood that people’s opinions of her are their own responsibility and coming from their own perspective, but are not necessarily related to her. She explained,

I’m a little bit stubborn, and a lot of people also don’t like me because of that, not that I care, but I understand the space outside and where they come from… It helps me understand a little bit… If you come and you say something to me… even if I feel unhappy and sad what you said to me, if I understand why you said it to me, if I know there’s something happening in your life, or something that you were brought up… I can respond to it.

Being okay with her difference in this in between space of “India and not-India, Canada and not-Canada,” Aadhya sees the ways others see her and decides to continue becoming in ways that do not conform to their idea of who she should be. Being both/and, but always becoming “neither one completely” (Coloma, 2008, p. 24), Aadhya embraces a new consciousness that breaks down the literal and metaphorical borders of India and Canada. Through the process of self-reflection through reading, she is able to trust her self more through this getting to know her self and these in between spaces become spaces of thriving and subversion of the white settler colonial discourse and its expectations.

Kiara was another participant that really connected to the immigrant narrative of Native Speaker and the in between space that the main character occupied. Although the main character
Henry was Korean, he was also born in the settler colonial context (similarly to Kiara). Kiara’s parents immigrated to Canada in 1986 from Iran illegally during the revolution and Henry’s immigrated from South Korea. Kiara explained her parent’s experience of fleeing Iran by paying smugglers to help them travel at night through the mountains, across the Pakistani border. Although the root of the Islamic revolution is debated, it was in part a result of the Iranian people’s backlash against the power the US held over Iran and the strong influence it had over its culture or the ‘westernization’ of Iran. This westernization, or ‘the Shah’ regime, enforced laws that forbade Islamic clothes and police would forcibly remove niqabs from women (Afary & Anderson, 2005). It is argued that this revolution was a “new Islamist movement aimed at a fundamental cultural, social, and political break with the modern Western order” (Afary & Anderson, 2005, p. 4). Although “Iran was never directly colonized by any single colonial power… its history is a history of colonial interventions and external powers vying for influence” (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi, 1994, p. 11). As explained by Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi (1994) who build on Bourdieu’s work, “when the colonial power attempts to impose its cultural patterns, a language of refusal develops, expressed in symbolic fashion; for example, women’s wearing of the veil signals the emergence of a ‘new traditionalism’ as a culture of resistance” (p. 12). Under the Shah, the people of Iran and its resources were exploited by the US and in resistance the people revolted against the secularist ways and aimed to establish a traditional Islamic government.

Reading about a character who has similar subject positions as second-generation, bilingual immigrant allowed Kiara to deeply self-reflect on her own subject positions and the ways in which Henry and her self both navigated the settler colonial context and worked hard to be unseen, or not seen as ‘Other.’ This connection Kiara had to the character and his subject positions in *Native Speaker* was another hot spot in the research process. Kiara was the youngest in the group and identified as heterosexual, Canadian/Western and Persian. In all of the meetings, Kiara touched upon how reading the books helped her reflect on her own present and past subject positions and actions. One of the main ways this occurred was through Henry’s narrative of assimilation in *Native Speaker*. Henry, the main character of *Native Speaker*, was an expert at assimilation, which was described early on and throughout the book in many aspects of his life. For example, when he first met his future wife, who had “never kissed an Asian” before, he explained,
It was strangely automatic. Instantly I was thinking of the lover she might want… I thought of the way Nils was perhaps falling short. I put myself in her place and imagined her father and mother. Boyfriends, recent loves. I made those phantom calculations, did all that blind math so that I might cast for her the perfect picture of a face. (Lee, 1995, p. 13)

Kiara often compared Henry’s assimilation tactics based on his context to her own. In one meeting, she explained,

As a child, I can remember having moments after a while when I had been around my white friends all the time, and then realizing, wait I'm not white, that's right… but now that I'm older, I can see myself changing parts of my personality or the way that I interact with other people depending on the people around me. So if it's people from my family that are very Persian, I'll kind of tailor it to fit them.

She also shared,

I felt like I'd been leading a double life for a really long time, and that was when I was a child, where my household was completely Persian in every way possible, and then I would leave and go to school and it was completely Canadian, and it was just like I would adapt based on where I was. But any time, which was rare, those two things came together, it was just so weird for me. I didn't really know how to behave and it was hard. I felt like I was acting in my own life and not actually living it for a long time. So yeah, I definitely was able to relate to a lot of his experiences trying to navigate that.

Again, reading these similar subject positions and actions which were like Kiara’s allowed for this self-reflection process to create a new trust for her subject positions and actions and helped the process of a new ‘conscious awareness’ outside of the white settler colonial discourse develop.

Through not only seeing her self but considering how she is seen (and judged) by others, Kiara reflects on how she often changed her behaviour because of how she was interpreted by others in the settler colonial context. As explained through Aadhya’s feelings of in between, these feelings of being an ‘outsider’ within the Canadian classroom for Kiara and being reminded that she isn’t white is part of the purposeful discourse which reproduces specific stereotypes and understandings of ‘the Other’ (Thobani, 2007). Kiara did not want to be ‘Other’
in her own Persian house or within her white friend group or classroom, so she changed parts of her self to ‘blend in.’ Kiara explained, “I feel like I'm a bit of a chameleon, and I try to kind of pass unnoticed,” very similarly to Henry in Native Speaker; however, when she read the experience of Henry, who also was “acting in [his] own life and not actually living it,” she related to the behaviour in a deep way and spoke about it in many of the meetings. Kiara spoke of trying to blend in to white spaces, but as she continued getting older, this willingness to adapt to what she viewed as desirable that was determined according to who she was with started to shift, which will also alter her reading process (Sumara, 1996). Now that Kiara has been able to give her self the space to reflect on her subject positions and the power structures that continue to mark her body as ‘Other,’ she is more conscious of these acts of assimilation. Kiara explained that “I really was distancing myself from the intricacies of my identity and I don't think that I was ready to dive in, whereas now I am.” Kiara is now ready to reflect on her subject positions. Through the process of reading a narrative with similar subject positions and actions as her own and other life experiences such as her graduate degree, Kiara has developed the confidence to reflect on her self and she is starting to come to terms with her position in the in between space, understanding that her individuality is a strength and not aiming to assimilate into the majority white settler colonial discourse. I will explain below and further in the next chapter, but also coming around the table to discuss the ways that these differences from the white settler colonial discourse were a commonality in the group really helped Kiara through her process of sharing, reading, and trusting her self.

Kiara’s process of reflecting on her “double life” (Kiara’s words) or in between space was aided by the putting into words and making connections to Henry, who had similar subject positions and experiences of marginalization. She explained,

Being introduced to stories that are not Eurocentric whether or not they relate directly to your own culture, reminds you that there are other different people around you and that we're not all just trying to pass as Europeans (laughs). You shouldn't do that to the point where you lose yourself.

Kiara often felt she was leading a “double life” where she had to be one or the other, but the way she views these experiences when she reads books that are not Eurocentric such as Native Speaker, or in line with the white settler colonial discourse, shifts and gives her trust in her self and her decisions. Coloma (2008) explains that this push to lead a double life comes from a way
of thinking that understands subject positions as “compartmentalized within an either-or framework” (p. 14), but this way of thinking about subject positions are essentialist and fixed and do not take into account the fluidity and the ways that one is both/and neither one entirely (Coloma, 2008). As she becomes older and is able to connect with these subject positions that validate her own her reading process shifts (Sumara, 1996), and Kiara continues to build trust in her self and develops a new conscious awareness, which takes into account this understanding of ‘both/and.’ She explained,

It made me feel better reading the perspective of someone who also felt like they didn't belong anywhere properly and hadn't figured it out yet… and I felt better, that I haven't figured it out yet and it has been a problem for so long. That I'm not just some weirdo who doesn't understand herself, but that cultural tension and not knowing where you fit and feeling like you don't belong in most places is okay, and that other people experience it as well.

Even though “the person in the book was not a middle eastern straight woman,” as Kiara explained, she “was like wow, why am I resonating with this man so much (laughs).” Reflecting on these experiences of living in these in between spaces, Kiara felt more secure knowing that other people, especially someone older than her who had similar subject positions had similar feelings of being in between. She explained,

I'm like, yeah that's spot on, he knows something about it, and he's bringing life to all these problems and all these realities that you face that are so different from your peers that are more acclimatized to the culture and the climate.

Through connecting with narratives outside of the white settler colonial discourse, Kiara reflected on her experiences in a more productive or positive view. Kiara explains,

I think [Native Speaker] helped me realize how multidimensional I actually am… Being able to look back on things that I've done and patterns of behaviour and seeing that it wasn't because I'm a bad person who doesn't deserve good things. I spent most of my life hating myself and I think a big part of that was that I thought I was alone in what I was doing. And reading this book and especially sitting around the table and talking about what's happening in the book, but what has happened in other people's lives made me realize that I shouldn't hate myself as much as I do (laughs).
Throughout Kiara’s life, and especially her schooling experiences, she felt different and alone in these feelings of being a “chameleon.” Growing up in a predominantly white neighbourhood, Kiara was embedded within specific “socio-historical discourses that regulate positions and meanings” (Coloma, 2008, p. 21). Her environment was constitutive of the white settler colonial discourses she had access to, which affected the way in which she viewed her experience of being ‘in between.’ Through Thobani (2007), we can see how the white settler colonial discourse subjectifies those who are not white as part of the reproduction of the white settler colonial discourse that ensures white privilege remains intact. Growing up in a white community and going to a white school, Kiara was embedded in white settler colonial discourses that had a static, simplified version of her as “cultural stranger” (Thobani, 2007, p. 145). Through putting into words these experiences of marginalization from the dominant white settler colonial discourse and the feelings of living in between, Kiara is given a new way to imagine her liminal space, where instead of seeing her self as a ‘bad person,’ she can understand her “plural personality… nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 101). Through this new consciousness that understands and appreciates the differences (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and contradictions within her both/and subject positions (Anzaldúa, 1987; Coloma, 2008), Kiara continues to build the trust she has for her self and her experiences through her reading process, which will continue to shift as she continues becoming (Sumara, 1996).

This new consciousness was possible because as Kiara explains,

I am not ignoring [my subject positions] anymore… Understanding that other people may have been compelled to do the same things or think the same way makes me feel better, makes me feel like less of a terrible person… It's being less ashamed of that and thinking that I wasn't this crazy child with a split personality who had like a broader psychological issue or was just a pathological liar… It wasn't as much of an anomaly as I thought it was. I wasn't just this one weird awful person, trying to exist in two worlds and lying and hurting the people around me to make that happen. I found that really comforting and it's made it easier to go back and understand why those things have happened.

Viewing her past experiences through a different lens, with a new consciousness, allows Kiara to bring a strength and understanding to her life that wasn’t available before. Putting into words these experiences of being in between brought comfort, strength, and confidence to Kiara that
can help bring trust to her experiences of marginalization and living in between two worlds. She is becoming in ways that do not conform to the white settler colonial norm, but as Carolina explained in the last chapter, this also means that she has access to this liminal space that others that are part of the dominant do not have access to, which creates a feeling of pride and persistence.

Looking at another participant’s reading process, Min-seo was able to reflect on the ways that she was not the only one who felt like she was in this in between space. Min-seo, who identified as a heterosexual, Asian/Korean Canadian, really related to the main character’s experience as a Korean-American, second-generation immigrant. Immigrating from South Korea, Min-seo is a part of complicated, colonial histories. Min-seo’s family lived in Korea when it was colonized by Japan from 1910 to the end of WWII in 1945 and then during subsequent US occupation in the south and Soviet Union occupation in the north (Kang, 2017). Japanese colonialism “served to increase social inequality” based “on a variety of social controls” (Haggard, Kang, & Moon, 1997, p. 878) and the impacts of forced labour of Koreans in agriculture, military, and sex work still impacts its people today (Palmer, 2013). It also affected systems within Korea, such as the police force, which helped to reinforce colonial systems and policies, as the police force was comprised of more than 80 percent of past Japanese military forces in 1946 (Kang, 2017). US occupation also impacted Korean systems, such as the economy because of policies enforced by the colonial power (Kang, 2017). Coming from South Korea to the settler colony Canada, Min-seo is entangled in complicated colonial histories.

Even after reading the book, Min-seo’s perception that she was the only person in this in between space was still very strong. After participating in the book club conversation, I asked Min-seo in our one-on-one meeting about feeling this way and she responded that she was surprised that others in the book club felt as though they were also in this in between space, as she explained, “I always thought that I would be the only one.” When speaking about being in this in between space, Min-seo explained, “I consider myself as both insider and outsider, I don't really belong to any of the cultures I would say, I don't really consider myself fully Korean nor fully Canadian, I'm both, or neither.” This statement is very representative of Coloma’s (2008) experiences and shows the way the white settler colonial discourse reinforces “debilitating dichotomies that bisect one’s subjectivities” (p. 21), but through Coloma and Anzaldúa’s theories, as well as Min-seo’s lived experiences, it is evident that subjectivities are non-binary, tentative, contradictory, transitory, and plural (Anzaldúa, 1987; Coloma, 2008). As explained by
Aadhya as being Canadian in India and Indian in Canada and Min-seo as both or neither, Coloma (2008) explains this as “being both/and – also mean[s] being neither one completely” (p. 24). It also shows how the white settler colonial discourse aims to convince the women that their experiences are not valid or that they can never be seen as a ‘real subject’ (Thobani, 2007). The white settler colonial discourse that aims to invisibilizes Indigenous bodies and claims to sovereignty, also ‘include’ the racialized women, but always as ‘Other’ or “cultural stranger” (Thobani, 2007, p. 145). However, through this self-reflection, Aadhya, Min-seo, and Kiara find new ways to trust themselves and through this new consciousness, understand their ‘minority’ subject positions through a lens that trusts their subject positions as valid, even though they are outside of the white settler colonial discourse which aims to simplify them as ‘Other.’

This feeling of in between or not belonging to one subject position completely was a common theme in Native Speaker and was something that Kiara and Min-seo both really connected with. After reading Native Speaker, Min-seo explained,

[Native Speaker] really helped me to understand myself better because Henry really was able to articulate things that I was feeling, and there are many parts that I underlined or marked in that book because I was able to really resonate with what he wrote. And the power of language is so beautiful I think.

Similar to Carolina, this “putting into words” an experience that was never represented in words before is very powerful. Reading the books and participating in the book club gave the women many different versions of similar subject positions and feelings of this in between space through a lens that was not deficit-oriented and this created a new consciousness, allowing the women to trust in their subject positions in the liminal space as valid.

Reading about a character with a similar subject position aided in this process of self-reflection and this process of reflection moved into acceptance of Min-seo’s subject positions as being valid or a new consciousness,

I think [reading it gave me] acceptance… because I know that I'll always be perceived as a foreigner and an outsider. I always get questioned about where I'm from and the fact that I always have to rely on other people's perception to define MY identity. So my sense of agency in defining who I am, that piece is lacking.
Although Min-seo feels that her agency in defining who she is lacking, reading the way this experience of subjectification and marginalization was common has helped her in trusting her self and her feelings of being marginalized. To see someone else having a similar experience of being subjectified gives Min-seo not only acceptance of her similar experience of subjectification, but allows for a deep trusting in the ways that marginalization is enacted through the white settler colonial discourse. When asked about the benefits of reading a book that has subject positions similar to her own in high school, she explained that it would have been impactful. Min-seo explained,

I grew up in a very diverse environment, I live in [a GTA Suburb], and [this suburb] we [have a] very huge Asian community so I was never like a minority, never, so because of that I think it had been helpful at least in my community to have picked one of these books as required reading. I think it'd had helped with my identity a lot.

The process of self-reflection and becoming were aided by reading about a character with similar subject positions and experiences of marginalization as her own which shows the constitutive nature of reading (Sumara, 1996); however, reading about the experience of being marginalized is productive in other ways as well. This process of self-reflection and connecting to Henry and his feelings of marginalization and being in an in between space created an affirmation of her own subject positions and feelings, which helps to subvert the normative white settler colonial discourse. Imagining other people having similar experiences of living in this in between space and not feeling alone helped Min-seo to create this new consciousness where she can trust her self and her subject positions as being valid and not an anomaly, which can help to create communities to walk alongside Indigenous resurgence which will be explained in the next chapter.

Reading about Henry’s experiences of being in between put these feelings Min-seo had into language, which aided in this process of self-reflection for Min-seo,

I do find it empowering to label and name the experiences and emotions… It's hard to identify what it is that you're feeling… and to name it, to label it. I think that's even more difficult. It was a lot of self-reflections that I did, that I actually had to do, that I'm still working on.
Min-seo also explained that reading *Native Speaker* and reflecting on the similar experiences, “helped [her] to understand [her] self better” (Min-seo). She explained that she connected to *Native Speaker* much more than *The Marrow Thieves* because she “was able to relate it to more because of the kind of experiences that [she’s] had” not only as a Korean, but because of his relationships and feelings within them. The putting into language these experiences allowed Min-seo to reflect on a lot of the similarities of their subject positions and actions. She explained these similarities,

I was able to relate to it more not only because he's Korean but because of what he's going through, the family, with his relationship with his father, and his relationship with his partner, his work. So it's very, they're all very intertwined, and of course his relationship with his co-workers.

This ‘conscious awareness’ of the many similarities between her self and Henry allowed Min-seo to reflect on her own life and experiences, while reading *Native Speaker*, and it continues.

This self-reflection and affirmation of her experience can allow for a deep level of trusting her own interpretations of the experience of marginalization, as the liberal multicultural framework in Canada aims to hide these systemic forms of oppression (Thobani, 2007). Through calculative policy development, multiculturalism was enacted only after whiteness was fully entrenched on stolen land (Thobani, 2007). Multiculturalism policy both invisibilizes Indigenous bodies and hypervisibilizes racialized bodies and reproduces specific understandings of the Canadian subject as a white subject, and those who are racialized are ‘Other’ and ‘welcomed’ onto stolen land on terms set by the white settler colonial state (Thobani, 2007). The official multiculturalism policy,

sought to constitute people of colour as politically identifiable by their cultural backgrounds… race became reconfigured as culture and cultural identity became crystallized as political identity, with the core of the nation continuing to be defined as bilingual and bicultural (that is, white). (p. 145)

It is through this discourse that Min-seo will always be seen as ‘Other’ to the dominant as she is subjectified by the dominant white settler colonial discourse. However, through reading *Native Speaker*, Min-seo can see similar structural forms of subjectification and marginalization enacted through Henry’s narrative and reflects on her self. This allows her to trust in her own subject
positions as being valid, even though they are outside of the white settler colonial understanding of ‘Other.’

Complicating Issues of Marginalization of Racialized Women on Stolen Land

This process of self-reflection while reading *The Marrow Thieves* was put into action outside of the reading process, as it helped Min-seo learn more about Indigenous issues. After reading *The Marrow Thieves* Min-seo explained,

> The books definitely helped to process some of the things… and because I started reading *The Marrow Thieves*, I became more interested in Indigenous population, and I actually went to attend the talk at OISE, the land-based education… I guess it's really amazing in the way that I was able to use what I've gained from these two books to understand or deal with my daily interactions… If it wasn't for *The Marrow Thieves*, I would not have gone to that talk.

As Min-seo continues becoming, she reflects on her self and the knowledge she’s developed through her reading process, and this reading process links her to other assemblages outside of the dominant white settler colonial discourse, such as the land-based education lecture at OISE. This helps her continue in her process of finding many ways to learn about the white settler colonial context and how to subvert its dominant discourse. Min-seo continues to develop her understanding of being a woman of colour on stolen land and what she gains from the reading process changes as her subject positions change (Sumara, 1996).

Min-seo’s experience reading *Native Speaker* was much different than her experience reading *The Marrow Thieves*. As just explained, Min-seo shared how she connected to *Native Speaker* in a much deeper way, as she related to the main character’s subject positions and his relationship to his father and partner, as well as his work and co-workers. When speaking about her process of reading the books, Min-seo shared with the group,

> To be honest I actually felt a little guilty because I did not experience what they experiencing in the book [*The Marrow Thieves*]. And I felt guilty and at the same time I felt… the kind of identity that I have can be considered as a privilege to a certain group of people. That's actually the aspect that I never thought of before because when I was
reading *Native Speaker*... it was very real to me because I am Korean, so I was able to connect a lot to the character and feel a lot more because I would position myself in that character's position. So I always have this feeling that being racialized female in this very white dominant society is kind of considered as somewhat and sometimes a disadvantage because I'm not part of the majority, I'm not part of the dominant group. I guess I kind of, this is being super honest, I guess I was just so caught up with my own pain that I kind of neglected, not neglected but I didn't really pay too much attention to other people's pain as well. So when I was reading this I was feeling guilty because of that.

Min-seo explains that she feels guilty because she didn’t go through these experiences and because she never considered her own identity as being privileged, but reading changed this perspective. Min-seo has viewed her self as marginalized, but through a lens of ‘compartmental subjectivity’ (Coloma, 2008), which sees identities as separate, binary, and static. It can also be seen through Thobani (2007) that Min-seo sees her self as marginalized, as the white settler colonial discourse reinforces her subject positions as marginalized (different but included) and aims to invisibilize Indigenous people and any of their concerns of the white settler colonial discourse and state. The education system Min-seo was embedded in and its white settler colonial system has made Indigenous peoples and their claims to sovereignty invisible which is constitutive of how Min-seo has seen her self and how she has read (Sumara, 1996). Through her process of self-reflection during the reading of *The Marrow Thieves* and her graduate education at OISE, Min-seo starts to think about ways that she is ‘both/and’ implicated in processes of power and oppression in the settler colonial context.

In our last one-on-one meeting, I asked Min-seo to elaborate on her feelings of guilt while reading *The Marrow Thieves*, but her feelings had changed since the meeting. She responded that, “it's gonna be a little bit difficult for me to go through that process because I'm a bit at different stage now.” She went on to explain,

I think when I was talking about that, I was situating myself as someone who basically I was making oppression as some kind of competition at the time. I was seeing the oppression that Indigenous people went through or are going through something more big than what I went through or what other racialized groups went through. And I think there was a bit of that sentiment from one of the group members as well, but as I engaged in more talk with other people I realized that that's actually not true. We all shared struggles,
and that's how we can help each other, support each other and bond. But to say that Indigenous populations are at the top chain because of more than hundred years of oppression as opposed to Asian Americans or Asian Canadians, I think that's putting hierarchy when it comes to oppression and I don't think that's very equitable. But I still do agree that because I was caught up in my own pain I did neglect to see other people's pain… I'm not saying that I shouldn't feel guilty, I still feel guilty, but it's different guilt though. I feel guilty for not knowing, I feel guilty for having stayed silent, I feel guilty for having remained ignorant for this long period of time. So it's a bit different guilty that I was processing when I was finishing up the middle point of the book. It's actually really interesting, isn't it (laughs)? That time frame really helped for me to engage in more deep critical thinking.

Through reading, and giving space for critical thinking between the readings, Min-seo reflected on her self and her feelings of implicatedness within settler colonial processes while reading The Marrow Thieves. Min-seo continues her complicated reflections on her own positionality and understandings of colonialism. During this reflective process, I felt strong feelings of discomfort. As my research and framework does concentrate on settler colonialism and its implications, it could be viewed that I have put Indigenous issues at the ‘top of the chain.’ However, through Coloma, Anzaldúa, and Thobani, I can complicate this understanding to see how it is not a matter of hierarchy, but a new consciousness of processes of marginalization. I now understand the ways in which oppression is enacted in the current context is the result of the white settler colonial, “socio-cultural, historical, and geographical contexts” (Coloma, 2008, p. 20). This white settler colonial history enforced borders (both physical and metaphorical) to determine who was “us” and who was “them” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 25), which impacts Indigenous, racialized, women, working class, disabled, etc. people in different ways.

Min-seo explains that she was making oppression a competition or hierarchizing oppression. Through Coloma and Thobani, I see this as being constitutive of the settler colonial socio-political context Min-seo is embedded within. As explained earlier, Min-seo’s view of her subject positions is constitutive of the way she is seen (Coloma, 2008). As part of the multiculturalism policy of the white settler colonial Canadian state, those who are not seen as white are hierarchized “through the discourse of cultural and national difference,” where some races are preferred over others (Thobani, 2007, p. 158). It is within this same framework that “if immigrants question or reject the multiculturalist frame, its discursive moves can be mobilized
against them to accuse them of not respecting diversity and difference and of being racist themselves” (Thobani, 2007, p. 161). Min-seo has ‘internalized’ her Otherness through her embeddedness within the white settler colonial society, but through her self-reflection process while reading *The Marrow Thieves*, starts complicating this understanding to see her self as both settler and woman of colour in the settler context. The white settler colonial discourse aims to individualize acts of racism or oppression, but through this complicating of subject positions, Min-seo starts to bring together ideas of oppression as systemically coming from white settler colonial discourse, which are marginalizing her and Indigenous peoples. She feels guilty for not making these connections before, as she only saw her self as marginalized, but through engaging with an anticolonial narrative, she is able to move past her guilt of being ignorant of these realities. Through reading and engaging in the book within the book club community, Min-seo moves from an individualizing of marginalization to the collective and she explains, “we all shared struggles, and that's how we can help each other, support each other and bond,” which will be elaborated on later as a tool encouraged by Anzaldúa (1987).

Later in our conversation, Min-seo linked her experiences to the ways in which other racialized immigrants are marginalized and subjectified within the white settler colonial discourse. She explained,

I was hearing this radio show it was CBC radio, and this third generation Muslim-Canadian came on the air and she talked about how she's not perceived as Canadian, how she's not treated as such and she questioned how now we're the third generation and how many generations do we have to go through in order to be acknowledged and being perceived as Canadian… Honestly doesn't matter whether you're third generation or not, why are you trying to create a hierarchy between people… And also because I know about Indigenous history, not fully aware (laughs), but because of that I was thinking yeah we are on this stolen land and in order for anyone to say that they are more or less Canadian, based on the number of years they have been here, it's so absurd.

This white settler colonial discourse that continues to colonize land and aims to make invisible and disconnect Indigenous peoples (Corntassel, 2012), also reproduces hierarchical thinking of belonging (Thobani, 2007). Through Anzaldúa (1987), we can see how this hierarchical and dualistic thinking aims to simplify complicated power relationships that oppress those who are racialized and Indigenous peoples, as well as women, those who are not heterosexual, able-
bodied, middle-class, and so on. As these issues of colonization are constitutive of the oppression of those who are racialized, I asked Min-seo if reading *The Marrow Thieves* helped her to understand her responsibility as a settler of colour, and she explained,

*The Marrow Thieves* definitely helped me to build that, but I think it would be too big to say the 'responsibility.' I think it helped me to bridge the gap or to really help me to get to that understanding, but I think to use the word ‘responsibility’ would be a bit too much.

Although Min-seo doesn’t want to use the word ‘responsibility,’ she recognizes now that she is on stolen land and the ways in which she “did neglect to see other people's pain” or oppression and through reading and participating in the book club, she started to move these feelings of guilt (for not knowing, having stayed silent, and remaining ignorant), to a more productive space of critical thinking and action, such as attending the event at OISE and learning more about Indigenous issues. This self-reflection through reading the book and participating in the book club moved her feelings of oppression from a space of individualization to a collective understanding of oppression coming from the white settler colonial discourse and the ways in which these specifically subjectify racialized people and aim to invisibilizes Indigenous peoples.

When comparing reading the two books, Min-seo disagreed with other members of the book club that *Native Speaker* was colonial and believed that the two books were equally anticolonial. She explained her thinking,

I think people thought that *The Marrow Thieves* is more anticolonial because the author actually puts that theme really forefront. Whereas Chang-Rae Lee, the author of the *Native Speaker* he doesn't, it's very subtle, very very subtle, and so he's very careful and cautious about it too. And it's actually really interesting because the (laughs) the title of the book, *Native Speaker* can really be associated with what *The Marrow Thieves* is talking about… In the *Native Speaker* English is considered as a native language, but then I think Chang-Rae Lee's critiquing that and I think he's being anticolonial in a very subtle way that Henry feels really lost and he is perceived as an alien, an outsider because of the system.

She explained that there are “very deep layers of different things and if you really look into it very deeply then I think it's equally anti colonial as *The Marrow Thieves.*” I tried to push her
thinking and asked how it was equal, even though Henry was a spy who got people deported. Min-seo replied, “I have a different perspective on that, I don't think he got people deported. Yes his action led to people got deported, but it's not actually him who did that. Of course he had a part in it.” I replied that,

I felt really uncomfortable with the way that he was complicit in his job... I couldn't get past the plot of him infiltrating other people of colour. Mostly because they trusted him as another person of colour, to get them in trouble with the law or to get them deported, to do the colonizer's work of making them illegitimate. That's how I saw it. I couldn't move past that view of it.

Min-seo replied,

I really, I really think so. I think it's because I'm really attached to the character Henry that I'm very biased (laughs)… I totally see where you're coming from, and I agree actually, I do. It's just that I think Henry's very complicated character and he, I can understand his actions because I kind of see him as me.

Again, I felt discomfort when Min-seo explained her thinking. It is not only because I disagree with her thinking and ability to forgive Henry for aiding in the deportation of immigrants in order to aid in white settler colonial power structures, but also because Min-seo tended to equate the differences of racism and colonization. Explained by Tuck & Yang (2012), this equating oppression is one way in which settlers aim to remain innocent and avoid responsibility in settler colonial processes. Although in the first book club meeting after starting to read *The Marrow Thieves*, Min-seo recognized that “the kind of identity that [she has] can be considered as a privilege,” after reflecting on structures of oppression, she equates the different forms of oppression and sees that “we all shared struggles, and that's how we can help each other, support each other and bond.” However, Anzaldúa (1987) would explain perhaps that this way of thinking is a start of a coming together to recognize white settler colonial discourse as the common ‘enemy.’ Anzaldúa (1987) explains,

*La mestiza* constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and
goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes. (p. 101)

By working together toward a common goal of subverting white settler colonial discourse a new liminal conscious can be born apart from white settler colonial discourse.

A New Consciousness to Subvert White Settler Colonial Discourse

Through the participants’ experiences in this chapter and the previous chapter, it is evident that they really connected with Native Speaker and its narrative of language outside of the white settler colonial version of English, the immigrant narrative, and the way in which the book understood and portrayed this in between, liminal space of ‘both/and’ within the settler colonial context. Introduced briefly in the previous chapter, the only participant with Indigenous ancestry in the ‘Canadian’ context was Samantha. As a Cree-Italian, Two-Spirit woman, she had a much different experience reading the two books, as she did not connect to the immigrant narrative in Native Speaker, like the other participants did. Going into details in her first set of audio journals, Samantha explained, “Does the author just hate women?... It’s just the way that he writes about them. There’s no way to like them as people… It’s shit… I hate this book… I hate the way that he writes about women.” In one of her last audio journal statements, she concluded, “okay, so the official verdict is that I hated this book.” This process of rejecting Native Speaker and her deep connection to the subject positions in The Marrow Thieves were two significant hot spots within the research process.

When reflecting on the reading process, Samantha did explain that reading Native Speaker helped her to reflect on her own experiences and imagine her own in between space in a different way,

Imagining myself as sort of an in between space in terms of how I am emotionally, as someone who's in ‘liberated Canada’, but then also coming from a family that has immigrant grandparents and on the other side having parents that are the exact opposite, they come from this land, and I always catch myself being in two very different world views.
She explained that she could relate to Henry’s way of dealing with emotions in a “sort of cold stand off-ish way,” which she explains as a “defense mechanism” and that reading *Native Speaker* “made [her] more accepting of the fact that it’s okay to be like that” (Samantha). Thuy also explained this in her journals,

> There’s something about being 2nd generation, you don’t fit into any world. You never will. It’s isolating and frightening to talk about because who could understand being a liminal person? Maybe that’s why Henry doesn’t emote much. He knows that feeling of isolation.

Although the ‘defense mechanism’ for Henry is for different reasons than Samantha, Samantha and Henry have similar tendencies within their liminal spaces and can connect through the way they distance their emotions as a technique for survival.

In some ways, Samantha can relate to Henry, but in other ways the character frustrated her so much that she was “actually quite excited to put [the book] down and [she] ended up having to switch to an audio book because [she] physically could not read through the book anymore” (Samantha). She explained further,

> For me it was really cool, even though I didn't really like the book in pretty much any other kind of way, it was just cool to see a character that embodies a lot of the same sort of defence mechanisms that I have about the world, that already sort of embodies the emotional distance… Which is really interesting because I was like, wow I probably would've reacted the same way in that situation, and I wonder if that's how people view me when I do those kinds of things [referring to responses from the women in the book club], and so it sort of made me do a lot of like internal reflection.

Physically not being able to continue reading the book was an intense hot spot. Samantha does find some ways to connect to the book and reflects on her similar defense mechanisms as Henry and how they are perceived by others in the book club. As explained earlier, having read a character that has similar actions helped Samantha reflect on her similar actions and made her more accepting of this ‘difference.’ It was not just reading the book that impacted the way that Samantha reflected on her self, but being a part of the book club environment and reflecting on the conversations within the space was very impactful for her, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter.
When speaking about the experience of reading *The Marrow Thieves*, the tone in Samantha’s voice changed. Instead of a feeling of tension and struggle to find ways to relate to the book, Samantha could not contain the excitement she felt about *The Marrow Thieves* – this was an intense hot spot. In *The Marrow Thieves*, author Cherie Dimaline who is a member of the Georgian Bay Métis Nation, writes an Indigenous science-fiction, in a post-apocalyptic future. Throughout the book club, many conversations surrounded the way that although the story is fiction, it is not too far from reality. The narrative follows Frenchie, who is on the run from ‘recruiters,’ along with all the other Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. Because of the intense environmental degradation, the white settler colonial population loses their ability to dream which causes them to suffer from mental health issues and they begin turning on each other, as a person “without dreams is just a meaty machine with a broken gauge” (Dimaline, 2017, p. 88). The white settler colonials realize that the key to their survival is the hunting and killing of Indigenous peoples in order to harvest their bone marrow, which is the key to being able to dream. The story follows how a group of Indigenous peoples from different nations escape the recruiters who are hunting them for their bone marrow and the ways that they become a family, as well as their incredible care, survival, and persistence.

Samantha’s connection to *The Marrow Thieves* changed the affect in the book club space. When she spoke about the book, the energy in the room shifted. For example, Min-seo was really working through her understandings of oppression and colonialism and explained,

> It never really hit me until I read this book, it never did (laughs) until I read this book, so I think, for that it's so significant that we've picked this book and actually reading this and talking about it, and I think it's really incredible that we have you talking about your experience and how that you know relates to the book (looking at Samantha).

Min-seo shares her appreciation of having Samantha’s knowledge and experience in the book club in a genuine way that Samantha felt did not tokenize her, but appreciated her links to the book. Samantha’s reading of *The Marrow Thieves* also extended to her own everyday life in deep ways and she spoke often about bringing the readings or reflections of the reading process or language into her everyday life. Samantha explained in her audio journal, “This book is giving

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5 Recruiters are those that hunt and bring the Indigenous peoples to the ‘schools,’ where they harvest their bone marrow, similarly to Canada’s history of residential schools.
me the language to describe feelings and thoughts that I’ve had for a very long time, but like in a very interesting narrative, so it seems more realistic than idealistic.” She went on to explain,

Being Cree and seeing how the main characters were coming to their own identity formations at different points mirrored my own in a number of different ways, again, not in the same way… and there is something very empowering about that… Yes, I feel powerful and I feel strong and I feel slightly less sad, but also sad and also angry.

Seeing the ways the characters grew in their own ways and learned about themselves and their histories allowed Samantha to reflect on the way in which she learned about her self and her family’s Plains Cree histories. Reading The Marrow Thieves made Samantha feel empowered, powerful, strong, sad, less sad, and angry. These complicated feelings highlight the ways that she is both/and through the reading process and reflects on her emotions and ways in which her subject positions are shown in the narrative through the characters allowed Samantha to trust in her self and her feelings of marginalization and settler colonial trauma.

Samantha had a difficult time coming to her subject position as Indigenous or Cree. Growing up in Ontario, in elementary school she quickly learned that being ‘Indian’ was not favourable. She described the complicated process of “coming out as Indian in Grade 3 after reading about savages in class.” After this, she was teased by classmates about her ‘Indianness.’ It wasn’t until her undergraduate experience when the Aboriginal Student Association at her school reached out to her that she started to learn more about her culture. She explained that,

Not ever having read any books where Indigenous people were represented as anything other than savage or some sort of hunter gatherer, past, dead, feature of time. I mean, first of all being known as a savage in elementary school when I did come out as Native was already weird enough but then not having any representation in books meant that I had no desire to actually seek out that knowledge because I didn't see the benefit or the point.

Through the discourses available to Samantha at the time, she lacked a desire to learn more about her Indigenous ancestry because everything she was taught through school and society was negative. Distancing her self from this part of who she was could be seen similarly to the way that she distances her self from her emotions, similarly to Henry, as a defense mechanism. However, reading positive, empowering representations of Indigenous peoples in the geographical context that she is living in, similarly to The Marrow Thieves, gave her new ways
to imagine her subject position and experiences. She grew trust in her subject positions as Cree, Two-spirit woman and developed new language to describe and understand them.

Samantha explained how reading *The Marrow Thieves*, especially after experiencing fierce discriminatory comments in elementary school about Indigenous peoples and her identity, made her feel a sense of pride in who she is. She explains,

There's a reason that [the Indigenous characters are] being targeted the way that they're being targeted. That's because of a cultural aspect that I didn't really, I mean I've always, now that I'm proud to be, I am proud to be, but the book again gave me a different kind of language a different kind of feeling of pride.

She went on to explain,

I would say I've gotten to a place in my life where I'm now, I would say pretty comfortable and pretty confident in my own skin. But it was really interesting reading that book because it gave me such an amazingly strong surge of pride in one part of my identity, and almost just a general excitement to see what I'm going to do next, what other members of my people, which sounds like really weird phrasing, but just how other Indigenous people, First Nations, Métis or Inuit people are gonna change the world, how we're gonna continue to resist and then I wonder how I'm gonna continue to resist, and honestly, *The Marrow Thieves* was one of the catalyst forces for me deciding to go for my own PhD.

Reading *The Marrow Thieves* has changed Samantha’s life and gave her a “new language” to describe to explain her subject positions and feelings of marginalization and settler colonial trauma. Through reading the book and reflecting on her own life, Samantha is finding ways to resist against white settler colonial discourse. The narrative in *The Marrow Thieves*, engaged Samantha in such a deep way that it helped to propel her into her new life in a doctoral program, focusing on human sexuality, in order to work through sexual traumas with Indigenous women.

This taking the reading into her life was spoken about in a couple of different ways. She explains that reading *The Marrow Thieves*, “made me more self-protective and has made me in the future want to be more careful about who I share certain parts of my identity with.” Drawing on the book, Samantha explains she developed a healthy fear in sharing her knowledges. As shared in *The Marrow Thieves* by the character Miigwans,
At first, people turned to Indigenous people the way the New Agers had, all reverence and curiosity, looking for ways we could help guide them. They asked to come to ceremony. They humbled themselves when we refused. And then they changed on us, like the New Agers, looking for ways they could take what we had and administer it themselves. How could they best appropriate the uncanny ability we kept to dream? How could they make ceremony better, more efficient, more economical?... They asked for volunteers first. Put out ads asking for people with ‘Indigenous bloodlines and good general health’ to check in with local clinics for medical trials… Soon, they needed too many bodies, and they turned to history to show them how to best keep us warehoused, how to best position the culling. That’s when the new residential schools started growing up from the dirt like poisonous brick mushrooms. (p. 88-89)

Reading the book also made Samantha think about an apocalyptic future,

I'm gonna learn how to garden this summer, that'll be my first step. But anyways, I might not have those survival skills necessary to survive in this kind of environment or context where people are hunting you down and you're being chased. But I do have a certain level of sass and wit that is paralleled by very few and so that is a skill in of itself to be able to defuse conversations, and to flip the narratives and to make people who have made you feel uncomfortable completely question everything that they've just said to you. Those are skills in of in themselves and that book kind helps me recognize that.

This self-reflection while reading the book, has created a new narrative, a new consciousness for Samantha. Reading The Marrow Thieves has helped Samantha thrive and persist in new ways. It has given her new language to navigate her environments and has given her more power to trust her self and her subject position as a Cree, Two-spirit woman. As explained by Samantha in the book club, “it gave me more fuel to that fire.” As shared in The Marrow Thieves through Frenchie’s eyes,

And I understood that as long as there are dreamers left, there will never be want for a dream. And I understood just what we would do for each other, just what we would do for the ebb and pull of the dream, the bigger dream that held us all. Anything. Everything. (Dimaline, 2017, p. 231)
I wondered if other Indigenous and racialized women could develop a trust for themselves through reading fiction, and I asked Carolina if this would be possible in our first one-on-one meeting. Carolina explained,

Well I think first we would have to have main characters that were like us, that were women or women of colour, and that so rarely happens already (laughs). And also stories that were also about us that weren't about us in search of like a romantic. Cause if there's a main character then it's about her, especially in Eurocentric literature, it's about her trying to find a man, usually, almost exclusively, and following this romantic storyline and it's never really about her and her ambitions or her feelings or what she wants, her personhood. So I think even starting by something as basic as that (laughs). Isn't that sad, oh my god, that is so sad… If we could see ourselves depicted as human then maybe, then we could trust ourselves. Then we could see ourselves as capable and as valid holders of knowledge, the fact that our feelings mattered and weren't just inventions in our head because we are hysterical or neurotic. Wow that's so sad, I've never thought about that.

This ability to trust her self and its links to representation and self-reflection was strong in these hot spots of the book club/research. Explained by Carolina, putting your experience into words can have a great impact, and

Being able to then name your reality… allows you to be more self-reflective about it and so I think that's also powerful in terms of being able to reflect on your experience instead of just having it go by unnoticed. And it allows you to see that other people are also experiencing that, so you're not alone.

Also, explained in the last chapter by Carolina,

Once you see the third space, the in between space as a space that you inhabit, I think it takes away some of that incompleteness because actually I'm in a whole other space… It made me feel super special and powerful in that way, and having something that is like a power that other people don't have access to. That's a really cool thing to realize.

Putting their experiences into words allowed the women to reflect on their own subject positions in new and empowering ways which allowed them to develop a deeper trust for their own subject positions and experiences of marginalization. Building a trust in their subject positions and
experiences of marginalization as being valid created a new consciousness outside of the white settler colonial discourse, which aims to simplify their complex subject positions. This re-narrating their own experiences through a new consciousness creates opportunities for the women to subvert dominant white settler colonial discourse through new language and can help in the process of persisting and as explained by Samantha about the book *The Marrow Thieves*, “you're like oh so that's not just survival, that's what thriving looks like. Thriving in spite of colonialism on crack.”
Chapter 6: Reading for the Development of an Anticolonial Community of Care

The Tenderness of Community

when you first told me that you wanted the book club to be only female, I didn't really understand

I do now

there's something special around it only being women
I didn't hold back, and I knew that I didn't have to coming around the table with a group of women who are minorities made me feel that I wasn't alone having a sense of community around something that gave me power this book club has become a version of home and family for me we were only really together for a short time this interesting communal bond formed out of respect these pockets of humans coming together, in these very beautiful tender kind of ways in this very familial kind of way, that to me is so anti-colonialism

It is really such a salve for the soul to be able to find small spaces like this I've been holding on to those moments of tenderness and trying to re-build the women in this group are vast, diverse, unique, beautiful and brilliant

that's not just survival, that's what thriving looks like

The poem above is comprised of the words of all of the six book club members. This showcases the hot spot that will be discussed in this chapter: community. This hot spot began around food. As the women came around the table, there was intense excitement and care around the food that was shared at the meetings. Through the sharing of food and the sharing of experiences, a deep sense of familial bonding and community was formed. Each member of the book club discussed how impactful the coming around the table was for them. In this chapter, I will discuss what this anticolonial community development did/can do through the lens of the theory discussed below.
Plugging in Theories

Through Sumara (1996, 2003), Ahmed (2006), Mohanty (2003), Leanne Simpson (2011, 2017), and Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014), I explain how the interactive reading process in an intentionally anticolonial book club environment of women of colour and one Indigenous woman created a deep community of care that allowed for the women to feel comfortable to share and build relationships in the book club. I will explain at the end of the chapter how this anticolonial space is one way in which women of colour can walk alongside Indigenous resurgence in anticolonial efforts. As I have explained throughout the dissertation, I came to this project as a white settler researcher, and was very conscious of the way in which I designed and enacted the research because of my positionality. I highlight the experiences of the participants in order to not centre whiteness, however I was the person that created the research project and guided the questions. My presence of course impacted the book club space. However, through the theory explained here and because of my political commitments explained through the Introduction and Theoretical Framework chapters, I focus on the women of colour and Indigenous woman in the book club and the community that was developed between them. Again, this is through my lens as a white settler, and although I am committed to walking alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives, such as creating anticolonial spaces, this research project is still controlled by what I share of it.

Through this chapter, I explain how through this anticolonial community that was developed, the women shared their concerns and ideas, and I argue that it is in these kinds of spaces that the women can move beyond survival and persist together in anticolonial efforts. A sense of care was developed through the feminist solidarity that was created in the group, as the women created a space to promote thriving, persistence, and walking alongside Indigenous resurgence efforts. I combine the different ideas from the theorists (Ahmed, Mohanty, Leanne Simpson, Sumara, and Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel) to be in conversation with each other in order to explain through this specific, anticolonial lens what happened to create this community of care and what these spaces can do.

Sumara (1996) helps again to understand how reading is ‘embodied action’ and how someone’s process of reading is inseparable from their environment, histories, and positionalities. In the book club environment, each person brought with them their own experiences and readings of the book. When they discussed the book as a group, their
understandings shifted and how they read the booked changed, as readers are always “co-emerg[ing] with a world” (Sumara, 1996, p. 102). Building on these ideas from Sumara (1996), I put this embodied action theory into conversation with Ahmed’s (2006) theory of queer phenomenology.

Drawing on and building on ideas from Ahmed (2006), allows me to understand how the space of the book club impacted the way people read and developed community in the anticolonial space. Orienting our bodies around a table and sharing in food, created a specific feeling and anticolonial community. Put in another way, “we are oriented toward objects as things we ‘do things’ with” for specific purposes and this creates specific feelings and relationships (Ahmed, 2006, p. 550). The room we met in at OISE became our book club space – a space of anticolonial community development, vulnerability, care, and building new narratives of self and the books. Now that the book club is ‘officially’ complete (although we continue to meet outside of the research project and will read more books and share in more meals together), when I arrive in the room at OISE, it still has the feelings of the anticolonial book club space.

When we came around the table, we were building an anticolonial community around food. Each meeting, I cooked different dishes to share with everyone. In the last two meetings, Aadhya also brought a dish to share with everyone. The food shared in the space created a familial feeling and the women still speak about the food that we ate at the meeting. Ahmed (2006) asks, “what does this gathering around food do? What directions do we take when we gather in this way?” (p. 556). The women were drawn to the table and the anticolonial book club space in part because of the food, as well as the care and community we built around the food/table. What did this gathering do? The table and the anticolonial book club space became a different type of table and room – not a university meeting room, but a space for care and anticolonial community-building. It became more than a table in a settler colonial university. As the woman gathered around the table in the colonial space of the university, it became an anticolonial space. They were not aiming to join a colonial conversation, but were oriented towards an anticolonial one that allowed them to create deep care and community with other women of colour and an Indigenous woman. I became a guest at this table to listen and learn from their experiences, but cannot ignore my control as the researcher or my complicity in settler colonialism as a white settler on stolen land.
Drawing on Ahmed’s (2006) understandings of ‘queer phenomenology,’ I understand that these six women were drawn to the ‘anticolonial book club’ because of their positionalities, which are marginalized in the settler colonial context. They did not just happen upon the book club, but were oriented towards the book club because of their experiences and subject positions (Ahmed, 2006). The women’s life experiences brought them to the book club where they could continue deviating from the white settler colonial norm, and together, the women created a space where they could discuss settler colonialism through the reading and by coming around the table and sharing food and care. Ahmed (2006) explains that,

A queer phenomenology would involve an orientation toward queer, a way to inhabit the world that gives “support” to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place. The table becomes queer when it provides such support. (p. 570)

I shift the focus of queerness from sexuality to the anticolonial and feel that this university table/room we met in each time became an anticolonial space, where the women could subvert settler colonialism and created a new anticolonial community of care that supported them.

Through Mohanty (2003), I understand the community built in the book club through a ‘feminist solidarity’ lens. This diverse group of women had similar struggles “against racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism” and through this community built a deep “horizontal comradeship” (p. 46). Mohanty (2003) explains this through the lens of oppositional struggles and as an “imagined community” and it is

‘imagined’ not because it is not ‘real’ but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries, and ‘community’ because in spite of internal hierarchies within Third World contexts, it nevertheless suggests a significant, deep commitment to… ‘horizontal comradeship.’ (p. 46)

The women a part of the book club came together with political bases for alliance, and although they are all women-identified, they have much different experiences in the world (Mohanty, 2003). The shared (but differently experienced) way each person in the group experiences power and oppression are based on

the way we think about race, class, and gender... Thus, potentially, women of all colors (including white women) can align themselves with and participate in these imagined
communities. However, clearly our relation to and centrality in particular struggles depend on our different, often conflictual, locations and histories. (Mohanty, 2003, p. 46)

The women around the table came from differently racialized perspectives and had different experiences based on their class and geographies, and they are differently implicated in colonial processes based on their positionalities and both past and current geographical context. Each woman graduated or would soon be graduating from OISE with a graduate degree, so they all hold privilege in some way in the capitalist society that favours education. They were also all similar in that they identified as women, and most could relate to sexual violence in the patriarchal society. The women were vastly different in many other ways, however, as they had different races, sexualities, languages, cultures, histories of colonization and immigration, political beliefs, and so on. Although five of the women were racialized and one was Indigenous, they were all differently positioned and the ways in which they are gendered and racialized varied (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014). The women had different experiences of their own or their family’s history of colonization in Canada, India, Iran, South Korea, Venezuela, and Vietnam, which were discussed in the previous two chapters. As explained by Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014),

the dispossession of Indigenous peoples lands is related to the history of British and European imperialism in India, Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world, and also continuing. And these are patriarchal, heteronormative, ableist, and capitalist imperial formations that remain relevant today. (p. 21)

Through their past experiences of different forms of colonization, the women developed a community “with divergent histories and social locations, [but were] woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 46-47). I understand this anticolonial community development through Mohanty’s (2003) lens of ‘feminist solidarity,’ as it helps to see how important these connections and community are, and how the local and the global “exist simultaneously and constitute each other… [and] the links, the relationships, between the local and the global that are foregrounded… are conceptual, material, temporal, contextual, and so on” (p. 242).

Understanding the anticolonial community developed through Mohanty’s (2003) theory of feminist solidarity and imagined communities, allows for an understanding of the community as fluid “since the operation of power is always fluid and changing” (p. 47). Although the women
came from different histories and experience the settler colonial state in different ways because of their own positionalities, the women created an anticolonial community of care through their common connection of being women who are marginalized through the white settler colonial discourse. Through the book club, the women came together and discussed the contextual, “overlapping forms of subjugation of [their] lives” (p. 236). What can be “emphasized are the relations of mutuality, co-responsibility, and common interests, anchoring the idea of feminist solidarity” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 242). This type of framing of power and oppression moves beyond intersectionality and focuses “on mutuality and coimplication, which suggests attentiveness to the interweaving of the histories of these communities. In addition the focus is simultaneously on individual and collective experiences of oppression and exploitation and of struggle and resistance” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 242). These women came together to read a book in an ‘anticolonial book club’ and built an anticolonial community of care based on their connections and common resistance against the white settler colonial discourse. The book club is an example of an imagined community and space of feminist solidarity, where community was built and feminist solidarities were developed “across the divisions of place, identity, class, work, belief, and so on,” and as further explained by Mohanty (2003), “In these very fragmented times it is both very difficult to build these alliances and also never more important to do so” (p. 250). It is through these communities and conversations that new paths of persistence were formed and “alternative destinations” of resistance, persistence, and resurgence were developed (Mohanty, 2003, p. 251), which will be further explained through the analysis as opportunities to walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives.

As explained in the theoretical framework chapter, I feel I cannot use a theory of resurgence, as this is a space by and for Indigenous people. I do feel it is important to walk alongside Indigenous peoples in these acts of resurgence and feel that the book club became a space of persistence. I explain this specific resistance and persistence as the development of a ‘anticolonial community of care,’ which is counter to the individualism favoured within white settler colonial discourse. As explained by Corntassel (2012), “If colonization is a disconnecting force, then resurgence is about reconnecting with homelands, cultures, and communities” (p. 97). Combining the thoughts of Mohanty (2003) with Indigenous resurgence theories to understand through a particular lens what was happening in the book club with five women of colour and one Indigenous woman helps to theorize how the book club became a space of anticolonial care, which can walk alongside Indigenous resurgence efforts. The women of colour created an anticolonial community of care and persistence, where they could discuss the similar ways in
which they were erased from fiction, but more importantly the diverse ways they could connect with the anticolonial fiction read in the book club.

Each person’s commitments to anti-racism and anticolonialism were different, and so I do not feel I can say that the book club resulted in decolonization; however, it was an anticolonial space – where an Indigenous woman and five women of colour joined together to speak of their becomings in the white settler colonial state and created a space for ‘imperfect accomplices’ to be in conversation (drawing on Dion’s work of ‘perfect stranger’). The white settler state that continually oppresses women, Indigenous peoples, and people of colour, aims to create specific understandings of these marginalized identities through narratives of dichotomies and hierarchies, such as an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality (Anzaldúa, 1987; Thobani, 2007). However, in this space, the women in the book club resisted these narratives and continued to persist. The goals of some members of the book club were not decolonial in nature and may be more anti-racist than anticolonial, as explained in the last chapter. However, “good relations across differences take time and care, and a willingness to live in contention” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 3), and those in the book club that were relatively new to understandings of (anti)colonialism grew their understanding through the book club, which will be discussed through the analysis in this chapter. It is important to remember, as explained by Snelgrove, Dhamoon and Corntassel (2014) that although bodies are differently implicated within settler colonialism and relations of power, these relationships to dismantle white settler colonial discourse are necessary. The authors explain,

Where I, where we, are never outside of struggle, everyone is ‘structurally implicated’ in the dispossession of Indigenous lands. Everyone is differentially structurally implicated, where the ideology of presumed consent underlies settler colonialism. (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 25)

Creating anticolonial communities of care that speak against settler colonialism means walking alongside Indigenous resurgence. As explained by Dhamoon in Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014),

What holds us together, I think, in writing this paper, is our willingness to build relationships that centre power, anger (against what we each represent to the other), and the possibilities of love. With others, and in the context of interwoven struggles of social justice, I seek to unsettle. (p. 7)
It is in these reflections of sexism, racism, and colonialism that a ‘horizontal comradeship’ was developed through a feminist solidarity and helped to develop an anticolonial community of care.

Centring the women and their experiences in the book club is similar to Corntassel’s “call for re-centring of community in both discussion and action” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 18). The women turn away from settler colonial discourse and understandings of who they ‘should’ be and find ways to persist in spite of settler colonial discourse. Drawing on Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014), also helps to push the ideas of the feminist solidarity in the book club into more critical locations and accountability. This accountability in the book club was ongoing and shifting, as shown in the last chapter with Min-seo’s learning of colonialism within the Canadian context (and continues today outside of the research). It is something that the women (and myself) will “have to constantly renegotiate or reinterpret in order to act in solidarity, or act in concert, or act in camaraderie” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 19). This will be further discussed in the last part of this chapter.

Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011, 2017) helps bring these ideas together to understand that this anticolonial community of care developed through feminist solidarity (Mohanty, 2003) and walking alongside Indigenous resurgence efforts (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014), is something different than resurgence itself. As the book club comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, the space became a place for feminist solidarity because of linked forms of oppression. The common (although still differently enacted) sexism and racism was felt throughout the group. Leanne Simpson helps me understand that this unique anticolonial community we developed had contradictory goals, such as the antiracism versus anticolonialism goals explained through Min-seo in the last chapter, but can come together for common goals of dismantling the white settler colonial discourse which oppresses racialized and Indigenous women, especially those who are LGBTQ2SI (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, & Morgensen, 2011; L. Simpson, 2017a).

In Leanne Simpson’s (2017a) chapter, “‘I See Your Light’ Reciprocal Recognition and Generative Refusal,” an explanation of Indigenous practices of resurgent organization, mobilization, and struggle are explained. Leanne Simpson first explains that the mobilization and organizing should not be in response to the state and politics of recognition. These politics of recognition “serve only to entrench settler colonial power” and instead there should be a “radical
resurgent organizing… a refusal of state recognition as an organizing platform and mechanism for dismantling the systems of colonial domination” (p. 176). Next, Leanne Simpson (2017) explains that Indigenous organizers should “refuse the state’s framing of the issues we organize around, and respond to and re-embed these issues within Indigenous political contexts and realities and within the place of productive refusal as a mechanism for building unity within the struggle” (p. 176). Leanne Simpson (2017) asks Indigenous peoples to “build movements that refuse colonial recognition as a starting point and turn inwards, building a politics of refusal that is generative” (p. 177). Through the anticolonial community of care built in the book club, although enacted differently with settlers of colour (Thobani, 2007), a new understanding of persistence can be built that is outside of white settler colonial discourse. Leanne Simpson (2011) explains,

It is my hope that readers will take the concepts and ideas presented in this book, return to their own communities, teachings, languages and Elders or Knowledge Holders and to engage in a process where they figure out what ‘resurgence’ means to them, and to their collective communities. (p. 25)

Each member of the book club had different experiences reading the book and being part of the community, but all felt the impact of building this type of anticolonial community of care together. It is in building this anticolonial community through feminist solidarity that tools for persistence and new ways of living outside of white settler colonial discourse can be developed.

This ‘outside’ of white settler colonial discourse can be understood through acts of resistance, as explained by Leanne Simpson (2011). Leanne Simpson (2011) drawing on the teaching of Métis Elder Maria Campbell explains,

Acts of resistance are like throwing a stone into the water. The stone makes its initial impact in the water, displacing it and eventually sinking to the bottom… concentric circles are more nuanced than the initial splash, but they remain in the water long after the initial splash is gone… It is impossible to predict the impact of these concentric circles as they radiate outward across time and space, through different Indigenous territories. (p. 145)

These acts of resistance are more than a refusal or binary to the white settler colonial discourse. It is not just a refusal; “I don’t just renounce. I refuse and I continue to generate” (L. Simpson,
Although Leanne Simpson (2017) explains that “there is virtually no room for white people in resurgence” (p. 228), I explain how I was able to develop a productive research project that did not centre whiteness, but helped to develop the anticolonial community of care and the persistence by and for the women in the group was created in the space. I follow Anzaldúa’s (1987) understandings of solidarity, who explains “I think we need to allow whites to be our allies… They will come to see that they are not helping us but following our lead” (p. 107). It is about not centring whiteness or my experience as explained by Leanne Simpson (2017), “when we put our energy into building constellations of coresistance within grounded normativity that refuse to center whiteness, our real white allies show up in solidarity anyway” (p. 231). I strive and continually try to be the white person who follows and listens to the needs of the communities I work with – with the ultimate goal of dismantling the white settler colonial systems of oppression and always noting that I am not and cannot be innocent. I will elaborate on these relationships in the end of this chapter, when speaking about walking alongside Indigenous resurgence.

**Coming Around the Table**

The process of building the anticolonial community of care was constitutive of who joined the book club. The six women interested in the book club joined, knowing that it was an ‘anticolonial book club’ and as per the poster and call for participants, knew we would be reading narratives outside of the white settler colonial canon. In our first meeting, we discussed what brought us to the space. Min-seo explained that she did her own research on identity in her Master’s and that this research topic was similar, so she was interested in joining. Thuy explained that she was also interested in identity and what gets published, as she likes reading books that have better representation. Aadhya joined the book club out of curiosity for the goals of the project and also recognized that she has her own lived experience that is relevant to the research project. Kiara explained she did research on identity in LGBTQ communities which showed that more representation in classrooms is important. Kiara also explained that doing an undergraduate degree in English meant that she read a lot of books by and about people she did not identify with and wanted to “talk to some people that might feel the same way.” Carolina joined because she had always wanted to join an immigrant women’s book club but wasn’t able to, so was excited to join this book club and read her self in a narrative. Samantha explained that
she joined because of her work with Indigenous youth. Seeing them and the ways “they’re trying to grasp themselves through literature,” made her want to join the book club to have a fun but challenging experience reading these kinds of books. Min-seo, Carolina, and Samantha all also mentioned that they knew me outside of the research project and also joined because they “love” me or thought I was “awesome.” This is important, as it shows how important it is for my self as a white settler researcher to be in community with these women outside of the research project. The three of the participants that knew me before coming to the book club trusted me and my politics, which allowed them to want to join the project.

The six women that joined the research project were ‘oriented’ towards the anticolonial book club. Because of their subjectivities, research interests, and desire to speak about anticolonial literature with other Indigenous women and women of colour, the women were oriented towards the space. As explained by Ahmed (2006), “to be oriented is also to be oriented toward certain objects, those that help us find our way” (p. 543). Although Ahmed (2006) focuses on sexuality, shifting this thinking towards being oriented towards anticolonial spaces has parallels. The women committed to this research, which means they prioritized creating this anticolonial space. It is also important to note that orientations are not only a one-way gravitation, as “orientations involve at least a two-way approach” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 551). I recruited the participants in a way that promoted the creation of an anticolonial space and oriented the call towards women of colour and Indigenous women with anticolonial political commitments, the six women were oriented towards and joined the space, and then the anticolonial book club became something specific to who was in the group and how they were oriented towards each other and the book club space. The women’s orientation towards the book club also shows their commitment towards this space and not others. They chose to be in this book club, which means they were oriented towards the anticolonial book club. The women’s orientation towards this anticolonial book club was not just ‘by chance,’ but “certain objects are available to us because of lines that we have already taken” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 554). The women’s own research interests, political commitments, and subjectivities oriented them towards the space. In addition to this, when the women orient them selves towards anticolonial spaces, it in turn affects their bodies and subjectivities (Ahmed, 2006). It is in this action, where the women through the repetition of being oriented towards anticolonial spaces that they can build on their anticolonial understandings and walk alongside Indigenous resurgence, which will be explained at the end of this chapter.
The women came around the table to discuss their own subject positions and reading processes in the anticolonial book club space. The process of self-reflection, discussed in the last chapter, was in part helped through the process of coming around the table to talk to the other women in the book club group. The members all discussed how impactful being in the book club was for them. For some, the act of speaking out loud their experiences to others that had similar subject positions and experiences of marginalization was very powerful. Explained by Aadhya,

Speaking makes a difference because then it forces you to kind of put a structure and … sort of build a story… but sitting and listening to other persons also impacts your thinking and say yeah, I didn't think about it, but you know what, you're right… we've all had our share of aches and pains, and we've all sort of shared, so it's a genuine and a real space and I can be real and genuine too in that space.

Building a story of one’s experience by speaking out loud the process of reading the book and living a life within the settler colonial context allowed for a genuine anticolonial community to be created in the book club with an Indigenous woman and five women of colour at the centre. Sumara (1996) and Ahmed (2006) both show how the reading of the books and coming around the table were constitutive of one another and impacted the way the books were experienced and understood. The process of coming around the table impacted the reading of the book and the process of reading the book impacted the coming around the table, and who was around the table also impacted how the women read the book and participated in the book club. Ahmed (2006) and Mohanty (2003) also help to understand how the space of the book club and the way the women were able to share in this community allowed for an anticolonial space to be created. The women were able to share ways in which they resisted racism and sexism in the white settler colonial state and felt comfortable doing so in this “genuine… real space” (Aadhya).

The anticolonial community and reflection that grew around the table allowed the women to reflect on the books in ways they would not have done if they read the books alone. It is also important to note that this book club was created outside of a classroom environment, which creates different goals and political commitments to the space. Book clubs within classrooms can be very effective for literacy development and engagement, as well as negotiating subjectivities (Barajas, 2016; Barone, 2011; Heller, 2006; Kong & Fitch, 2002; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2004; Turbill, McAuliffe, Hill, Burney, & Willetts, 2013; Tijms, Stoop, & Polleck, 2017). However, many classrooms are taught through white settler colonial discourse and
although many teachers encourage their students to connect their identities to texts, the encouraged responses often align with “white, middle-class norms and ideals that undergird schooling, texts, and curriculum” and “discourage anger, sadness, and frustration” (Thein & Schmidt, 2017, p. 313). Because of this, this book club space was able to do things a book club in a classroom may not be able to do. Creating a book club outside of a settler colonial classroom means that we were able to have anticolonial goals, timelines, and that it was a book club for the Indigenous woman and five women of colour a part of it. It also meant that the women were not policed by the white settler colonial curriculum which excludes them. This is not to say that good, anticolonial work is not happening in schools, as there is of course resistance and critical questioning of white settler curricula within classrooms. Reading books in the anticolonial book club outside of the white settler colonial space of school “can create opportunities to interpret personal and collective experiences” (Sumara, 2002, p. 19) through an anticolonial lens not informed by the colonial curriculum. Echoing Blackburn’s (2003) work with youth in book clubs, it is also important to look at the negotiations of subjectivities outside of school environments, as sometimes looking inside schools can create a vision of the youth as ‘victims.’

This anticolonial space that was created allowed for the women to learn not only about them selves, but about their connections to colonialism. Kiara explained,

Coming around the table and talking about it opened my eyes beyond my immediate frustrations or just strong feelings. As much as I was trying to get outside of my head and look at things objectively, I’d still get caught in the same patterns, so talking about it with other people that really helped. I think with Marrow Thieves, even though I was enjoying it and was reacting to the book, I think at first, I wasn't really connecting to it as much as I wanted to, and then hearing other people around the table who were also to some degree as removed as I was from the identities in the story, helped me realize that there were connections there that I was just kind of blowing past, which was very interesting. It was helpful.

For Kiara, connecting to the narrative that centred Indigenous characters was possible after meeting with other women of colour and learning about the ways that they connected to the story. After speaking about the book with other people, Kiara’s understanding and relation to the book changed, which shows how readers are always “co-emerg[ing] with a world” (Sumara, 1996, p. 102). When Kiara read the story alone, she felt removed from the characters, but
through speaking with others and giving time to sit with the story, she made connections to the narrative. She explained,

I think with *Marrow Thieves*, I think at first, even though I was enjoying it and was reacting to the book, I think at first, I wasn't really connecting to it as much as I wanted to, and then hearing other people around the table who were also to some degree as removed as I was from the identities in the story, helped me realize that there were connections there that I was just kind of blowing past.

As explained by Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel (2014), “good relations across differences take time and care, and a willingness to live in contention” (p. 3). Taking time and care to think deeply about the narrative allowed Kiara to read the book in a way that connected her own experience to the text.

This deep reflection through the book club allowed for learning and other ways of understanding the world to take place for Samantha as well. Samantha explained,

Going around the table at the book club helped shed some insight into the different ways that people were reading, and it made me a lot more cognizant and aware of… taking up a little bit too much space in terms of speaking during *Native Speaker*, and it made me engage with the topics a little bit differently… What was interesting with book club was it asked us all to take into account and pause and take note of things that we were experiencing and feeling throughout the reading of the book, so that when the time came, we could give the language to articulate exactly kind of what was going on, and that asking to stop pause reflect or you know, in whatever not linear way, you want to go about doing that isn't something that I necessarily would've done if I was reading it by myself, and I also wouldn't have thought about other people's experience of reading it.

The book club allowed Samantha to stop and reflect on her experiences reading the book, her experiences of coming around the table with others, and also it allowed her to reflect on other people’s experience of reading the books. The self-reflection moved from her self to how she was impacting others in the feminist solidarity, anticolonial space of the book club. Samantha is differently implicated in structures of colonization in the context we were meeting in as a Cree-Italian Two-Spirit woman. Through her actions of allowing people to speak their experiences when sharing their reading of *Native Speaker*, Samantha modelled Snelgrove, Dhamoon &
Corntassel’s (2014) “call for re-centring of community in both discussion and action” (p. 18) and helped to critically think about solidarity as a fluid and contextual relationship. This is what feminist solidarity looked like in the book club and allowed for the anticolonial community of care to be developed.

This feminist solidarity was also created through sharing and exploring the different lenses to read the books. Carolina explained,

I LOVED the coming around the table part, I thought that was amazing… It was also really cool to be like in this book club with people I did not have any connection to before, and who were very different from me, and get all these different reactions to things, where I would be like I didn't think about that, you know, oh I guess it is sexist (emphasis added to try and bring attention to the tone of Carolina’s voice).

Coming around the table to hear about the experiences from the perspective of an Indigenous Two-Spirit woman, an Indian-Canadian mother, a Korean-Canadian woman, a Vietnamese Bisexual student, and a Canadian-Persian heterosexual woman allowed Carolina to learn with the other women and a deep sense of community was developed through this anticolonial feminist space. I listened much more than I shared, but there were points in the book club where I was asked directly about my own subject positions and shared my experience or opinion reading the books, which helped to develop trust and community in the group. For example, when we met for the first time to discuss The Marrow Thieves, Min-seo asked, “I have a question to everyone, so like when you talk about identity, which element do you centre?” After everyone answered, I was going to move on to the next question when Kiara asked, “what about you Shawna?” I paused and shared about the contextual and political nature of my identity and how I don’t think I centre ‘one thing.’ I explained that what I ‘centre’ depends on the context and my feeling of needing to highlight or downplay different subject positions I hold. The different perspectives shared around the table because of the women’s and my own different subject positions and histories changed the process of reading and reflecting as we learned together through sharing in the group.

Sharing in the book club also allowed for us to think more critically about the books, and specifically the sexism and other colonial aspects within the narrative of Native Speaker. For example, after having read Native Speaker, the group met and Aadhya brought up the sexism displayed in the text, which began a lengthy conversation on the colonial aspects of the novel,
Aadhya: I mean talk about how he projects the women. There are only, other than Lelia, there are only two women… and the way he describes them, it's like these cheap…

Thuy: like they're objects

Aadhya: slutty, objects

Kiara: and then there's Janice, who's portrayed as kind of man-ish and like not effeminate at all… I think you're right, his treatment of women was particularly concerning to me

Aadhya: and there was some mention of John's wife

Kiara: yeah

Thuy: she's a footnote

Aadhya: literally a footnote

Kiara: the young girl, Sherrie, and Lelia are very sexual objects in this story, and then Janice was basically like a man

Samantha: maybe that's why it was so award winning because so many people could identify with [that] fact [the sexualization of women]… straight men that I have conversations with about difficult subject matter, they'll describe situations and stuff… and then the ability to just move on to the next topic, (snaps) like that, never fails to astound me, and is always appalling… but I think it's very telling of a certain way of socializing of men.

The women built on each other’s understandings of the sexism within the book to add to their examples of the treatment of women in *Native Speaker*. In another conversation, Thuy expands on the colonial aspects of the book,

I think it's a deconstruction of the model minority stereotype where it's like a myth constructed to justify the stereotype … the Asian people they're working so hard and conforming, assimilating, and becoming part of American society, so the fact that he's a spy is wrestling with this model minority stereotype of conforming to the model minority myth where you have to become successful and you have to assimilate. That's why there's this big obsession with becoming American, which really bothered me cause the model
Minority stereotype also perpetuates this thing that apparently all Asian people want to become white and not all Asians want to do that. So I think it's really trying to deconstruct that and make you uncomfortable and also show how different levels of Asian immigrants often use each other against each other to try to get to this whole unattainable myth, but it doesn't really do it very well because it makes you feel like you're kinda conforming by reading this novel… I feel like this novel is a tragedy.

Through the conversations in the book club, we continued to shift our readings of Native Speaker and continued to uncover colonial aspects of the text. Shown earlier, Carolina came to terms with some of the sexist elements of the text only after speaking in the group. Kiara explained that, “after we discussed Native Speaker, I was like this is not anticolonial (laughs)… just because the book is about a racial minority doesn’t mean that it’s gong portray a story that’s productive… or goes against colonial archetypes.” It is through this feminist solidarity community that was developed that we could discuss these views of Native Speaker and build understandings of anticolonialism through conversation.

Although the women who joined this research came from different subject positions (women of colour, an Indigenous women, different ages, histories of colonialism, etc.) the space that was created allowed for diverse viewpoints to push each of our thinking so that we could create a common goal of uncovering structural forms of sexism, so the feminist solidarity created “the relations of mutuality, co-responsibility, and common interests… [focusing] on individual and collective experiences of oppression and exploitation and of struggle and resistance” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 242). These spaces are important for anticolonial work, as explained by Susan Dion (2007), as they offer opportunities for “critical reflection on self and self in relationship with Others situated in a social-political-historical context” (p. 332). Instead of positioning them selves as a ‘perfect stranger,’ as explained in Dion’s (2007) and Dion and Dion’s (2009) work, the space allowed the women and my self to learn from one another through a self-reflective, ‘imperfect accomplice’ positionality, which will be described in further detail in the conclusion. Also explained by Cannon (2012), these conversations can create space to disrupt “the binary of self and Other [and] can create unique opportunities as people engage with difference and the non-singularity of oppression” (p. 30). Carolina explained this through the idea that coming around the table also changed her reading of The Marrow Thieves:
It [coming around the table] changed my reading of *The Marrow Thieves* for sure, and I think for me there's something around having a sense of community around something. That is really powerful and I think particularly when it's a group of women, I think that's really powerful too… I think that there's something special around it only being women. That was really special. I think it changes your readings and your experience of reading something because sometimes reading can be really solitary and it's just in your head, so getting perspectives from people who are very different from you, who read something that you just read and read something not completely different, but very different and picked up on something you did not pick up on at all.

The process of reading changed after coming around the table and the way that it changed was specific to who was around the table – five women of colour and an Indigenous woman, as well as my self as an ‘imperfect accomplice.’ The women shared their readings of the books in an anticolonial community that they created and created a ‘horizontal comradeship’ (Mohanty, 2003) through their lived experiences within the white settler colonial state to create an anticolonial community of care.

For Kiara, the coming around the table made the reading and connecting to the character emotionally possible. Kiara explained, “I don't know if reading these books alone and engaging with the reflection process would've been as safe for me without the component of coming and talking to other people about it.” Kiara elaborated on her reading of *Native Speaker* in our one-on-one meeting, “I don't think I would've been able to delve that far into the book and reflect back on my own consciousness as much without knowing that I had a safety net to work a lot of those things out in.” The anticolonial community of care created in the book club supported Kiara in her processes of self-reflection and gave space to work through these emotions. This deep feminist solidarity that was created oriented us towards each other (Ahmed, 2006) and created a gathering that supported people in their process of reading and reflecting on their experiences within the settler colonial state. Shifting Ahmed’s (2006) queer phenomenology from the queer to the anticolonial, allows us to think about how the women were oriented towards this space, which created an environment that supported the women who are seen as “oblique, strange, and out of place” (p. 570) within the settler colonial state. Kiara felt supported in the anticolonial space and she explained in our last book club meeting that,
Coming around the table with a group of women who are minorities in their own ways made me feel that I wasn't alone and all these anxieties and fears that I have about what's going on in the world right now… That gave me power to launch into the next couple of weeks, so that experience [of coming around the table] really changed it for me.

Kiara further explained,

Realizing that that grey space doesn't just exist for me, that there's other people who are trying to navigate that like grey… then as a broader group, demanding for changing, demanding for action… and how much more effective it is when you stand and work with other people who are navigating the same waters. That's been really helpful.

Kiara is able to reflect on and build community with other women who are also “trying to navigate that weirdness” (Kiara) or in between space. Through the theorists explained earlier, it is evident that the women in the book club were oriented towards the anticolonial book club because of their life experiences and subject positions (Ahmed, 2006). The coming around the table and sharing in their reading processes and experiences of marginalization within the white settler context changed their readings of the books (Sumara, 1996). Through this sharing and reflection on their own reading process, a feminist solidarity was built by creating ‘horizontal comradeship’ (Mohanty, 2003), which helped to develop an anticolonial community of care. Although we were differently positioned and implicated in white settler colonial discourse and processes, coming together from our diverse subject positions allowed the women to share the ways in which they have experienced marginalization in the settler colonial state as explained in the last chapter, and provided space to support each other (Mohanty, 2003).

Creating Anticolonial Communities of Care and Moving Beyond Survival

This reflecting on and sharing experiences was really impactful for some. Explained in the previous chapter, after suppressing her experience of rape for years, Aadhya was inspired to share this with the group. Reflecting on this sharing of the rape, Aadhya explained,

Oh my god, I shared things that I've never shared in my life with anyone, and then I was able to say, and that was so strange actually… because I always carried it with me… I never felt comfortable sharing it with anyone, ever, and I had no intention of sharing it
with anyone, but I don't know, when I was in the group and I - god knows, I don't even remember what it was- what triggered it and I was able to just say it.

The fact that Aadhya shared this personal experience in our first meeting to discuss the book *Native Speaker* was very impactful for the other members, and explained in the last chapter, created an intense affect in the room. It also created a dynamic in the group that allowed others to feel as though they could also share their personal experiences. Carolina explained this by saying, “because of what we were reading, and the ways that we connected to what we were reading, you know, people were comfortable enough to share really personal stuff, and so that was also really special.” This sharing and the ability to share allowed a deep sense of care and community to be developed in the book club.

Sharing these personal experiences, instead of holding them inside and facing the emotions alone explained by both Aadhya and Kiara cannot only allow an anticolonial community of care to develop, but also can push feelings of survival to feelings of thriving and persistence. Kiara explained in her reading journal,

This book club has become a version of home and family for me. I cannot fully express how wonderful and empowering it has been to regularly meet with a small group of women who are minorities in their own ways. This experience has allowed me to become open and honest in a way that I have not been before. My prior inability to express myself and my experiences was largely due to my own timidity. But I feel that I also have been silent before because I have not occupied a space in which each member can understand or relate to many aspects of my experiences as a woman and cultural minority. I now feel that it is a way to share aspects of my life; that it’s important for my voice to be heard and that I am not a burden.

Drawing on Thobani (2007), we can see how being immersed in the white settler colonial discourse, Kiara is continually reminded that she is a “cultural stranger” (p. 145). Being part of the anticolonial space of the book club, the feminist solidarity built created a horizontal comradeship that allowed for a community of care to develop that allowed Kiara to feel comfortable and realize that “it’s important for [her] voice to be heard.” The women shared intimate details of their struggles “against racism, sexism, colonialism, [and] imperialism” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 46) and in sharing these many felt a sense of safety and care that allowed
them to work through the struggles within the comfort of the anticolonial group with other ‘imperfect accomplices.’

When coming around the table to discuss *The Marrow Thieves*, Samantha explained,

I was comfortable enough sharing certain experiences about my upbringing and my family. What I really liked is that even though I was the only Indigenous First Nations person in the room, it's not like every time a line or something was read in the book everyone looked at me to answer that kind of question because the book was already doing that. The book was sharing these kinds of stories and narrative and these healing mechanisms, and so it was something that people were taking in, in the context of all reading it together, but they weren't looking at me to validate this. We were all just genuinely enjoying reading this book together, and still listening and reflecting and being mindful but it was probably the first time (laughs), and I say that having been in a lot of these situations, but probably the first time where quote unquote Indigenous focused something was being read or researched and I wasn't asked to speak or like validate whatever it was that we were reading.

Being in a group of other women who are racialized and may have had very similar experiences of validating ‘the marginalized experience,’ the women did not look to Samantha as the ‘token’ Indigenous spokesperson. The fact that *The Marrow Thieves* was written by a Métis author and through an anticolonial lens, allowed there to be genuine experiences and answers in the book as well. Samantha further explained that, “just being able to read this book and in book club and just the dynamic of the group, it sort of gave me hope that not every space has to be tokenizing.” Although Samantha completed a graduate degree at OISE, she felt she had never been in a space like this before, where she wasn’t tokenized. In this anticolonial book club, Samantha could be something other than the ‘token’ Indigenous person to validate the experience. This really points to how important spaces such as these with racialized and Indigenous women are and should be created in order to create these anticolonial communities of care that allow for moving beyond survival and into persistence and thriving.

I asked Samantha how she thought it was possible to create this anticolonial community of care that didn’t tokenize her and her experiences. She explained,
The people that you selected or that entered to be in this book club all had an interest in being there that wasn't like self-serving nor was it altruistic, it was just to help a person that we care about with a project. And I think because of maybe the intentionality of the people that were coming together in that space... we all chose the books together... and the ways in which the questions were being asked, and the kinds of questions that were being asked, they weren't the kind of questions that targeted any one specific group or demographic or anything like that… We talked a lot about the feelings of reading the book as you know coming into it as this person, but without even needing to say that because everyone was just speaking from their heart and from their own experiences of things.

Samantha explained that the women were intentional in creating and being in the space together. The women were oriented towards the anticolonial book club which brought women who already had anticolonial commitments. Walking alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives means working together in community through anticolonial mentality and efforts. Coming together to speak against white settler colonial discourse and finding commonalities among their struggles, the women were “speaking from their heart” and instead of differences being highlighted in the book club space, the commonality of being a woman who is oppressed in the white settler colonial state allowed for an anticolonial community of care to develop.

The space being carefully created to be free of cis-gendered men made a big impact on the group dynamic and sense of care and community. The group members felt comfortable speaking about sexism within the book Native Speaker and society, which may not have been possible with a cis-gendered man present. Before reading The Marrow Thieves, Min-seo asked if her cis-gendered male friend could join, and I refused his involvement. Min-seo explained,

You know, when you first told me that you wanted the book club to be only female, I didn't really understand, but I think I do now. It definitely creates different dynamic and I think when there's a male present (pause), because of the gender stereotypes that we were socialized and expected to perform since very young, that kind of plays into factor when it comes to participating. So just having all female environment I think helped in this context, and because of that I think we were really able to empower each other and also (pause) (laughs), there was no white person (pause) in in the group.

Min-seo went on to explain,
We all have lived experience of feeling disempowerment, not being heard, and not being invited to participate in the dominant narratives - have that in-between identity. We all had that, and I think that really helped me to feel safe. I think it was really one of the most safe places that I have been in. I really, I didn't hold back and I knew that I didn't have to hold back in terms of speaking up because well they may not agree with what I say, but they can still add onto what I say or give different perspective. They're not going to say no, this is what I think.

From these two excerpts, Min-seo explains how important it was to have a space that was only women-identified people and centred racialized and Indigenous women’s voices. Because Min-seo trusts me, she did not always see me as a white person, but said that “I did not think of you as a white person, I just thought of you as Shawna.” This is a complicated conversation, however, as if I was not part of the group, I am sure it would have been a different experience for the women, just as it would have been with a cisgendered man present. I am still a white settler and am afforded privileges in the settler colonial context in which we did the research. This comment could point to the way in which whiteness and white supremacy are much more than race-related, and that Min-seo did not see me as associated with the goals of whiteness and white supremacy. I am always complicit in white supremacy though, as I am living and working on stolen land and am provided with different privileges because of my race. However, it is important to note that the when forming communities with women of colour and Indigenous women, having a common anticolonial goal to subvert white settler colonial discourse is very important as a white settler researcher. Having the book club centre women of colour and an Indigenous woman allowed for an environment where the women did not have the feelings of “disempowerment, not being heard, and not being invited to participate in the dominant narratives.” Min-seo explains that having other people that live in this “in-between identity” allowed her to feel safe and she did not hold back in what she shared with the group. I was in that space though, so it is not only subject positions such as race or gender identity that matter, but anticolonial political commitments and an understanding of oppressive systems within the settler colonial state.

In the multicultural space of Toronto, creating feminist solidarity spaces with Indigenous women and women of colour is important. Although not all members of the book club were deeply integrated in anticolonial thought, the thinking shifted after reading *The Marrow Thieves* and taking part in the book club discussions, and those that were more focused on an anti-racist way of thinking shifted their thinking to a more anticolonial one, as explained in the last chapter.
with Min-seo’s learning about Indigenous issues at outside events. Kiara also shifted her thinking and explained,

before I started my studies at OISE the word colonial or colonized...would automatically revert me to like Black slavery specifically... I knew nothing about the Indigenous history of Canada before I got here and because of that learning very early on in my program, the word colonizer took on a very different meaning for me and now immediately elicits a gut response... but I think what was interesting was that it was a narrative this time, whereas most of my learning that occurred at OISE was written by academics or was just a bit more of a scientific glance at it, but this was a first hand account... but having the time to myself to dive into that perspective was really interesting and eye opening and really fuels the fire even more.

Kiara went on to explain that having Samantha in the group, who identifies as Indigenous was also an important part of her process of understanding settler colonialism,

[Samantha] had such a rich perspective that she was so generous in sharing with us from her own understandings and experiences of her family. It really humanized the story and helped me contextualize it in my brain and understand it. Even though I said it was easier for me to understand from a first-person fictitious narrative, I think having somebody at the table to said yeah I've seen my grandmother, my Kokum, have a very similar experience and then sharing that with us only brought that you know, it was more prominent in my mind, it helped with my understanding.

Coming together in the book club to read an anticolonial fiction, *The Marrow Thieves*, and also having an Indigenous-identified woman in the group, although not tokenizing Samantha in the process but learning from the knowledge she shared helped Kiara’s understanding of white settler colonialism in Canada. It is these conversations and this learning that developed an anticolonial space which developed this horizontal comradeship of understanding.

As explained previously, the ways in which the women are oppressed are different in the settler colonial state, but they are interconnected and are coming from the white settler colonial discourse and history of oppressing Indigenous peoples, people of colour, women, and LGBTQ2SI folks, among other marginalized groups. Reiterating the words of Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Cormack (2014), “Everyone is differentially structurally implicated, where the ideology of presumed consent underlies settler colonialism” (p. 25). However, it is important to note that the goals of racialized and Indigenous women can often be in contention. In one of the above excerpts, Min-seo explains that she is “not being invited to participate in the dominant
narratives.” The goal of wanting to “participate in the dominant narrative” is counter to many Indigenous peoples’ (and some other people of colour’s) anticolonial goals. Explained by Leanne Simpson (2017), these politics of recognition “serve only to entrench settler colonial power” and instead there should be a “radical resurgent organizing… a refusal of state recognition as an organizing platform and mechanism for dismantling the systems of colonial domination” (p. 176). However, Leanne Simpson (2017) also explains that it is more than just a refusal – it is about refusing and continuing to generate. It is in these anticolonial communities that although all of the goals may not be the same, an anticolonial community of care can be developed, which is counter to the white settler colonial discourse and can be spaces to generate knowledge about anticolonialism and steps to walk alongside Indigenous resurgence.

What Can These Anticolonial Communities DO?

Creating the anticolonial community of care through the feminist solidarity lens is important, but not common in the settler state. Carolina explained in her reading journal, This space that we built with the book club is so special. I don’t know if I have ever had the privilege to be in a space like this before, with other WOC and reading this kind of fiction together… I think it’s rare (at least for me) to be in a space where I feel I belong and comfortable as I am in that group. It is really such a salve for the soul to be able to find small spaces like this. It helps to recharge and nurture your spirit before going back out there to keep fighting the good fight.

This care that was created in the anticolonial community of the book club was developed through reflecting on one’s own experiences and relating these to the books and the other members of the group, as explained earlier. In this “safe space,” as explained by Min-seo, feelings of comfort were felt around the table and it helped to develop a space for ‘recharging’ before “going back out there to keep fighting the good fight” (Carolina). Creating a space of care moved the feelings of survival to a space of persistence and thriving and were outside of the white settler colonial discourse, which we saw earlier with Kiara’s experience of feeling supported in working through her emotions and thoughts. The group fostered a sense of understanding and care for their common experiences of being in-between because of the marginalization coming from the common white settler colonial discourse.
This sense of anticolonial community linked to activism and efforts to persist in the white settler colonial society shared in Carolina’s journal entry was also reflected in Samantha’s responses. Samantha explained that this anticolonial community of care was created because of anticolonial efforts and was reflected in the anticolonial communities of care developed in The Marrow Thieves. She explained,

Anticolonialism is literally these pockets of humans coming together in these very beautiful tender kind of ways, both to protect themselves and to protect Mother Earth and to protect each other, in this very familial kind of way. That to me is so anti-colonialism. I think the only way in the context of that book that you could theorize a way out [of colonialism], is through those pockets and it's because having to read about those interactions happening in different contexts. That's not just survival, that's what thriving looks like. Thriving in spite of colonialism on crack.

Although Samantha was not directly speaking about the book club but the book itself, I see these spaces as being able to act in similar ways by the way the other members explained their experiences in the space. Samantha also explained,

I think the only ways that we can kind of move forwards in new ways are to imagine completely new ways of being, and I think the way that I understand that impacts the way that I choose to interact with people, the path that I've chosen to pursue in terms of my career, the way that I've chosen to incorporate Indigenous ways of being right into the very foundation of the work that I do… I think it can be a way to think about moving away from the traumatic narratives we constantly find ourselves tied to, to trauma or to pain or to fear or to anger and that's again not to say that any of those things are unacceptable, but I think that if we would like to move forward in better ways, obviously not necessarily into a utopia but something better. I don't know if subversion is the way that I would like to look at it… subversion requires the presence of the system itself and I don't like that system so, fuck it.

Echoing Leanne Simpson (2017), Samantha refuses white settler colonial discourse and continues to generate anticolonial ways of becoming outside of the white settler colonial norm. Through a lens of persistence and resurgence, and drawing on Leanne Simpson (2017), this community of care created a space for Samantha where she could move beyond survival and speak about ways of being outside of white settler colonial discourse. Samantha’s thinking
echoes Leanne Simpson’s (2017) request to “build movements that refuse colonial recognition as a starting point and turn inwards, building a politics of refusal that is generative” (p. 177). Samantha refuses to align her acts of persistence and thriving with or even in opposition to the white settler colonial state and discourse. She is thinking of anticolonial ways of living, persisting, and thriving outside of the white settler colonial discourse. These acts of persistence may seem small, but as explained by Leanne Simpson (2011), can be like

throwing a stone into the water. The stone makes its initial impact in the water, displacing it and eventually sinking to the bottom… concentric circles are more nuanced than the initial splash, but they remain in the water long after the initial splash is gone… It is impossible to predict the impact of these concentric circles as they radiate outward across time and space, through different Indigenous territories. (p. 145)

Differently positioned settlers walking alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives is very contextual. To walk alongside Indigenous resurgence means to centre Indigenous knowledge, history, and actions. When we centre Indigenous resurgence initiatives, “we center transformative alternatives to this present… we remain attentive to the very ground upon which we stand” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 2). This means turning away from and subverting white settler colonial discourse and turning towards or centring anticolonial and “community in both discussion and action” (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014, p. 18). As explained by Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014), centring Indigenous resurgence initiatives does not mean that Indigenous issues are separate from issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on, but “the white settler nation… maneuver[s] different bodies… differently” (p. 19). Walking alongside Indigenous resurgence means to centre anticolonial thought and actions that subvert the white settler colonial state and discourse, which marginalize Indigenous peoples and people of colour. It is important to note the differences in which the white settler state aims to hypervisible people of colour and invisibilize Indigenous peoples, but that these systems of oppression are coming from the white settler colonial state (Thobani, 2007).

By coming together, the women of colour and Indigenous woman a part of this group were able to create a horizontal comradeship which helped to uncover the commonalities in their experiences. As explained by Mohanty (2003),

In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining.
The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings better and more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully. It is this intellectual move that allows for my concern for women of different communities and identities to build coalitions and solidarities across borders. (p. 226)

Although differently enacted, the subject positions of Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people “in Canada have been shaped by the colonial encounter and its aftermath” (Dion, 2007, p. 340). Further explained by Cannon (2012), “oppression is both a shared experience and something that is experienced differently” (p. 33). Creating these anticolonial spaces that foster horizontal comradeship also means that settlers of colour and white settlers all have “a stake in colonial dominance and reparations” (Cannon, 2012, p. 33), as we live and work on the same, stolen land. We are all implicated in white settler colonial dominance and we all have a responsibility to use the privilege we carry to uncover the systemic oppression and these anticolonial spaces can “foster a collective responsibility for our complicity in social inequality, and to work toward changing this” (Cannon, 2012, p. 26). This also allows for an ‘imperfect accomplice’ positionality, which can allow for a turning towards uncovered these power relationships, rather than the “perfect stranger” positionality which allows for a turning away for “fear of offending” (Dion, 2007, p. 331).

Coming together to create an anticolonial community of care in this book club allowed for learning, reflecting, feminist solidarity, and care to be developed. Through Kiara’s words in her reading journal,

The women in this group are vast, diverse, unique, beautiful and brilliant, and this shared experience has brought great joy and comfort to my life, and the experiences faced in the last 6 months. I am very honoured to have been a part of this very special group of women.

The anticolonial community of care that was created through the book club was much needed for many of the women and allowed for spaces of persistence, thriving, and walking alongside resurgence initiatives through anticolonial thought and knowledge-building. Through deep sharing, reflecting and learning, the women created a horizontal comradeship that can allow them to learn from and walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives in their fight to create new, better, more anticolonial worlds.
Chapter 7: Continuously Becoming

Summary of the Findings

I came to this research from my own experiences as a white, cisgender queer woman. As I continue becoming, I add to my learning about the interconnected forms of oppression, which I have shown through this dissertation as stemming from the white settler colonial discourse in the Canadian context. I am so grateful that the six women a part of this book club shared their reading processes and becomings with me and I have learned and grown so much through this research process. Through the project, I learned different ways the racialized and Indigenous women negotiated their subjectivities through reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction. To ensure I continually reflected on my own positionality as a white settler researcher and remained committed to my political commitments, I utilized an anticolonial feminist literacy theoretical framework and feminist Deleuzian methodological framework. Through each data chapter, I focused on specific theorists from these frameworks to analyze the hot spots that arose in the research project. By focusing on the hot spots of the research, I uncovered how reading is an embodied process, how reading can be a tool for self-reflection to create a new consciousness, and how the anticolonial book club created an anticolonial community of care which can walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives.

In Chapter Four: Reading as an Embodied Experience, I focused on Carolina’s embodied reading process of becoming bilingual-immigrant-racialized-woman. Through reading *Native Speaker*, Carolina continued her becoming and developed a new more liveable understanding of becoming a bilingual speaker of Spanish-English, a displaced immigrant-settler, and a Latina-Venezuelan woman of colour. To uncover these becomings, I utilized Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) becomings, Coloma’s (2008) constitutive subjectivities, and Sumara’s (1996) embodied action to show how Carolina’s reading process was an embodied process and was constitutive of her becomings which resisted molar/static white settler colonial discourse. Carolina was impacted greatly by this ‘putting into words’ her experience of being bilingual-immigrant-racialized and reading the fiction gave her the ‘tools’ to explain her experience as bilingual-immigrant in a more liveable way. In this chapter, I also explained how these embodied reading processes depend on the positionalities of the reader, and share Samantha’s reading process, her rejection of *Native Speaker*, and her connection to *The Marrow Thieves*, as well as Thuy’s reading process and rejection of the sexism within *Native Speaker*. 
In Chapter Five: Reading as a Tool for Self-Reflection and a New Consciousness, I shared a hot spot in the data, where Aadhya explained that she was raped and its connections to being taught not to trust her self. I drew on Coloma’s (2008) constitutive subjectivities, Anzaldúa’s (1987) new consciousness, and Sumara’s (1996) embodied action to explain how these feelings of trust were developed through reading, critical thinking, and participating in the book club with other women who are marginalized in the current context. I then explained how this building of trust is part of a self-reflective process where the women (Aadhya, Kiara, Minseo, and Samantha) built trust in themselves through a ‘putting into words’ their subject positions and experiences of marginalization. It is through this ‘putting into words’ that the women developed a ‘new consciousness’ to explain their experiences of being in between by reading Native Speaker (Aadhya, Kiara, and Min-seo) and resisting settler colonialism by reading The Marrow Thieves (Samantha). In the conclusion of this chapter, I explained how Samantha could not physically continue reading Native Speaker because of its sexist and colonial aspects, but she could not stop her reading or excitement for The Marrow Thieves. Reading a book like The Marrow Thieves, Samantha was given new language to explain her subject positions and experiences of marginalization that she did not have before. This ‘new consciousness’ shifted her view of her subject positions and her future, as she explained the book helped her decide she was on the right path pursuing her PhD. This putting into words subject positions and experiences of marginalization helped the women to develop a deep trust in themselves and their positionalities outside of the way white settler colonial discourse imagines them.

In the last chapter, Chapter Six: Reading for the Development of an Anticolonial Community of Care, I combined theories from Sumara (1996, 2003), Ahmed (2006), Mohanty (2003), Leanne Simpson (2011, 2017), and Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel (2014), to explain how reading in a book club environment that centred five women of colour and one Indigenous woman created an anticolonial community of care. I explained how the women were oriented towards this anticolonial book club and how the anticolonial community of care that was developed through a feminist solidarity and horizontal comradeship allowed for the women to feel comfortable to share and build relationships with one another. I explained how coming around the table and speaking out loud the process of reading the book and its connections to the women’s subject positions and experiences of marginalization built the anticolonial space. As the women came from very different histories and subject positions, they learned about the different ways in which each person experienced marginalization and persisted within the white settler colonial state. I explained how these kinds of spaces, where women of colour and Indigenous
women can come together and reflect on their experiences through anticolonial fiction are important. It is through sharing in this intentionally created, anticolonial, feminist space that the women continued to find ways to persist outside of the book club, within the settler colonial state. This can create opportunities for women of colour to work with and alongside Indigenous women in resurgence initiatives.

Implications of the Findings

In this research project, I focused on the ways in which the five women of colour and one Indigenous woman negotiated their subjectivities while reading anticolonial fiction. Through this research, I used a desire-based lens to look at the ways the women are subverting white settler colonial discourse and the ways they are persisting and thriving. When discussing ways of becoming outside of the white settler colonial discourse, the women created a new consciousness and more liveable lives. As an anticolonial feminist project, I focused on the hot spots in the data which adds to the affect studies literature (Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2010; MacLure, 2010, 2013; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010) and adds these six women’s voices to the complicated ways in which women of colour and Indigenous women are refusing the white settler colonial state.

Seen through Samantha’s inability to physically continue reading the book, Native Speaker, it is evident that the content in a book matters when engaging readers. This adds to conversations within postmodern and critical literacy research that look into the ways that reading is not only a cognitive event (Gee, 2015; Janks, 2010; Simon & Campano, 2015; Sumara, 1996; Wilhelm & Smith, 2016), but is “inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in a given society” (Street, 1995, p. 161). Through this dissertation, I have explained how the women differently engaged in the two texts and what this did (how they negotiated their subjectivities). Creating opportunities for the women to read anticolonial fiction that ‘puts into words’ their own subject positions and experiences of marginalization was powerful and became a deeply embodied reading experience (Sumara, 1996). This contributes to the literature in literacy education that examines the ways that subjectivities affect reading (Suh & Hinton, 2015) and reading affects subjectivities (Craig, 2016) and the messy ways that it is always both/and multiple ways of being (Broughton, 2002; Janzen, 2015; Sumara, 1996, 2003).

This research project helps add to a conversation within literacy studies that understands engagement with texts as pertinent to literacy engagement (Ashcraft, 2012; Cummins, Hu,
Markus, & Montero, 2015; Dodge & Crutcher, 2015; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004). As explained by Augustine (2010),

School should not be a place where students focus on reading as a passive, practice unrelated to their lives or the various disciplines in the arts, sciences, and humanities. Instead, school should foster creative practices that engage students and teachers in generating possible lives. (p. 159)

If readers cannot connect with the texts because they are written by and for the dominant, who have different subject positions and often different political commitments, then we are failing our students. As shown through this dissertation, asking students to read anticolonial fiction that represents them, their subject positions, and their experiences of marginalization in the settler colonial context could create opportunities for a deeply embodied reading process that can build their engagement in reading, it can help them through their self-reflection processes which help to develop a trust in their subject positions, and can help them thrive and persist within the white settler colonial state which aims to convince them they are ‘Other’ (Thobani, 2007). This also adds to the conversation within critical literacy research that examines readers as “makers of cultural meaning… and agents of change” (Simon & Campano, 2015, p. 479). This in turn can help create a more anticolonial classroom, where the classroom community could find ways to walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives through conversation and action. As explained by Janks (2010), “In a world marked by social injustice, critical literacy continues to help us understand the effects of power and the need for redress” (p. 205), or productive possibilities of anticolonial spaces.

The anticolonial feminist community that was developed because of the intentionality of the space and the literature chosen to be read is important to education. As explained early on in the dissertation, as well as mentioned throughout the participants’ explanations of their own lack of readings of anticolonial fiction within their colonial schooling experiences, much of the literature available within schools is through a white settler colonial discursive lens. It is written by and for white, heterosexual, settlers. It was not only the texts that we read, but the anticolonial book club environment that impacted the participants’ subjectivities and the way the participants read the books. Adding to conversations about the importance of engagement in reading and subjectivity negotiation (Broughton, 2002; Craig, 2016; Janzen, 2015; Suh & Hinton, 2015; Sumara, 1996, 2003), this study explained that creating spaces where women of colour and Indigenous women can come together in a horizontal comradeship can be one way of refusing and dismantling the white settler colonial state. As explained by Audra Simpson (2007, 2017)
and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017), organizing in resistance to or refusing the settler colonial state and its discourses should not be in response to the state and its politics of recognition and should be done within local communities. By refusing white settler colonial discursive framings of their subject positions, the women a part of this research can walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives on their own feminist, anticolonial terms. Leanne Simpson (2011) also explains,

> We are each responsible for finding our own meanings, for shifting those meanings through time and space, and coming to our own meaningful way of being in the world. We are each responsible for being present in our own lives and engaged in our own realities. (p. 43)

Through reading anticolonial fiction that puts into words experiences outside of a white settler colonial discursive framing, the women in this book club imagined new possibilities for their futures. It is through this imagination that women of colour and Indigenous women can work together in ways that work for them to subvert white settler colonial discourse, as drawing on Janks (2010), these critical literacy spaces can create opportunities to change dominant discourses and change “which discourses are dominant” (Janks, 2010, p. 27).

This book club is one method of walking alongside Indigenous resurgence. It is one way of turning away from white settler colonial discourse. As explained by Audra Simpson (2017), “turning away, as Coulthard has argued, and as I have argued and demonstrated in Mohawk Interruptus, is a technique, is a possibility” (p. 29). It is not reactionary, it is outside of white settler colonial discourse and pays attention to refusals, persistence, and subversions. This raises a number of issues that we should consider in educational contexts about how settler teachers and students can engage with Indigenous resurgence initiatives, by subverting white settler colonial discourse and taking part in anticolonial action that is not just reactionary. Recognition politics are at the heart of ‘reconciliation’ conversations (A. Simpson, 2017). When reconciliation is a “largely state-driven performance art that attempts to move elements of history forward in order to ‘move on’ from the past, to transition out of one period of history into another, better one” (A. Simpson, 2017, p. 23-24), white settler colonial discourse remains intact which continues its aim to invisibilize Indigenous peoples into the ‘multicultural’ state.

Secondary school teachers in the Ontario context can mirror this theoretical framework and methodology and create anticolonial book clubs in their own contexts. Moving from documenting and acquiring ‘facts,’ these book club spaces allow for productive, affective learning and becomings. These spaces have potential to engage youth in active, productive ways
that pay attention to their subject positions and where they can place them selves within the conversation of Indigenous resurgence. How the book club runs will depend on the subject positions of the teacher and the students who are part of the group. Creating these anticolonial spaces for racialized students to be in conversation with Indigenous resurgence initiatives is important. This book club space would be different than a space of white and racialized students, only white students, or mixed groups of racialized settlers, white settlers, and Indigenous peoples. If the teacher is white, like my self, and the students are racialized and/or Indigenous, the conversation should be led by the students themselves, with the teacher as a guide through the anticolonial feminist framework as a lens. If the teacher and students are all white settlers, the teacher may need to play a more prominent role in guiding the conversation in non-problematic ways.

Creating anticolonial spaces as a settler teacher is an important political act. All non-Indigenous people have a responsibility to reflect on the ways they are implicated in colonial processes on stolen land. Although white settlers and settlers of colour are differently implicated by white settler colonial discourse, both have a responsibility to place them selves in relationship to and walk alongside Indigenous resurgence initiatives. With this in mind, there have been many conversations around ‘reconciliation’ initiatives in Canada due to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This study pushes us to think in non-reactionary ways that do not place ourselves in relationship with the white settler colonial state, but how we can be in right relationship with each other by centring Indigenous resurgence instead of white settler colonial discourse. Following Martin Cannon’s (2018) calls to teach and learn reparative education, all educators must centre “lands dispossession, the role of law, lands reclamation, colonial reparations, and Indigenous-settler relationships building as a starting point in education” (p. 165). Through this lens, educators and students in the Canadian context can question their “collective responsibility to reject settler capital and lands exploitation and the ecological devastation brought on by both” (Cannon, 2018, p. 172). All of this requires a different positioning of one’s self in relationship to the land, the state, and Indigenous peoples. Instead of positioning our selves in relationship to the white settler colonial state, we should challenge our selves to place our selves in relationship with the land and Indigenous peoples, as well as Indigenous resurgence initiatives. This means not centring white settler colonial discourse or assuming that the white settler colonial state is inevitable (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013). Viewing the issues in these ways allow non-Indigenous people to also imagine ways outside of the white settler colonial discourse and these power relationships (Macoun, 2013). This is important within
the ‘formal’ settler education institutions at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary level, as explained by Cannon (2018), “formal education should work to challenge more effectively a system that exploits us all” (p. 176).

The findings in this research are also important as it reminds educators that antiracism and anticolonialism are not synonymous; however, both are important and interrelated initiatives. Through coming together in a book club, the issues of sexism and colonialism in texts such as Native Speaker, and anticolonial and antiracist issues and activism can be examined in the feminist, anticolonial space. Creating these spaces in and out of schools where women of colour and Indigenous women are at the centre can create horizontal comradeship, and allows a deep learning to take place, as shown through Min-seo’s experiences reading The Marrow Thieves. Creating these spaces is also a way to ensure desire-based projects are at the forefront, not damage-centred projects (Tuck, 2009). This echoes Leanne Simpson’s (2011, 2017) conversations about subverting white settler colonial discourse and persisting in spite of it – not playing by the settler colonizers rules of damage-centred narratives (Tuck, 2009). It also echoes Macoun’s (2013, 2016) call to move beyond setter colonial theory into more productive anticolonial conversations to ensure white people do not claim innocence but that they are also not immobilized by their implicatedness in colonial processes. It is in these anticolonial communities of care that we can create more opportunities to subvert white settler colonial discourse through these difficult conversations.

As mentioned previously, this research project is important for white researchers and educators. It is important that white researchers not shy away from anticolonial work because of their subject positions. Drawing on Susan Dion’s (2007) theorizations of the ‘perfect stranger,’ I aim and urge other white educators and researchers to work towards being ‘imperfect accomplices,’ not just allies. Explained by Indigenous Action Media (2014), being an ally has “become an identity, disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support,” whereas an accomplice is “a person who helps another commit a crime” (p. 2) against the white settler state. The article goes on to explain allies provide temporary support or solidarity, but accomplices fight with those who are marginalized and become complicit together. Through this framework I see it as my (and other white researchers and educators) duty to use their privilege within academia and society to “leverage resources and material support and… strategize with, not for” (Indigenous Action Media, 2014, p. 5) and continue to negotiate their relationship with Indigenous and people of colour in the common goals against white settler colonial discourse.
Another resource explains that accomplices continually challenge systems of oppression such as racism, colonialism, and white supremacy and they continue to remain accountable by working with Indigenous peoples and people of colour (Osler, n.d.). As a white settler, it is my duty to use the privilege I have to speak against the systems of oppression reinforced through the white settler colonial discourse. Although my ancestry is of European descent, I cannot use guilt to fuel my efforts in this fight against white settler colonial discourse, but use the anger against these cruel systems to constantly question the systems of domination that we are all implicated in. I take Anzaldúa’s (1987) advice and continue to follow the lead of Indigenous women and women of colour in the fight against colonialism. As explained by Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel (2014), “Differently positioned people of colour and Indigenous peoples are not operating with the same kinds or degrees of authority as whites or each other, but nonetheless we are not outside of these relations and forces of power” (p. 23). Although the anticolonial space created in this research project was not ‘perfect’ or free from white settler colonial discourse, we became a group of ‘imperfect accomplices.’ By refusing white settler colonial discourse and refusing to be ignorant, we became ‘imperfect accomplices’ in anticolonial and Indigenous resurgence initiatives.

Limits of the Project

As explained earlier, one limit to this project was my positionality as a white settler. To not do this research with racialized and Indigenous women meant to centre whiteness and this was not an option for me and my political commitments; however, as a white person, the space we created was not free from my influence as a white settler researcher. As explained in the previous chapter, my political commitments and anticolonial way of doing the research was important for building trust with the participants; however, because of histories and current actions of white researchers, there may have been hesitancies that may not have been there with an Indigenous woman or racialized woman researcher.

In addition to this, it is important to note that everything written in this dissertation is through my lens, as a white settler. Although I do not shy away from anticolonial work, I am not innocent. I live and work on stolen land and benefit from colonial processes. Doing this research also benefits me, as I may be seen as ‘innocent’ or the ‘good’ white person (Macoun, 2016). I am not innocent and recognize that this research and my way of doing the research is one way and it
is partial. I cannot and will never be able to make any claims about what is best for Indigenous peoples (Macoun, 2016), so following and learning from Indigenous peoples in their anticolonial and decolonial efforts is key. This also “means it is similarly not possible for me to make knowledge claims about colonialism, undoing colonialism, or what Indigenous or non-Indigenous people should do” (Macoun, 2016, p. 98). This also turns back to the theoretical framework utilized in this project, which understands there are no truths or realities, but only partial, fluid, interpretations.

Another limit to this project includes the lack of high school student perspective. Explained in the Methodology Chapter, as I am not in relationship with high school students, it was difficult to recruit racialized and Indigenous youth to a research project. Youth perspectives are important in this research, as youth are also reading fiction and negotiating their subjectivities. It would be interesting to see how youth’s reading processes are embodied, how their self-reflection through reading could create a new consciousness, and how youth create anticolonial communities of care. It is also important to uncover the ways reading anticolonial counternarrative fiction can engage youth and help develop their literacy engagement, which this research project was unable to do. In addition to this, the women selected for this project were all current OISE graduate students or had already obtained a graduate degree from OISE. Although every book club will be different because every person comes with different subject positions and becomings, these women all had a graduate education, which means they have been trained to think critically about power relationships, including settler colonialism. This creates a very different dynamic and lived experiences or assemblages that someone without a graduate education may not be connected to.

In addition to the above limitations, although anticolonial in nature, the research project is still bound by the white settler institution of the University of Toronto and OISE. It was also bound by timelines due to (lack of) funding for my graduate education. The book club met between September 2017 and April 2018 and we read two books. The two books were very interesting in comparison; however, reading additional books with multiple groups would create more varied and complex relationships with different types of anticolonial counternarrative fiction and participant subject positions.
Extending the Project

In the future, I would like to continue working with women and gender non-conforming folks in book clubs. Focusing on desire-based research to look at the many ways people who are contextually marginalized are subverting dominant discourse is important work within education. Uncovering practices of subversion and persistence through literature can help teachers provide tools for their students in these processes. Extending this research to work with youth is also a goal of mine. Youth are connected to different assemblages than graduate students and alumni. In addition to this, working with youth to understand the ways in which they are negotiating their subjectivities through antiracist and anticolonial discourses would be important to education. To walk along Indigenous resurgence, it is important to understand the ways we can work together in a common, anticolonial efforts against the white settler colonial state and discourse.

I hope to live and work in Japan in the near future. Extending this research in the Japanese context has many possibilities and complications. As an outsider, before starting any research project, it will be important to develop relationships with the university community and local communities I am working in. After gaining some understanding of the local context, I hope to work with women and gender non-conforming university students to understand the ways they are negotiating their subjectivities through reading counternarrative fiction. However, I will have to continue to take a ‘back seat’ and listen to the needs of the community and understand the different discourses that are being negotiated in the different context and may take a much different research path, depending on the needs of the community. No matter where my journey leads me geographically, I am committed to continually becoming an ‘imperfect accomplice’ in fighting oppressive systems.

This dissertation project started with my own desire to read my self in a text. It led me to uncover the ways that the oppression of queer folks and women, although different and comes with privilege as well, is coming from a white settler colonial discourse. Understanding the hierarchies reinforced through this discourse guided me to this research project, as I knew it was important to understand the voices of Indigenous and racialized women and the way they are subverting these discourses and persisting and thriving in spite of it. I am so so grateful to have been able to take part in this project. I have made life-long friendships through this book club and have learned so much in the process. As I continue my relationships with the women a part of the book club, I continue to learn, grow, and become. Thank you again to the women a part of this research. My life has been forever changed and you have contributed so much to my
anticolonial education – I am forever grateful and am looking forward to continuing our journey together. For those of you that made it to the end of this dissertation, thank you for taking the time to read these words.
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Appendices
Appendix A: Posters

Poster – Version 1

Queer Book Club

Tired of reading straight, racist, colonial fiction at school?...

Want to read meaningful anti-colonial fiction that disrupts racism on Turtle Island?

This is a book club for LGBTQ2SI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Queer, Questioning, Two-Spirit, Intersex) female or gender-nonconforming people of colour, racialized, and/or Indigenous folks, between the ages of 14 and 18.

To join or get info contact Shawna:
Email: shawna.carroll@mail.utoronto.ca
Text: 647-455-0045

The book club may take place between July and August 2017 (depending on people’s availability) at the 519 Community Centre downtown Toronto.

This book club is part Shawna’s PhD research project. Please feel free to contact the research supervisor, Dr. Heather Sykes at 575-650-5034 or heather.sykes@utoronto.ca
Anticolonial Book Club

Tired of reading straight, racist, colonial fiction?...

Want to read meaningful anti-colonial fiction that disrupts racism on Turtle Island?

This is a book club for:
- past and present OISE students
- female or gender-nonconforming
- people of colour, racialized, and/or Indigenous folks.

To join or get info
contact Shawna:
Email: shawna.carroll@mail.utoronto.ca
Text: 647-455-0045

The book club may take place in October (depending on people’s availability) at OISE.

This book club is part Shawna’s PhD research project. Please feel free to contact the research supervisor, Dr. Heather Sykes at 575-650-5034 or heather.sykes@utoronto.ca
Appendix B: Information and Consent Letters

Information Letter

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Dear -----,

My name is Shawna Carroll and I am a graduate student from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, and am conducting a research project called: “Negotiating Identities: Reading Anticolonial Counternarrative Fiction.” An ‘anticolonial counternarrative’ is a narrative/fiction that speaks against the often told stories, which are very white, Eurocentric (European-lens), and heterosexual. We will discuss what our own definitions of ‘anticolonial counternarratives’ are in the initial meeting.

This letter explains the purpose of the study for my PhD research and what participating would involve on your part.

In Ontario, the fiction used in schools and school libraries is often not representative of students’ various identities. Research has shown that literacy and our identities are linked, which makes this glaring absence important, as much of the fiction available is very Eurocentric (white and European) and heteronormative (only sharing heterosexual/straight characters). My interest in this research lies in what happens when people are able to read fiction of their choice in a book club format. The purpose of this research is to understand the ways folks who are marginalized negotiate their identities through the fiction they read, and how reading a ‘counternarrative’ fiction (a fiction that is contrasting to what is widely available) enables different ways of identity negotiation and a space to thrive.

This research project will involve 2-5 other participants that have or are attending OISE at the UofT, who identify as female or gender-nonconforming, and a person of colour, racialized and/or Indigenous. It involves taking part in a book club, where we will read a book selected by the group and will meet according to the everyones’ schedules. We will meet at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at 252 Bloor St. W., Toronto. If you agree to participate, the book club meeting schedule will be sent to you once decided upon by the everyone as a group. In order to decide this, I will be hosting an approximately 60 minute initial meeting to discuss everyone’s needs. In addition to meeting with a book club discussion group which will be audio and video recorded, you will be asked to keep a journal in order to record your thoughts and feelings during your reading process. This journal can be created through narrative, poetry, art, or any other format you decide. Once the book club discussion group has finished meeting, I will ask each person to meet with me one-on-one to discuss your experiences in the research project and to check in with each person regarding the information collected so far. This one-on-one meeting, which will be audio recorded, is an opportunity for you to remove any information you decide you would not like to share. Please note that because we will be meeting in a group setting, which will be video recorded, it will not be possible to remove the data from the book club discussion group. You may remove all or parts of your journal submission and one-on-one meeting data. You will also be invited to review and edit your written transcripts of the book club discussion group and one-on-one meeting.

Overall, my aim is to make this book club a positive experience for all involved. I hope that by participating in this project, you will build a community of friends, enjoy reading ‘alternative’
fiction, and enjoy self-reflecting on your reading process. It could also be an opportunity for you to learn more about yourself and your identities. Speaking about your reading processes in a small group format with other people can help develop confidence and friendships, which I hope will endure after the research project is finished.

I will ensure your confidentiality by not using any real names or any information that may identify you when I am analyzing and sharing the results of this project. Also, I will use pseudonyms for names of other people, organizations, and places to protect your confidentiality. You will be invited to review and edit the written transcripts of the book club discussion group (your portion) and one-on-one meeting. It is also important to note that although I will keep your identity confidential, I cannot guarantee that the other members of the group will do this. There is a small risk that you may feel uncomfortable or become upset discussing stressful or difficult experiences related to your identities. During and after each meeting, I will ask if you need any support. Please see below this letter a list of professional supports that you may contact if this situation does occur. You may choose one that fits your needs (location and identities) best. We will all meet on the first day of the project to discuss these risks, supports, and the need to respect all members’ confidentiality.

As a participant in this project you would have several very definite rights:

- First, your participation in the book club group, sharing your journals, and meeting with me one-on-one is entirely voluntary.
- You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- You are free to withdraw from any aspect of the research at any time.
- Excerpts from the journals and the transcripts of the book club discussion and one-on-one meeting may be included in published accounts, but under no circumstances will your real name or identifying circumstances be included.

Should you have any further questions you are welcome to contact me by phone at 647-455-0045 or e-mail (shawna.carroll@mail.utoronto.ca). Also if you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please do not hesitate to contact the research supervisor of this project, Dr. Heather Sykes at 575-650-5034 or heather.sykes@utoronto.ca or the University of Toronto Research Oversight and Compliance Office – Human Research Ethics Program at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

If you are interested in joining this research project, please email me to tell me that you are interested. If more than six people are interested in joining the book club, I will select the people who identify with a variety of racial, gender, sexuality, and age identifications. Please also let me know if there is a book (or number of books) you would like to recommend to the group. Before our initial meeting, I will compile this list of recommended books and summaries, so that we can discuss which book we would like to read at the initial meeting. At this initial meeting, we will decide as a group if we would like to read one of the recommended books together, or if we all would like to read individual books. As the goal of this project is not to analyze the content of the text, but what happens when you read it, our concentration in the book club discussion will be on your experiences while reading the book. When you send me your book idea(s), please also send me any dietary restrictions you have, as I will be providing food at each meeting. Please also note that the book will be purchased for you, your TTC travel costs will be refunded, and you will receive a $20 gift card to thank you for your involvement. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you will keep the book, be reimbursed for any TTC travel costs you acquired while participating in the study, and will still receive the $20 gift card.
Sincerely,

Shawna Carroll

LIST OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

408 Help Line
(free 24/7 immediate distress and crisis support phone line for all ages)
416-408-4357

Anishnawbe 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Management Service
(free 24/7 immediate distress and crisis support phone line for Aboriginal people of all ages)
416-891-8606

EdgeWest
(walk-in free counselling for youth up to 29 years living in Toronto west side)
1900 Davenport Rd.
Toronto, ON
M6N1B7
416-652-4363
edgewest.ca

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
(free, drop-in counseling and support)
655 Bloor St. W.,
Toronto, ON
M6G1L1
416-969-8510

Native Youth Sexual Health Network: Two Spirit and Indigenous Support Circle
(free support circle for Indigenous Two-Spirit and/or LGBTQIA for all ages)
twospiritcircle@gmail.com
kwilliams@nativeyouthsexualhealth.com

Woodgreen
(walk-in free counselling for all ages on East side of Toronto)
815 Danforth Ave, Suite 100
Toronto, ON
M4J1L2
416-645-6000 x1100
www.woodgreen.org
Consent Letter

Thank you for offering to participate in this project. This letter explains this research so you can make an informed decision about taking part in it. My name is Shawna Carroll and I am conducting this research project as part of my PhD research. I am a student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. You can contact me at (647)455-0045 or shawna.carroll@mail.utoronto.ca. The research project is called: “Negotiating Identities: Reading Anticolonial Counternarrative Fiction”, or ‘alternative fiction’ explained below.

Purpose of the Research.
The purpose of this study is to look at the ways your identity shifts depending on your experiences, with a focus on reading fiction. The book we will discuss in a book club setting will be different from a lot of the fiction available in schools and libraries. It won’t include only white, heterosexual characters. I identify as a white, cisgender female (meaning I identify with the gender I was assigned to at birth) and as part of the queer community, and feel that this research is important because I did not feel represented in the books I read in high school. After learning about the connections of oppression within settler colonial Canada, I feel it is necessary to focus my research on the experiences of people who identify as female and/or gender-nonconforming, and people of colour, racialized and/or Indigenous folks. These experiences are important in understanding the multiple ways oppressive forces function in society. Groups that have been oppressed are able to thrive and find ways to challenge the standards in our colonized society. This is my focus. In this research project, I will also focus on the emotions and ‘gut feelings’ you have during the reading process and during our book club discussion. I think that there are a lot of possibilities and important ways of knowing in these gut feelings, which is why it is my focus.

Description of the Research.
This invitation to participate in the research includes joining in a book club discussion group, keeping a journal, and meeting with me one-on-one after the book club is finished. The group that is included in the research will decide how many times the book club will meet. The number of times and length of the book club meetings will be decided upon at the initial meeting, which will last approximately 60 minutes. These decisions will be based on a group vote in the initial meeting. The meetings will take place at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at 252 Bloor St. W., Toronto.

In order to prepare for these book club discussions, we will all read a book and will journal about our experiences and emotions during the reading of the book. The book that we read will be decided upon in our initial meeting. At this initial meeting, we will decide if we would all like to read one book that has been recommended, or if we would all like to read our own self-selected book. As the goal of this project is not to analyze the content of the book but the process of reading it, the conversations in the book club discussion will concentrate on our experiences reading the fiction we have selected. This book will also be chosen as an ‘anticolonial counternarrative.’ This means that it is a narrative that speaks against the often told stories, which are very white, Eurocentric (European-lens), and heterosexual. We will discuss what our own definitions of ‘anticolonial counternarratives’ are in the initial meeting.

I will also meet with each individual in a one-on-one meeting after the book club is finished. This will take about one hour. In this meeting, we will discuss your experiences in the book club and I will show you how I have understood the data so far. During this last meeting, you will
also be asked for any additions or changes you would like made. I will be audio and video recording the book club discussions and audio recording our one-on-one meeting. Your own name, the real names of other people, and the names of places will be replaced with aliases to protect your privacy. All of the data will be kept in line with the University of Toronto’s Office of Research Ethics rules of confidentiality.

Access to Research Information.
Myself and my thesis committee will have access to the data collected during this project. The files containing real names will be stored on my personal computer and my online HomeSpace account in password-protected files accessible only by myself. All files will be encrypted, as per university standards. All emails will be exchanged through my official University of Toronto email address. All emails will be deleted from my email inbox/outbox and saved in password protected files on my computer with de-identified information within one week of being sent/received. If you have contacted me through phone via text message, your messages have been de-identified and the messages have been assigned an alias. The aliases will be saved in the key containing aliases and real names, which will be saved in a password protected file. Any identifying information sent through text message will be deleted right away. The researcher’s phone is password protected and will be kept securely with her at all times. Any printed materials as well as the usb drives with audio and video recordings will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home in Toronto, Ontario. All original data files will be deleted or destroyed 7 years after the completion of the study.

Potential Discomfort.
There is a small risk that you may feel uncomfortable during this research process, as we will be talking about identities that are marginalized in the current context. You may exit from the research project at any time. Please see on the last page of this consent letter, a list of professional supports that you may contact if this situation does occur. You may choose which one to contact or go to in person, depending on your needs (identities and location). We will all meet on the first day of the project to discuss these risks, supports, and the need to respect all members’ confidentiality. Please note that because we will be meeting in a group setting, which will be video recorded, it will not be possible to remove the data from the book club discussion group. You may remove all or parts of your journal submission and one-on-one meeting data. If you exit or withdraw any information, you will not be punished in any way. If you exit from the research, your data from the one-on-one meeting and journal submission will be removed from the collection. You may also remove any or part of the data from the one-on-one meeting or journal submission up to 6 months after our first meeting. It may not be possible to remove your data after six months of data collection because they will be part of the larger analysis. However, if you request this data to be removed after 6 months, all efforts will be made to remove all or parts of your data. Please note that if your parents or guardians are not aware of your gender or sexuality identities, they may become aware due to your involvement in this research.

Potential Benefits.
You may benefit from discussing and reflecting on your experiences reading and reflecting on your identities. You may also benefit from joining a book club which will build a community and relationships. You may also benefit from reading the research after the project is complete to see how you added to knowledge building.

Confidentiality.
Privacy will be respected and no information that reveals your identity will be released or published. However, we will be meeting with a group of other people, so I cannot promise that
the other participants will respect yours or other’s privacy. This will be discussed in our first meeting.

**Reimbursement.**
You will be refunded for your travel costs. The book you will use in the book club will be purchased for you. Meals will be provided at each meeting. You will also be given a $20 gift card to thank you for your participation. If you withdraw from the research, you will still be refunded for the travel costs while participating and will still receive the $20 gift card.

**Participation & Voluntariness.**
Before you start the research, I would like to reassure you that as a participant in this project you have several very definite rights.
- First, participation in research is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study you can withdraw at any time.
- If you do not wish to participate or wish to withdraw, you do not have to provide a reason.
- You are free to refuse to answer any questions.
- Sections from any of the discussions and/or your journals may be included in published accounts, but under no circumstances will your real name or identifying circumstances be included.

**Contact.**
I would like to express my appreciation for your participation in this project. Should you have any questions you are welcome to contact me by phone (647-455-0045) or e-mail (shawna.carroll@mail.utoronto.ca). Please also feel free to contact the research supervisor of this project, Dr. Heather Sykes at 575-650-5034 or heather.sykes@utoronto.ca. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact: University of Toronto, Research Oversight and Compliance Office – Human Research Ethics Program at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. Please note that this Research Ethics Program may have confidential access to data to help ensure participant protection procedures are followed.

**Consent.**
By signing this form, I agree that:
The study has been explained to me.
All my questions were answered.
The possible harms and discomforts and the possible benefits (if any) of this study have been explained to me.
I understand that I have the right not to participate and the right to stop at any time.
I understand that I may refuse to participate without any problems.
I have a choice of not answering any specific questions.
I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study.
I have been told that my personal records will be kept confidential.
I understand that no information that would identify me will be released or printed without asking me first.
I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.
I hereby consent to participate.

-------------------------------------------
(Signature of Participant)

-------------------------------------------
(Printed name)

-------------------------------------------
(Date)
LIST OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

408 Help Line
(free 24/7 immediate distress and crisis support phone line for all ages)
416-408-4357

Anishnawbe 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Management Service
(free 24/7 immediate distress and crisis support phone line for Aboriginal people of all ages)
416-891-8606

EdgeWest
(walk-in free counselling for youth up to 29 years living in Toronto west side)
1900 Davenport Rd.
Toronto, ON
M6N1B7
416-652-4363
edgewest.ca

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
(free, drop-in counseling and support)
655 Bloor St. W.,
Toronto, ON
M6G1L1
416-969-8510

Native Youth Sexual Health Network: Two Spirit and Indigenous Support Circle
(free support circle for Indigenous Two-Spirit and/or LGBTQIA for all ages)
twospiritcircle@gmail.com
kwilliams@nativeyouthsexualhealth.com

Woodgreen
(walk-in free counselling for all ages on East side of Toronto)
815 Danforth Ave, Suite 100
Toronto, ON
M4J1L2
416-645-6000 x1100
www.woodgreen.org
Appendix C: Journaling Guide

Journaling Guide

This journaling process is a way for both you and I to understand how the book is affecting your identities/subject positions, and how your identities/subject positions are affecting the way you read/understand the book. It is a way to reflect on your feeling, reflections, and processes of reading the anticolonial counternarrative fiction. This journaling can also be used to describe the ways you connect/don’t connect to the story and characters and why you think this is the case.

You can create this journal in any way you are comfortable with. This could include, but is not limited to, autobiographical journaling/diary writing, writing poetry, drawing, painting, collaging, or any other method you would like. In addition to this journaling process, I would also recommend writing in the margins as you read, this may help you work through some reflections, but could also help in the journaling process.

Some questions you may ask yourself when journaling:
1. How does this make me feel? Why do I think this is?
2. Do I feel discomfort, gut reactions, excitement, or any other ‘affect'/pre-emotion gut responses to the story? How would I describe this?
3. What does reading this book do to me as a person? Do I see myself different or changed at all by reading this book?
4. How is this book different from other, colonial books that I’ve read?
5. Does this book help me subvert/refuse colonial norms in any way? How?
6. Is there a part in this book that makes me imagine other possibilities?
7. Does this book close down possibilities that I would like to imagine?
8. Do I feel like this book has changed any part of who I am?
9. Who am I and how have I developed this sense of self? How is this subverting white settler colonial norms?
10. Does this book help me see ways in which I am thriving and persisting, in spite of white settler colonial norms and expectations?
Appendix D: Book Club Guiding Questions

**November 3\(^{rd}\) (1/2 way completing Native Speaker) Meeting Guiding Questions:**

1. How have you enjoyed the book so far?
2. What do you like/not like about the book so far?
3. If you could change something about the book, what would it be and why?
4. When and where do you read this book? Why?
5. How does your gender, sexuality, citizenship, ethnicity, culture, race, or other subject positions affect the way you read this book?
7. Did you have any gut reactions, excitement, or any other ‘affect’/pre-emotion gut responses to any parts in the book? How would you describe this?
8. How is this book different from other books you have read?
9. How do you feel reading this book compared to other books you have read?
10. How do you feel reading this book subverts colonial norms in any way? How?
11. Is there a part in this book that makes me imagine other possibilities?
12. Does this book close down possibilities that I would like to imagine?
13. Do you identify with any of the characters in the story? Why and how?
14. How do you feel reading this book has changed you? How does this make you feel?

**December (end of Native Speaker) Meeting Guiding Questions:**

1. How did you enjoy the book?
2. What did you not like about the book?
3. If you could change something about the book, what would it be and why?
4. How does your gender, sexuality, citizenship, ethnicity, culture, race, or other subject positions affect the way you read this book?
5. While reading the book, what sort of feelings arise? Why?
6. Did you have any gut reactions, excitement, or any other ‘affect’/pre-emotion gut responses to any parts in the book? How would you describe this?
7. Do you often read these kind of anticolonial counternarrative fictions?
8. How is this book different from other books you have read?
9. How do you feel reading this book compared to other books you have read?
10. How do you feel reading this book has changed you? How does this make you feel?
11. Do you identify with any of the characters in the story? Why and how?
12. How do you feel reading this book subverts what people think is ‘normal’?
January 12th (1/2 way completing *The Marrow Thieves*) Meeting Guiding Questions:

1. What is your identity now versus in your youth?
2. What enabled this to change? How have dominant norms affected this?
3. How do your identities/subject positions affect the way you read this book?
4. What did you FEEL while you were reading this book? What did the book DO?
5. Where were you when you read the book? Experiences in life affecting how you read the book/feel about the book?
6. How is your bodily response different reading this book vs. Native Speaker? What about EU books?
7. What can this book help you put words to?
8. How does this book help you understand colonialism? Anticolonialism?
9. How does this make you see the current world differently? How does that feel in your body?
10. How does the writing style change the way you feel when reading the book? How does it change your connection to the characters?
11. How is masculinity seen in this book vs. Native Speaker?
12. Is there anything you’ve learned from reading this book that you wouldn’t have known otherwise?

February 9th (end of *The Marrow Thieves*) Meeting Guiding Questions:

1. How did each book help you think of ways to persist or thrive in the current context?
2. How does persistence or thriving feel inside of your body when reading the book?
3. How does power or white supremacy feel in your body? Does reading this/these book change that feeling?
4. How does the way you felt connected, disconnected, or guilty feel in your body?
5. What contributes to your feeling guilty/connection when reading The Marrow Thieves?
6. How does a narrative of oppression and subversion change the way you see yourself as an actor in the current context?
7. How does reading identities and experiences in language feel in your body?
8. Did reading this/these book(s) help you put names to the feelings in your body?
9. How is reading this in a narrative form different from reading it in journal articles?
10. How does this/these book(s) help you understand yourself in relation to others?
11. How do you see time/experiences affecting the way you read these books?
12. Life is a process and a series of lessons. There is no ‘goal’ or ‘end point’ of learning, but a constant becoming. How do these books help you learn to become yourself at this moment in time?
Appendix E: One-on-One Guiding Questions

One-on-One Questions After Native Speaker

• How did you enjoy this book club?

• How was it the same or different from your other reading experiences?

• How do you feel this book club changed you?

• How do you feel about my analysis and re-presentation of the data so far?

One-on-One Questions After The Marrow Thieves

General:

• How was your reading process different for the two books? (colonial vs. anticolonial) Why?

• Has reading these books changed the way you understand colonialism or anticolonialism?

• How have reading these two books changed you or your view of yourself/the world?

• What can these books do that Eurocentric books can’t do? (subverting normative subject positions/stereotypes)

Guilt:

If you ever feel guilty or uncomfortable when reading a work of fiction like Native Speaker or Marrow Thieves, what is your process of moving through this feeling? During and after reading? What do you do when you recognize your guilt or feelings of discomfort? How do you move past them?

 o Carolina – you say you don’t like the feeling of guilt because it allows people to opt out – are there ways you have worked through feelings of guilt in a productive way through reading? For example, when you read Native Speaker, you assumed the wife
was Asian, and when you realized she was white-American, you felt guilty. What do you do with those feelings? How do you move beyond them?

- Kiara - You talked about having a difficult experience of being left with guilt and anger in a course here at OISE, how do you think your reading processes can help you move beyond these feelings of guilt to make them productive?

- Samantha - You explain feeling guilty while reading Native Speaker because of judging the character harshly because you haven’t been in Henry’s shoes/not identifying with the character, feeling like being an outsider in the context, or being able to easily disassociate with the feelings of guilt because they’re not reflective of your experience – how do you move through these feelings during your reading process? (does the reading process stop at the physical reading?)

- Your reading of the Marrow Thieves was much different and you connected/related to the narrative, emotions, characters in a much deeper way – you said that this allowed you to be more judgemental - you explained that you could bask in the feelings of guilt, rage, and fear, but you had a feeling of satisfaction because it was a recognition of your reality – this was different than your feelings of guilt when not relating to Native Speaker. How is this reading process different?

- Thuy – you speak about trying to cling to the similarities between you and Henry, but feeling the great divide between your identities, and feeling alienated because of the way he treats/discusses women – you also discuss how reading the book made you feel like you were conforming to the ideas of assimilation by reading the book. How can you move through these feelings during your reading process?

- Some people discussed being confronted with their privilege (Kiara, Min-Seo) while reading the Marrow Thieves – Min-seo describes it well when she said in a meeting that she was caught up in her own pain so didn’t see other people’s pain. What do you do with these feelings while reading? How do you resolve them/move past/through them? How has reading these two different books impacted you and the way you view the world?
• Does reading a book like the Marrow Thieves help you to understand your responsibility as a settler of colour?

• Did either of these books make you question parts of your identity or beliefs? What was this process like?

• How was your reading process different from when you related to the characters versus not relating to the characters? How does this feel when reading?

• How is the reading process different when you can relate to the characters versus being able to empathize with the characters

• Samantha - You speak about being in two different worlds because of your parents’ different backgrounds and relationships with this land, did you feel like this at all when reading/comparing Native Speaker and The Marrow Thieves?

Language:

• Some people explained feeling like an imposter/phony, but then reading yourself in something/being represented validates your existence – How has reading these two books changed the way you view yourself or the language you use to describe things? (for example, sexism, borderlands, colonialism, etc.). How does reading about different experiences outside of the Eurocentric norm help you be more conscious of yourself and others’ experiences?

• For some, putting these experiences into words (giving you new kinds of language) was really transformational – putting it into existence through fiction (for example, sexualities, colonialism, etc.) – does this help you understand aspects of your reality? What is this reading process like? Does it end at the reading or does it go beyond the reading into your everyday life? Does this process help you take account of/reflect on your emotions? How does this tie into persistence? Does putting these things into words help you imagine a different future/possibilities that you wouldn’t have otherwise imagined?

• Reading fiction can help you be more you and help you persist – do you agree with this? Did you experience this in both/either of the books?
• Samantha said The Marrow Thieves gave her more fuel to the fire. Others seemed to have similar experiences with Native Speaker – how do you bring your reading of fiction into your everyday life?

• Many of us in the book club explain feeling in an ‘in-between’ space, and Native Speaker explains that “It’s still a black and white world” (p. 195) – How does reading fiction that represents you and allows you to put words to these experiences help you navigate these situations any differently?

• The journaling process and the process of coming around the table for the book club made a greater impact of the book – can you articulate why this is? Is it more than describing/language? Reflecting on one’s experiences – how is this related to your reading process? Did the way you read the book change after journaling or coming around the table/articulating the experiences?

• Kiara - You explain that reading the book allowed you to get in touch with different parts of your identity that you’ve blocked off for a long time. Did it change your perspective on who you are? - You explained how reading the Marrow Thieves, you could see your mother’s journey in the narrative and you felt it in your upper stomach. While reading this, did it change the way you understood your mother’s experience or the experience of those in the book when making the connection?

• Samantha – imagining new narratives that aren’t centred on trauma can be very powerful – moving forward in better ways – how does language/reading these into existence help you do this?

• Thuy - You speak about how it’s important to tell stories, and that The Marrow Thieves helped you think about this – how did reading this book help you bring your experiences back to life?

Time:

Some people explained that they had to put the book down because of the emotions or not reflecting on things until later on because it was too hard in the moment - how does this change your reading process? What does the space between you and the book allow you to do? What happens in that space?
• It seems that your view of Native Speaker changed a bit from the ½ way point, to after finishing the book, and then after reading the Marrow Thieves. How do you feel that giving yourself space between the book changes your reflection on it?

• Your experiences and context change the way you see yourself and the way you identify – how does this affect the way you read? How does your reading process change depending on what’s going on in your life?

  Carolina: You speak about reading things differently throughout your life – in high school you wouldn’t have read into the issues of cultural genocide and colonization in the same way as you do now. Can you speak about your different experiences reading “100 Years of Solitude” by Gabriel García Márquez? How was your reading different 10 years ago vs. now, etc.?

  Kiara: You speak about reading things differently depending on where you’re at in your life. For example, in high school you felt like you wanted to be a chameleon so reading Native Speaker in high school wouldn’t have had the same impact as it did now, and you may have refused it then. How was your reading of POC differed from your time in high school versus today?

  • You watched 500 Days of Summer and hated it, but then watched it again after living sad experiences and then could really relate to it

  • How do you think your reading of Percepolys would be different now compared to when you read it when you were 14-15 years old?

  Thuy: In one of the meetings, you say that sometimes great stories need you to re-read them in different times of your life – you say that what you know at the time in your life when you read the book shapes how you devour the book and the book affects you differently depending on this process - do you have any of these books?