APPLIED DRAMA AS ENGAGING PEDAGOGY:
CRITICAL MULTIMODAL LITERACIES WITH STREET YOUTH

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Abstract

This critical ethnography investigates the pedagogical spaces constituted within a youth-led, participatory theatre production, *Surviving in the Cracks* (Wager et al., 2009). The popular theatre production documented the lived experiences of eight street-youth, including their struggles to survive in the face of cuts to public health resources in Vancouver. As an applied theatre study, this theatre project is defined as a messy and rich site of pedagogical inquiry that is examined through multiple theoretical and methodological frameworks. It draws on critical feminist pedagogy, critical youth studies and theatre and literacy research with the purpose of revealing how drama and theatre spaces provide “anomalous” (Ellsworth, 2005) learning places, or out-of-the-ordinary learning spaces, that youth and researchers collectively embodied during the applied drama and theatre process and production.

Analysis of ethnographic data generated before, during, and after the theatrical production of *Surviving in the Cracks* suggests how drama and theatre with street youth opens up embodied pedagogical spaces. Two different methods of analysis bring multiple perspectives to this work through exploring how meaning was collectively constructed, how multimodal literacy practices were used in critical ways, how power was negotiated, how desire was manifested through imaginaries, and how safe spaces were generated by this community of youth within selected pedagogical moments of resistance during the theatre process. Specifically, the script is analyzed with a youth participant, followed by the analysis of particular moments of resistance during performance creation and production.

This research advances knowledge of how informal learning spaces and youth resistances within education become crucial parts of pedagogy and should be considered as future foundations and expansions of education. Implications include using multiple
methodological lenses in order to work alongside, for and with youth, as well as being able to reach larger audiences of youth, communities, educators, and scholars through different analytical perspectives. By examining how theatre provides a space for marginalized youth to engage in dialogues about complex social issues, this research contributes to the fields of critical and feminist pedagogy, language and literacy education, drama in education, critical youth studies, and collaborative methodological studies in qualitative research.
Preface

This study was reviewed by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Minimal Risk REB) as “Vancouver Street Youth Reveal the Social, Political and Cultural Dimensions that Impact their Lives through Ethnodrama.” An ethics certificate (ref: H08-02712) was issued on January 22, 2009.

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Parts of the following manuscript are included in Chapter One within the section “Overview of the Field: Applied Drama and Theatre in Education Practices”:

Portion of authorship: 80%. I wrote the majority of the paper, with edits by the co-authors. Used with permission.

Parts of the following manuscript are included in Chapter One within the section “Overview of the Field: Applied Drama and Theatre in Education Practices” and in Chapter Two within the section “Critical literacies: Multimodal artistic expressions”:

http://brock.scholarsportal.info/journals/teachingandlearning/home/article/view/400/368. Portion of authorship: 70%. I wrote the majority of the paper, with edits by the co-author. Used with permission.

Parts of the following manuscript are included in Chapter Two within the section “Critical youth studies: By, for and with youth” and throughout Chapter Five:


Parts of the following manuscript are included in Chapter Three within the section “Visual methodologies”:

Portion of authorship: 50%. This manuscript was based on my data, but was a co-written conversation of analysis. Used with permission.

Greg Masuda granted permission for the reuse of all still images obtained from his footage of rehearsals and performances.
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Dedication

What I’ve learned most from my decade-long encounter with education as an academic field is, I don’t want to teach or learn in the absence of pleasure, plot, moving and being moved, metaphor, cultural artifacts, audience engagement and interaction. (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 21)

For Davina. You move me. Thank you.

Figure 1. Wise Words from Davina

And for Eric Logchies: Civilization, are we really civilized?
Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

TRUE STORY by John Murphy
(re)evolution theatre @ The Cultch
May 14, 2009: Post-Show artist talkback
WARNING: Nudity, gunshots, fog and strong language!

blackout.

i am in a theatre with at least sixty other audience members, including the eight youth i am creating a play with right now. we are sitting in darkness waiting for the show, true story, to begin. at least a minute in complete and utter pitch darkness has passed. bodies start to move. people are becoming antsy. it’s a long time to be sitting with a group of strangers in darkness. we haven’t had a moment to laugh together yet. to audience together. to ‘get it’ together. it is really dark in here. i cannot see the youth i brought with me. this is their first time being audience members at a professional theatre production, or any production for that matter. darkness. i cannot even see my hands or the people sitting next to me, let alone the youth who are across the U-shaped stage from me. all i see is black, and all i smell is the cool air of the theatre. my hands start to twitch and i feel out my legs to place them under. how can a production begin with a blackout for this long? a five minute blackout? or at least five minutes so far. i think. i’m getting cold. people are starting to make noise. laughter. darkness. i worry about my cast members, the youth that i brought here. my responsibility. why am i sitting so far away from them? i should have sat next to them and left drew and jaime on their own over here. i should be there with them. next to them. anxiety is rising in the room. i feel it. i feel my own fear stirring. nervous laughter. somebody shouts out, “did they forget to pay the electricity bill or something?”. laughter. nervous laughter. the youth are too far away from me. someone pretends to snore loudly. at least seven minutes have passed. it must have. what is going on? did something go wrong? are we waiting for an actor to arrive? what kind of production is this? i wish i had read the synopsis better. but it’s a cultch production, a well-known theatre company here in vancouver. what are the youth thinking? my thoughts are frantic. at least 10 minutes have passed. the room is uncomfortably unstill. and pitch black. we are blind right now. blind and following the cultural norm of waiting. waiting for the production to begin. the blackout is only supposed to be a few seconds long. that’s the norm. the point was to show the youth a production. a controversial production. one that might reflect on a lot of
the emotions that our audience members might have at our production next month. That’s why I chose this performance. That’s how the cultch described it. Well, we sure are uncomfortable cultch. Bravo! But I want the youth to see theatre. Performance. Acting. They need to have a better idea of what is expected of them when they are on stage in front of an audience in a month. Not blackness. Audience members are shouting out all sorts of things now. “Turn the lights on!”. Our show opens in a month. The youth need this experience. But not this experience. I feel myself grinning. Grinning in utter anxiety and discomfort. What an interesting way to start a production! What are we supposed to do now? What are our options even in this darkness? We are completely under the control of the theatre space. The darkness. 15 minutes must have passed by now. And I hear a teenage male voice say loudly and sarcastically, “I’m scared.” It’s Cody’s voice from across the stage. Oh no. Laughter.

Lights up.

**Intentions of a Pedagogue**

This study is a critical ethnography in which I investigate the pedagogical spaces constituted within a youth-led, participatory theatre production with the eight street-involved youth who accompanied me to the above performance. Six months prior to this moment a research collaboration, between a grassroots coalition of street youth and university researchers, invited me to co-create, direct, and research their theatrical production *Surviving in the Cracks* (Wager, et al., 2009). As an educator, my pedagogical intention is to co-create individual and collective spaces with children, youth and community members, which foster engagement in social and political issues while also embracing differences in language use and cultural backgrounds. To further inquire into these ideas, within this study I analyze ethnographic data generated before, during, and after the theatrical production of *Surviving in*  

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1 “Street-involved youth” is a term used to refer young people, generally aged 16-24, who spend a significant amount of time on the streets, as squatters, at youth shelters and centers, or as couch-surfers.” (Rogers, Schroeter, Wager, & Hauge, 2014, p. 2)
the Cracks. My inquiry specifically examines how critical multimodal meaning-making is created and negotiated by youth, as well as the role of power, desire, and space within selected pedagogical moments of resistance within the theatre process.

Significance of Study: Drama as Pedagogy

This study sits at the intersection of critical feminist pedagogy, critical youth studies and theatre and literacy research. In terms of literacy, my work extends research on arts-based and critical, multimodal literacies in several ways. I look at the pedagogical spaces of a theatre project as collectively constructed, I approach the data with continually critical and reflexive lenses, and I focus on the importance of multimodal resources as critical tools of meaning-making. Ultimately I question, what do the youth and researchers “teach” to each other and the public using drama as a pedagogy?

In the following sections I contextualize the project by providing an overview of the field of drama and theatre practices, the background of the Surviving in the Cracks theatre project, a statement of positionality, the purpose of my study and my research questions.

Overview of the Field: Applied Drama and Theatre in Education Practices

Drama and theatre in education practices span a vast historical and geographical spectrum. Within western civilization, theatre can be traced back to the fifth century B.C. when Athens held theatrical performances at annual festivals in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility (Brockett, 1996). Traditionally the term drama, derived from the Greek word dran meaning ‘to do’, refers to the written text of the play, while theatre, derived from the Greek word theatron meaning ‘seeing place,’ defines the space where the performance
takes place (Nicholson, 2005, p. 4). Drama and theatre education sit within the larger category of applied theatre, which I describe further below.

**Applied theatre research in education.**

Applied theatre or drama, an umbrella term incorporating various types of theatre for social, pedagogical or political development, is often used in informal settings with marginalized communities to ignite social change. This general term is used to describe a wide range of drama and theatrical types, to name a few: drama/theatre in education, Theatre of the Oppressed, Mantle of the Expert, theatre for development, community-based theatre, popular theatre, theatre for health education, prison theatre, museum theatre, and reminiscence theatre (Nicholson, 2005; Pendergast & Saxton, 2009; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Due to its broad context and use in various disciplines (e.g., public health, education, social welfare, and criminal justice), the term has incorporated a multiplicity of theatre types. Because of this, Thompson (2008) reflects that “it is therefore practised, taught and researched without … commensurate attention being given to understanding its meaning” (p. 13). In response to Thompson, the following overview of the applied drama and education field attempts to understand the meaning of applied theatre through identifying key terms relevant to this study and by describing the work of historical and contemporary scholars and practitioners.

Combining the terms ‘applied’ and ‘drama’, brings to surface the current practice of applied drama and theatre that involves processes of action and reflection, which Helen Nicholson (2005) coins as “dramatic activity that primarily exists outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions, and which are specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities, and societies” (p. 2). In *Engaging Performance*, Cohen-Cruz (2012) chooses
the term ‘call-and-response’ while describing the engaged artist as “embracing rigorous connection and exchange, becoming involved in the issues and people at the source of their work, [while] not assuming the need to keep a critical distance” (p. 5). Drawing from Nicholson, Cohen-Cruz and other practicing scholars, I perceive applied theatre and drama as a hybrid of three important elements: theoretical foundations, community engagement, and practical applications. The theoretical foundations of applied drama and theatre examine those underpinnings created and contributed by contemporary and historical scholars and practitioners of the field, such as Augusto Boal, Dorothy Heathcote, James Thompson, and Petra Kuppers (to name but a few). In recognition of the breadth and depth of the applied drama and theatre field, Sharon Grady (2003) also suggests three common theoretical underpinnings that provide a rationale for applied theatre and drama work: “a belief in the efficacy of artistic engagement, faith in the productivity of participation, and a solemn regard for reflection [italics added]” (p. 68). These foundations reflect how applied drama and theatre contribute to and are deeply connected to language, culture, and social practices of everyday life.

Working with respect and humility within communities is essential to participatory theatre. Community engagement includes important principles of community collaboration and leadership, such as adapting to new situations, organization and leadership skills, funding challenges, and directing and engaging individuals with no prior theatrical experience. Since drama work can be unpredictable and beautiful, facilitators of applied drama and theatre aspire to create situations where participants organically follow and take charge. Facilitators use practical applications, such as acting, role-playing, improvisational skills, script-writing, *Theatre of the Oppressed* practices (Forum/Image Theatre), process drama, participatory
theatre, artistic design with few resources (costume/scenic/lighting), and research methods, such as interviewing and taking field notes.

In respect to the terms drama and theatre, applied drama has often been referred to as being process-based while applied theatre is performance-based (Taylor, 2003). Phillip Taylor (as cited in Grady, 2003) further articulates the distinctions between applied drama and theatre to be:

what one tends to find in [applied drama] is a dependency on conventional British drama in education strategies to teach about issues, events, relationships. Applied theatre [emphasis added] is powered by a strong sense of aesthetic education and is usually centred on structured scenarios presented in teams of teaching artist-facilitators. (p. 68)

Distinguishing the difference between these terms is a messy and contentious task (Grady, 2003; Schonmann, 2005) and not necessarily my intention within this investigation since, in my opinion, they overlap, intersect, and often coexist within my own and others’ pedagogical practices (e.g. Norris, 2009; O’Neill, 1995; Rohd, 1998; Saldaña, 2011). For the sake of clarity, I use the term drama for all those processes (e.g. rehearsals and script-writing) leading up to the final theatre performance of Surviving in the Cracks.

**Drama and learning.**

Drama as a strategy to enhance learning has been practiced, or at least written about, in the Western world for nearly a century. Educational drama can be traced to the work of Henry Caldwell Cook (1917) who developed the Play Way approach, a strategy that encourages primary and secondary students to practice both language and social skills. Since Cook’s early writings a number of researchers, practitioners, and educators have shared...

“Mantle of the Expert”.

Drama in education pioneers like Dorothy Heathcote (Mantle of the Expert) and Gavin Bolton pose questions and develop students’ self-awareness by drawing on the knowledge and experience of all people in the classroom, instead of relying on the authority of the teacher. Heathcote’s Mantle of the Expert (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) provides a space where students position themselves as experts in any field of study. Within these roles, students examine real-life problems and construct new knowledge together. Inside classrooms—often where participatory drama contexts are explored—students and teachers share the power, making learning relevant and more equitable. O’Neill (1995) describes Mantle of the Expert as “an approach that is purposeful, dialogic, emancipatory, and metaphoric” (p. vii). The goal of the Mantle is not to teach specific information or lead participants toward a predetermined goal. Rather, Mantles are respectful spaces where all participants have opportunities to construct and share perspectives. Heathcote adds that this kind of work “takes time and infinite gradations of perspective, each one chewed over … as a deliberately task-orientated action” (p. 22).

Drama, language, and literacy.

A group of researchers and educators also examined ways drama increases engagement in communicating across cultures, through language learning, facilitating comprehension skills, and exploring social contexts (Bournot-Trites et al, 2007; Catterall, 2002; Dodson, 2000; Heath, 1993; Ntelioglou, 2011; Wager, Belliveau, Lea, & Beck, 2011;
The work of these researchers, among others, suggests that drama-based activities improve literacy skills by reaching students with a range of cultural backgrounds and language abilities (Miccoli, 2003; Winston, 2013). More specifically, studies have documented how language learning through drama has positively influenced vocabulary development, as well as increased agility, fluency, and flexibility of language use (Dodson, 2000, p. 131). Gerd Bräuer (2002) notes how drama has the potential to emphasize language fluency through improvisation as well as to develop accuracy through script memorization or repeated reading practice. Developing both fluency and accuracy supports the notion of process-driven and product-driven drama activities being equally viable and mutually beneficial opportunities for language and literacy development. As well, exploring social contexts through drama engages learners in a dialogue that enables them to understand themselves and the world they live in (O’Neill, 1995) and “allows us . . . to passionately pursue and discover ways of living with ourselves and others” (Rohd, 1998, p. xix).

“Theatre of the Oppressed”.

Inspired by renowned educator Paulo Freire (1970), Augusto Boal (1979) developed the Theatre of the Oppressed approach in response to the need for political and economic change in rural Brazil to explore the experiences of marginalized peoples through examination of the existing historical, social, and political fabric that characterized the dominant society. Boal’s goal was to create a “forum” for the oppressed to consider various staged options, before confronting these issues in real life. To do this, Boal developed improvisational activities, workshops and plays that reach a moment of crisis without offering a solution. Within the Forum Theatre technique, the spect-actors (spectators + actors), or active audience members, are asked to intervene on stage to help the characters
solve the problem (Boal, 1995). They do this by replacing the actor, resuming the action and introducing an intervening viewpoint into the scene: “... far from being a witness, the spectator is, or must do his utmost to become, the protagonist of the dramatic action” (Boal, 2002, p. 255). Boal’s vision, as summarized by Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz (1994) is:

    embodied in dramatic techniques that activate passive spectators to become spectators — engaged participants rehearsing strategies for personal and social change. Although founded in theatrical exploration, the techniques, all based on transitive learning and collective empowerment, are not limited to the stage; educators, political activists, therapists and social workers devoted to critical thought and action have adapted the work to address issues ranging from racism and sexism to loneliness and political impotence. (p. 1)

A related technique of Theatre of the Oppressed is called Image Theatre. “Freeze life in any moment. That is an image” (Diamond, 2007, p. 92). Within Image Theatre, specific issues are addressed through frozen images created by participants, who then contribute their interpretations of the image’s meanings through various forms, such as stating thoughts, adding bodies in the image, and changing the positions of people in the image (Boal, 1995). Image Theatre as a research technique has been widely used by and with groups of people from various racial, economic, ethnic, and social backgrounds (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994; Rohd, 1998). Both Forum and Image Theatre are a means by which a community’s collective story and the power dynamics within that community can be created and explored in front of an audience or in a workshop, classroom, or theatrical setting.
**Current drama research.**

These pioneers, including Boal, Heathcote, and O’Neil, set the foundation for drama and theatre in education to be used in various applications with children, youth and adults as a strategy for learning across multiple disciplines and within various communities (see Gallagher & Booth, 2003). Educators gain understandings and teach multiple perspectives of the subject-matter through the use of drama in and outside of classrooms today. Current research studies and projects in the drama in education field (Belliveau, 2012, 2014; Gallagher, Wessels, & Ntelioglou, 2012; Perry, 2011; Rogers, Winters, La Monde, & Perry, 2010, 2014; Wager & Winters, 2012) suggest that dramatic inquiry has the potential to be a safe space where critical exploration can take place, and where students can work together to better understand cultural divisions.

Acknowledging the profound contributions of these drama pioneers, contemporary researchers such as Gallagher, Rogers, and Conrad, extend the critical potentials of drama. These arts researchers argue that participatory dramatic practices are viable frameworks through which education can be designed in and outside of formal schooling, where youth can be motivated to think critically about equity. Specifically, they explore the participatory and critical ways marginalized populations construct their identities, make themselves visible, and refute stereotypes. In this way, many contemporary critical drama research studies (Medina, 2005; Winters & Rogers, 2006) use drama to question power and socio-cultural values in consciousness and society. Researchers argue that the innate nature of drama allows populations to see themselves within their situational contexts, while at the same time, to develop critical thought and cooperative action (Shor, 1992).
**Popular theatre.**

Popular theatre, another applied theatre practice, best describes the type of drama method that the youth employed for the production of *Surviving in the Cracks.* Popular theatre is commonly understood to be a politically motivated, community participatory theatre that involves specific communities in identifying, examining and taking action on matters that it believes need change (Conrad, 2004; Little, 2006; Prentki & Selman, 2000; Salverson, 2010, 2011). The foundation of popular theatre is based on Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2007) and Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974/2008), pivotal works written about popular education and the representation of the oppressed. As noted above, Freire (conceptualizing literacy pedagogies), and Boal (conceptualizing public drama and theatre initiatives) created and wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Theatre of the Oppressed* respectively in the seventies as a response to political and economic circumstances developing in rural communities of Brazil. Prentki and Selman (2000) describe popular theatre as existing within community-based theatre, while further specifying that the term implies “community involvement and ownership of the process and content of the theatre” (p. 13). Both popular and community theatre are used in informal or alternative theatrical spaces to explore social and political issues within a specific community of people. However, within popular theatre, it is specifically the people within the community that define the content, message, or goals of the practice as opposed to being suggested by institutions such as a university or social agency.

An example of a documented community theatre project that became a popular theatre project can be found in the community of Ratones—a small Southern Brazilian village in the interior of Santa Catarina Island—where researcher Noguiera (2006) worked with youth theatre practitioners since 1991. The community theatre developed after a group
of young Ratones came to the university to present a performance that was based on
imitations of television comedy shows. Noguiera and other colleagues assisted these youth
in learning a “cultural renewal” theatre practice that was “based on stories closer to their own
culture and reality” (p. 221). The university collaborators facilitated three performances
based on content originating from the children and their connection to their community
through collective creative processes (see Ilo Krugli, Catherine Dasté, & Viola Spolin’s
acting methods). Expanding from Dasté’s methods, children invented stories while the
facilitator(s) asked thought-provoking questions, led improvisation activities and drawings,
and devised staged performances adapted from the children’s stories. The university
facilitators also introduced aesthetic devices such as puppets and shadow theatre. All
performances were based on improvisations, allowing for continual spontaneous effect on
stage and a growing trust between the young actors.

Due to the influence that the university collaborators had on the creation and content
of the productions, I define this example as community theatre. A few years later Noguiera
(2002) discovered dialogical and participatory Theatre for Development methods (such as
Forum and Image Theatre), and realized that the university collaborators were prescribing
solutions instead of involving the community throughout the process in “identifying the
problems, selecting those that were most significant, creating the drama and presenting it to
the community” (Noguiera, 2006, p. 224). It became a popular theatre project in 2002 when
two project coordinators were appointed from within the community, passing the ownership
of future theatre performances to the community members.

Prior to the popular theatre experiences, Ratones was known to be a conservative
community with little group participation. However, once the two community members took
on facilitating positions, there was a growing community participation in the theatre group. The theatre directors and teachers became widely recognized by the community and were invited to take part in community association meetings. Within these meetings, other leaders in the village told stories, explained issues to the theatre facilitators, and requested that the theatre group create advocacy performances surrounding the issues. The popular theatre work was politically motivated and identified, facilitated and performed to the public by members of the Ratones community.

*Surviving in the Cracks* (Wager et al., 2009), the theatre project described in this dissertation, originated from a youth-led project by Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition (VYVC) and the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) Partnerships in Community Health Research (PCHR) regarding the closures of the only three Vancouver underage safe houses, where three of the cast members had once lived. The play was a collective creation between the youth and university researchers, and advocated for the reopening of these safe houses. Throughout the six months of rehearsal, we used an abundance of drama methods described above combined with multimodal literacies (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear and Leu, 2008; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; New London Group, 1996, 2000; O’Halloran & Smith, 2011; Street, Pahl and Rowsell, 2009) to represent the youth movement, which included improvisations and playbuilding, scripting narratives from youth journals, collaborative oral storytelling, and integrating raw footage of past protests and participant interviews into the performance. The next section presents historical information that led to the collaboration and creation of *Surviving in the Cracks*. 
Background Information: A Contextual History of Surviving in the Cracks

“The freest I have ever felt in my life was when I lived on the streets.” (D. Boone, personal communication, March 1, 2009)

In January 2009, a research collaboration between a grassroots coalition of street youth and university researchers invited me to become the volunteer artistic director and one of the graduate research assistants for the research project Street Youth Revelations through Ethnodrama (Granger et al., 2009). This project theatrically documented the lived experiences of a specific group of youth, including their struggles to survive in the face of cuts to public health resources.

In 1994, the BC Provincial Government created the underage safe house program as part of a community action plan to help sexually-exploited street youth aged 13 to 15, and as “a voluntary youth-centered service intended to provide short-term protective accommodation on an emergency crisis-intervention basis to primarily high risk youth” (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2002; Ministry of Social Services, 1996). The underage safe houses operated from 1995 to 2004 at a cost of $800,000 per year, or $20 per day, per youth. In 2004, with only two weeks notice, the Provincial Government, citing fiscal re-organization, shut down the only three Vancouver underage safe houses and many youth lost access to safe, stable housing. In response, the youth created a street-involved youth-run NGO called Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition (VYVC), and marched to Vancouver City Hall on March 31, 2004 in protest of the closings. As a result, the City of
Vancouver asked the BC Provincial Government to reinstate funding, but the province did not respond and the safe houses remained closed.

The Homeless Count (Social Planning and Research Council of BC [SPARC], 2005) and Vancouver’s McCreary Society (2001, 2007) reveal that approximately half of homeless youth:

- have addictions
- have thoughts of suicide
- have been in BC’s child welfare system
- are girls led into the sex trade at the average age of 13
- are of Aboriginal descent

Common factors causing youth to turn to the streets are family violence and emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse. Without emergency shelters youth on the street experience difficulty locating services that can help pave the way to recovery and find permanent housing options and health services necessary for their transitioning off the streets. In Canada, approximately 150,000 homeless youth live on the streets on any given day (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Vancouver has a homeless population of approximately 2,800 people, and it has been estimated that up to 700 youth are homeless or at risk of being homeless on Vancouver streets with approximately 150 new youth adding to that number each year (Jackson, 2014; Kraus & Woodward, 2007; Sinoski, 2014; SPARC, 2008).

With a driving passion, VYVC partnered with PCHR to write a literature review on the underage safe house closures and the resulting impacts on youth (Elliot, 2008). As a result of collectively writing this review, VYVC youth leaders generated the idea to create a collaborative, participatory research and dissemination project, Street Youth Revelations.
through Ethnodrama (Granger et al., 2009), in the form of a theatrical production. The research collaboration named the production Surviving in the Cracks and held two public performances, one at a community centre in downtown Vancouver on June 18, 2009 and another the following evening at Ironworks Studio (www.theironworks.ca/events09_June.htm).

My study draws on this team run project, which was headed by faculty members Dr. Peter Granger (Principal Investigator) and Dr. James Frankish (Project Supervisor) from UBC’s School of Population and Public Health. The research team of five UBC graduate students (myself included) and three VYVC youth leaders conducted the youth-led study, disseminating the youth-analysis of living on the streets to the public in a theatrical form. Other than the public play, the data were not used for any further research or writing by the PCHR research team.

Research funding also provided three of the university researchers with pay, the VYVC youth leaders with a part-time income, and the other youth actors with an income of $20 per hour of rehearsal (approximately four to six hours of rehearsal per week). The three VYVC youth leaders initially recruited approximately 15 street youth, but only five committed to attending rehearsals on a weekly basis to participate in the final production. Of these eight youth (three VYVC youth leaders and five youth participants), there were two female and two male First Nations youth, as well as one female and two male White youth, and one female that was half South Asian, a quarter First Nations, and a quarter White. My dissertation is an independent ethnographic analysis of data (videos, a focus group, interviews, the script, observational field notes, youth and director journals) from the year-long project (January to December 2009), as well as seven more participant follow-up
interviews throughout 2011 and 2012. My study complements and expands on the public health participatory study *Street Youth Revelations through Ethnodrama* (Granger et al., 2009) through further exploring this project from an educational perspective by examining how pedagogical spaces were collectively created with youth who chose the public forum of theatre to engage in social and political issues.

In the next sections, I articulate my purposes for doing this study, my research questions, and provide an outline of the dissertation. First, I begin to unpack my positionality in regards to the production, participants, and my personal history, in order to create a deeper understanding of who I am in relation to this project.

**Positionality: A Deep Respect**

One answer, then, to the question of whether the story of *Hong Kong, Canada* is a story a White, Canadian-born ethnographer should be telling is this: Uncovering, revealing, and challenging the racist discourse of invasion that limits academic, social, and work related possibilities for immigrant students is every educator’s responsibility. (Goldstein, 2001, p. 300)

Guided by the values of respect and humility, my intentions as an educator—echoing Goldstein’s words above—have always been to co-create safe pedagogical spaces with my students and other community members while engaging in social and political issues to further social equity. I perceive social and political issues as being interwoven into our lives in multimodal ways, and carry a strong belief that multimodal literacies—in multiple forms—are deeply connected to the languages, cultures, and social practices of our everyday lives.
My initial invitation to join this research project came in January 2009 when I received a forwarded email from the first director of the play:

Hello dear ones,

I need your help. I recently started a project with some street youth I've been working with the past couple years. They want to build a play on some of their experiences on the street in order to bring some light to some of the challenges they face in the hopes that there may be some political action. Essentially, the group, Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition was borne because they were upset that safe houses for young people under 16 were closed a few years back. They still haven't been opened and youth have no place to go. I've worked with some members over the last couple of years on a project or two (health promotion workshops). This theatre one is the latest one.

We had auditions last week - and have some interested youth - most who have been street involved at some time, or been through the foster care system, or have been homeless at some time. There are 8-9 youth, with little acting experience or knowledge. They range in age from 14 to 24. Very keen.

I agreed to playbuild with them and create something wonderful. We planned to start this process last year. Unfortunately, we started late because funding from Vancouver Foundation was only recently awarded (I volunteer my time, but we pay the youth for their rehearsal time, and provide a meal as well). Thus, the timeline, we are guessing at, is to work once a week for a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon to build and write the play, with the understanding that we would increase the time and number of rehearsals in April and May so that we can put something on for June. Rehearsal space has been organized at the Gathering Place and it is possible that we may get the Roundhouse as a performance venue.

So timeline - originally it was going to be September - Feb or March. Now it is Jan through June. I'm not available anymore so the youth are needing a volunteer director, playbuilder, visionary, acting coach, mentor, control freak - preferably all in one person - able to work with youth. Do you know anyone that can do this? Who would like to take something like this on? Who can commit to a project, at least until the first show? Any of you? Or a pair of you? Or anyone you know who you think can do this kind of work you could lead me to?

There may be some funds available (if we can get more grants) for this person, but it wouldn't be much. It's more about giving back and building community, process.

We have some university researchers involved, as well as other youth willing to be production assistants, etc.
After reading this email, I jumped at the opportunity to be the artistic director of this production and to conduct research with the involved youth. My experiences of directing drama productions with children, youth, and adults, combined with my time working with youth from various backgrounds in rural Peru and on the south side of Chicago, made me feel confident in my ability to respect and connect with the youth connected to this project.

I came to the production primarily as an elementary school teacher who employed drama within her classrooms and directed plays within her schools concerning issues of social justice, which is how I introduced myself to the youth the first day that I met them. After introducing myself as an elementary school teacher, I was faced with strong initial resistance from the cast. Davina—the head VYVC youth leader—immediately responded with, “well, we are not children – so what experience do you really have that can even help us?”. This initial resistance to my presence as the artistic director of Surviving in the Cracks is something in which we later found humor and irony, considering the dependence we had on each other throughout the rest of the production, and how close Davina and I became.

After a month of Sunday rehearsals with the core youth who participated in the full project (we originally started with 15 youth), we formed a comfortable, although at many times resistant, working relationship together.

In terms of positioning myself more traditionally, I am a White, (Dutch) American woman. My biological parents are from the United States, but my Dutch stepfather (who I

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2 This is a pseudonym.
consider my father) raised me the majority of my life. My biological father—whom I had a relationship—died when I was 18, due to many drug addictions, and my mother and I have had a combative relationship since the age of 12. Complicated, to say the least.

By descent, I am Jewish and grew up in Hebrew school until I had my Bat Mitzvah, a Jewish coming of age ritual. After a girl performs her Bat Mitzvah at 12 years old, Judaism considers her to be responsible for her actions. Given this opportunity—to be responsible for my own actions—I choose not to continue studying Judaism, as I believed from an early age that religion is reciprocal with war. This could be due to my family’s history. In the beginning of the 20th Century my great-grandparents came to the United States from Poland/Russia (the borders were constantly shifting) to find a safer place, fleeing the Jewish genocide of the Russian Red Army that massacred the rest of our family after my great-grandparents left. While Jews are historically marginalized, I have never experienced this kind of oppression; in fact, I have lived quite a privileged and fortunate life. Although my home was very unstable due to many family members addictions and an overwhelming number of marriages and divorces by all three parents, I always had a safe place to run away to and never had to sleep on the streets nor panhandle for money. My parents were quite good at making and spending money, so we lived in beautiful houses and then ended up living with grandparents a few months later.

I was born in Los Angeles and attended a Jewish preschool. When I was five years old my family moved to London for a year, then returned to Los Angeles where I entered a public school with a mean clique of girls who bullied random girls at their leisure. At the age of 12, I was fortunate enough to move to my father’s home of the Netherlands, where I found a safe space to grow-up. Many of my values stem from these formative years growing up in
Amsterdam, where I attended an intimate and diverse international school. It is there where I gained the values of tolerance, humility and a deep respect for humanity, nature, and myself, which have now guided me through my life as an educator, a student, a researcher, a director, a friend, a sister, a partner, and now a mother.

In high school, I began to tutor younger bilingual children in English and worked as the high school theatre stage manager. This led to my decision to study drama in education at university, a place where teaching became a driving force in my life. Practicing respect and humility, for and with students and colleagues, has always been key to my teaching and learning environment. Prior to my four years of teaching elementary students in Chicago Public Schools, I was an ESL teacher for three years in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Peru. By invitation of the Peruvian owner, I contributed to the establishment of the first certified English school in the small community of Chachapoyas, located in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Using critical pedagogies, including the use of drama in the classroom partnered with discussions regarding local political and school issues, I designed the curricula and taught five elementary and three adult level ESL classes per day. After experiencing firsthand how critical multimodal literacies impacted and progressed literacy and language education in Peru, I returned to North America to become a public school teacher. My first position was in a bilingual Spanish/English school on the southside of Chicago in a marginalized community with predominantly Mexican-American students.

Within the last 15 years, I have strived to work with, and for, marginalized communities towards a notion of social justice. I believe in putting my theories into practice. Drawing on critical and feminist pedagogues, I seek a balance between individual agency and collectivity and believe that learning is social and contextual. Through my doctoral studies, I
have come to realize that this notion in itself is inherently ridden with imperialist ideologies in that as a White woman I practice and project my own cultural and historical ideologies onto those marginalized, many of who are from different cultures. However, I approach life experiences with a strong belief in collectivity, reciprocity, and reflexivity - that I may learn as much from others as they may learn from me by revealing who we are in relation to our histories and contexts within which we work.

I carry a strong belief in living life with a questioning approach to determine why and how we learn and teach, both inside and outside the classroom. I am still, and will continuously be, working to unpack my prejudices, to discover who I am in relation to those that I work with and explore how this impacts the research and teaching that I do. My strong belief in a shared mutual respect for and with others is the foundation of my position as a researcher within this project and beyond.

The reflexive researcher must find a way to write that makes visible the technologies of self and of researcher-selves that are engaged in analysis and writing; reveals the limits of our knowledge, particularly in the research act; makes clear the political orientation driving our work; reveals what discursive and textual framing shapes our work both in practice and in writing; opens up the possibilities of thinking otherwise once old interpretive certainties are made visible; and finally, acknowledges that at some points it is necessary to get on with the story, in which the effects of discourse are made visible, because otherwise there would be nothing on which to cast our reflexive gaze. (Davies et al., 2004, p. 385)

And now on with the story …

**Purpose of Study: Unpacking Dramatic Pedagogical Spaces**
But to look back upon a three-year study and ask questions of the work that were not or could not be asked of it at the time is a rare opportunity. I want to ask why it seemed, at times, so messy and exciting, why it held the promise of real discovery, why it felt risky, and how it allowed us to tease out the complexities of collaborative research work: that is, collaborative among researcher and graduate research assistants and collaborative also among research team and youth research participants. It was an experiment in what I would now call a collaborative science. (Gallagher, 2008, p. 68)

Similar to what Gallagher frames above as a collaborative science, this inquiry involved work and intense collaboration between five youth, three youth leaders, one director, and five researchers. We formed a messy and exciting collective that always held the feelings of risk, potential, and to expect the unexpected. Within this pedagogical inquiry I analysed how drama and theatre spaces provide “anomalous” (Ellsworth, 2005) learning places, or out-of-the-ordinary learning spaces, that youth and researchers collectively created while embodying forms of pedagogy. Through examination of the script with Davina, one of the youth leaders, I examined how meaning can be collectively constructed and how multimodal literacy practices are used in critical ways. By focusing on particular moments of resistance in these pedagogical spaces, I exposed how power is negotiated, how desire is manifested through imaginaries, and how safe spaces are generated by the community of youth. Rather than focusing on specific drama and theatre practices, I concentrated on unearthing the pedagogical moments of resistance that occurred during the creation and performance of Surviving in the Cracks through the multitude of drama and theatrical practices employed.
Borrowing from Ellsworth (1997), I considered these pedagogical moments as *modes of address* between the individuals and collectives formed within the project, which Ellsworth explains as a concept that filmmakers think about prior to and during the creation of the film while anticipating their audience response:

…there is a ‘position’ within the power relations and interests within gender and racial constructions, within knowledge, to which the film’s story and visual pleasure is addressed. It’s from that ‘subject position’ that the film’s assumptions—about who the audience is—works with the least effort, contradiction, or slippage. (p. 24).

In regards to pedagogy, she then uses the term mode of address to question:

Can social change or individual changes in the ways someone understands the world start from and be fueled by the ways students are addressed by curriculum and pedagogy? Can—do—teachers make a difference in power, knowledge, and desire, not only by *what* they teach, but by *how* they *address* students? (p. 36).

Influenced by these questions, my focus is on how drama and literacy practices worked together to construct a *mode of address* with the youth collective and among the apparent and hidden differences of the youth, director (myself), and researchers, in the process of building the script and the performance. Further to this, my curiosity leads me to question how embodied forms of pedagogy (Davies, 2000a, 2000b; Ellsworth, 1997, 2005; Grosz, 1994) are embedded within these public pedagogical spaces and places (Cresswell, 2004; Giroux, 2004; Soja, 1996) that pre-existed and were formed by our diverse research group.

Embodied pedagogy, which I explain in detail in Chapter Two, explains how meaning-making encompasses corporeal/mind/brain and spatial movements, sensations, and affects
that exist in our everyday experiences of learning, which may or may not include formal language (Ellsworth, 2005).

My intentions in pursuing this study are largely influenced by my belief that drama affords possibilities for working across differences—through acts of mimesis, resistance, and critical questioning—leading to deeper understandings of self and other and the liminal spaces between self and other. This conviction is derived from my own experiences as a learner, where informal pedagogical experiences were driving factors within my educational history. I was fortunate and privileged to be guided and supported by family, teachers and mentors who pushed me to learn through doing – I learned sign-language from my aunt for a book presentation on Helen Keller when I was in Grade 2, repaired an ecosystem during a week in the woods for a geography project in Grade 7, participated in local museum theatre about the Industrial Revolution in Grade 9, lived in Spain with a family to learn Spanish in Grade 11, and traveled and taught English in Peru as an adult educator. These privileged pedagogical moments are driving forces in my practice as a teacher and now as a researcher. In the many classrooms and communities that I teach in, where youth often are not entitled to field trips or travels to distant places, I have used drama as experience, as an act of doing. Contemplating drama as an interpretive pedagogical mode of address that is embedded historically, culturally, and spatially, that acknowledges teaching as a performative act, I wish to explore where and how the meaning-making occurs within these drama experiences (Ellsworth, 2005; hooks, 1994).

With no previous script-building or acting experiences, the youth in this project took substantial risks in the exploration of themselves and their collective—historically, culturally, socially, spatially, pedagogically and collaboratively—and in creating and performing their
stories in front of public audiences. I continually ask within and beyond this study: What did these experiences, or pedagogical moments, look like in public spaces? And how did the power relations between the youth participants, youth leaders, and university researchers affect the pedagogical process? On a larger scale, how do marginalized youth use drama as a political and educational incentive to teach each other and others? And as a researcher, how do I interpret and represent these moments? Such questions mirror queries that I posed as an elementary school teacher, and are what motivate me to dig deeper within theory and practice as a researcher.

Finally, my approach throughout this dissertation is to explore this research project through a critical youth studies methodological lens of *desire-based* research (Tuck, 2009a, 2009b, 2010), which draws on the complexities and power dynamics of the youth and researchers’ everyday lives emulated through self-determination and contradictions. This approach focuses on the youth creations and possibilities rather than on the damage that occurred in their past, which can further promote marginalization of these youth. Historically, the damage needs to be recognized and honoured. In shifting the focus away from youth leaders’ and participants’ trauma narratives and particular types of raced, classed, and gendered histories and struggles, I have chosen to address possibilities seen through the youth desires and resistances in creating and performing a theatrical production in front of public audiences. I believe that youth desires and resistances can redefine marginality as a source of strength (Collins, 2000).

**Research Question and Sub-Questions**

The following are my research questions:

- How does drama and theatre with street youth open up embodied pedagogical spaces?
What are the critical multimodal meaning-making processes that populate these spaces?

How do moments of resistance explore the negotiations of power, desire and space within these spaces?

Sub-questions:

- How are these embodied pedagogical spaces collectively created?
- How are critical multimodal literacies used to represent the youth lived and imagined experiences within these spaces?
- What forms of resistance were represented and how did they affect the process?
- How is power negotiated?
- How does the imaginary of the theatre represent both the youth desires/constraints of living on the streets as well as their imagined and physical places of security/anxiety?

Outline of Dissertation

This first chapter has introduced the purpose and rationale for this study, providing a brief overview of the field of drama and theatre in education, and describing terminology (e.g. applied and popular theatre) that guides this study. I have situated the study contextually, explaining the background history of the underage safe houses and the events leading up to the production of *Surviving in the Cracks*. I also positioned myself by drawing on my life experiences and work as an educator and researcher in regards to the subjects and locations that I am studying.

Chapter Two introduces the theoretical and methodological frameworks that anchor my study within contemporary critical feminist pedagogy and critical youth studies, touching
upon cultural geography to inform my analyses of embodied and collectively constructed spaces of resistance. Within this chapter, I further explore the surrounding literature in the fields of drama and literacy research that most influenced my work.

Chapter Three defines the visual methodological design of the study, with the sites, participants, and data sources explained in detail. The chapter goes on to introduce and explain the two phases of my process of analysis.

Chapter Four is a contextual framing analysis that includes the collaborative ethnographic script, *Surviving in the Cracks*, which I frame as a collaborative analysis. Along with the script I share a spatial context of the many places that were part of the production, as well as historical images and details, narrated by a youth leader and myself, which further reveal how the scripted story is an example of critical multimodal meaning-making.

Chapter Five explores embodied pedagogical moments of resistance during the play process within filmed moments of a VYVC/PCHR meeting and during six rehearsals. I examine the role of power, desire, and space within these selected pedagogical moments of resistance during the theatre process. My analyses of these moments begin with the video data as an entry point and are supported by other forms of data, such as interviews and the VYVC/PCHR shared observational field notes blog.

Finally, Chapter Six explains the implications of my findings in the fields of critical feminist pedagogy, language and literacy education, drama in education, critical youth studies, and methodological studies in qualitative research. It concludes with proposals for further research when thinking about theatre and learning in both academic and non-academic settings.
Chapter Two: Theory and Research

Email Written to Cast.

hello everyone,

my mind is in a whirlpool of thoughts about the events of last night. i am still rather in shock about all that happened during and after the performance of the cultch’s true story. . . i have been trying to give myself time to digest before writing . . . but i think writing to all of you may help the digestion process.

to begin with i feel very angry about the way that we were treated at the end of the show. it was completely unjust. in some sense i wish i would have voiced my feelings more, but honestly i was taken by surprise and found myself trying to calm various parties down. i am not the sort who freaks out or yells in such situations, i need to figure out what is going on, and act from there – that is what i spent most of the time doing.

on the other hand, the publics voice (audience members) and support (when we were finally invited back into post-show artist talkback) was what i find is most important to take away from the situation. supposedly even while we were not allowed in the theatre, the audience was advocating for us, explaining how ridiculous it was that we were not in the room. so in the end, do not forget the power and impact that people can have – remember this for our own production. that show last night has never created such intensity and conflict = that is when things can happen and affect change.

and here is another perspective – as a director, my cast comes first – you all are in the forefront of my mind, especially when we are in the theatrical space. the director of the show last night explained that he arrived at the end of the production (when a show is running for a while, the director sometimes does not go to every performance) – the actors walked up to him in a rage – they worked very hard on this

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3 Written May 15, 2009, the day after attending The Cultch’s play, True Story, which I journal about at the beginning of Chapter One. This experience occurred one month prior to our performances of Surviving in the Cracks.
production — for months and months — it is their passion, their life most probably — and at times I cannot say that individuals in our group were always respectful of their performance (can you really disagree with this? please imagine if audience members make comments often during our production — disrupting it — how will that make you feel?). anyways, I do not support the reactions that the actors had — becoming angry and aggressive gets you nowhere — but back to the perspective of the director — his actors came to him angry and upset at the end of the show — and in the heat of the moment he made the executive decision to ask us as a group (he did not know who was being disruptive exactly) to not return for the talk. he didn’t know what happened — but his primary concern was his actors. just like my primary concern is all of you. if it were me, and you came to me angry and upset after the performance, there is a large possibility I might do the same thing — I would want to protect and comfort you, and those who were making you angry and upset would need to leave in order to do that. so although I disagree with the events, I can understand why those spontaneous decisions were made. and I am calmer now, because we were let back in — although unfairly at the end — but our perspective was seen by the public and eventually by the director/writer/actors. in some sense, peoples perspectives were changed because of the events of last night. you made the actors/director/writers think about their actions way more than they thought about ours — you moved them — made them realize how absurd it is that they are directing their play towards a specific audience — and how they are not prepared for difference — believe me, they are still talking about it right now and will remember this production forever.

now, I need you to go back to why we went to this performance to begin with. the main purpose that we decided to go to such a controversial show was because it reflected a lot of emotions that our audience members might have. and the primary purpose that i brought you there was for you to see theatre — so that you may more understand what is to be expected of you on the stage — if we had gone to a musical or a cheery production, you would still be in the dark about the intensity of the acting that is possible and that we need to reach. and i must say that despite everything, there was some excellent acting during last nights performance.

i hope that you are able to now contemplate some of these questions:
how do you think our audience members will feel watching our production (considering we have scenes about prostitution, suicide, and rape)?

what will you do if there are members of the audience who are disruptive? how will you feel? how will you react? how will it feel for you if people walk out and leave during the performance?

what if people challenge our ideas (and they will) during our discussion session afterwards?

can you push yourself to embody your character so much so that you affect people? that you create discomfort to provoke thought? are you willing to go that far?

the greatest observation that I saw in the show last night was this: they (the actors) invaded our (the audience) space, they expected a reaction, and then they were not prepared to deal with the reaction they were given. we need to be prepared to deal with the reaction from our audience. but we also need to provoke a reaction — which will take lots of time and energy as actors in the rehearsal process. you are completely capable of this. i know you are. but it takes dedication. i am sincerely asking you all to take your roles seriously, think about what you are doing, listen to the thoughts and reflections of the facilitator of each rehearsal — hear what they have to say and truly listen to yourself, your intuition, your emotions.

all right — enough said now — thank you for reading all of this — more than anything i must end this long letter letting you all know how much i respect each and every one of you. you have all taught me so much already and can do so much with what you hold. i truly enjoy our time together. it has been a pleasure getting to know you all and i only hope for more time in the future.

amanda

Theoretical Framework: Digging Deeper

The above email to my cast was written the day after we saw the The Cultch’s production of True Story, a production I feel was described falsely in the program and began with a 15-minute blackout where actors were unknowingly in character as audience
members. The intention, or expected mode of address, was for the audience members to react in a specific way during the blackout and then during the performance, but the actors were not prepared for the reactions from the *Surviving in the Cracks* youth in the audience. After the initial blackout, where the actors in-role as audience members were yelling things out, the youth, who had never been to a performance, then laughed and talked throughout the entire performance. Because of the group’s lack of experience as “typical” audience members, we were thrown out of the venue prior to the post-talk show with the actors. However, several other audience members demanded that we be let back in and the youth were then allowed to join the post-talk show. This illuminates some of the intersecting theoretical, pedagogical, and political dimensions of a theatre performance, and raises questions about who learns from whom in regards to the teacher and the students (e.g. the actors and the audience), and how we learn depending on our cultural and historical backgrounds and the spaces where we are situated, whether they be formal or informal learning environments.

My inquiry into *Surviving in the Cracks* explores how these aforementioned dimensions intersect and inform each other (hooks, 1994, 2010) within and between the conceptual and methodological frameworks of critical and feminist pedagogy, cultural geography and critical youth studies. I draw from contemporary feminist theories and pedagogy that explore embodiment, performativity, and resistance in pedagogical moments (Davies, 2000a, 2000b; Ellsworth, 1997, 2005; Gallagher, 2008; Grady, 2000; Grosz, 1994; hooks, 1994, 2000; Nicholson, 2005; Perry & Medina, 2011; Soep, 2012; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). As well, engaging in Edward Soja’s (1996) theory of human geography to inform my analyses of embodied and collectively constructed pedagogical spaces, I examine how these
pedagogical moments reside in physical and imagined spaces during rehearsals, script-writing, performances, focus groups and interviews. Within these moments, my inquiry is theoretically and methodologically informed by a critical youth studies framework, critiquing and challenging the production and maintenance of social inequity—by, for and with youth—and across disciplines (Best, 2007; Bourgois, 1995; Fine & Weis, 1998; Giroux, 1983; Lesko, 2012; Lesko & Talburt, 2012; Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006; Rasmussen, Rofes, & Talburt, 2004; Willis, 1977).

**Pedagogy: Learning through experience.**

Pedagogy as a social relationship is very close in. It gets right in there—in your brain, your body, your heart, in your sense of self, of the world, of others, and of possibilities and impossibilities in all those realms. A pedagogical mode of address is where the social construction of knowledge and learning gets deeply personal. It’s a relationship whose subtleties can shape and misshape lives, passions for learning, and broader social dynamics. (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 6)

**Feminist pedagogy: Rethinking educational practice.**

Feminist pedagogy is based on the idea that dimensions of power are always at play within the classroom and there is a need to address and challenge forms of patriarchy. Similar to many feminist scholars (Davies, 2000a; Ellsworth, 1997, 2005; Gallagher, 2008; Grady, 2000; Grosz, 1994; hooks, 1994, 2010; Lather, 2007; Pierre & Pillow, 2000) my initial study of pedagogy began with critical pedagogy, a social educational theory rooted in the experiences of marginalized people. This discipline examines learning and schools in a historical context and as a part of the existing social and political fabric that characterizes dominant society. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2007), drawing from
the philosophies of Hegel and Marx, Freire articulates the origin and meaning of critical pedagogy. Addressing the state of the oppressed/oppressor within a political context, Freire suggests a libertarian problem-posing education to develop students’ critical consciousness and creative power. Critical pedagogy emphasizes that all people should be regarded as conscious beings and that learning consists of cognitive acts instead of transferrals of information (Freire, 1970, p. 79). A key element in creating change, as outlined by Freire, requires a focus on the subjective, or one’s own perception and experience of the world.

Although critical pedagogy has been an implemental foundation in the field of education, it carries with it a number of limitations, such as the absence of an examination of patriarchal white privilege and a troubling meta-narrative of a binary liberation (oppressed vs. oppressor) (Ellsworth, 1989; Gore, 1992; Grady, 2003; Lather, 2001; Weiler, 2001). Many (post)feminist scholars critique critical pedagogy’s theoretical assumption that students are “empowered” by their teachers. Ellsworth (1989) notes that “critical pedagogies have failed to probe the degree to which ‘empowerment’ becomes something done ‘by’ liberated pedagogies ‘to’ or ‘for’ the as-yet-unliberated, the ‘Other’” and poses the question: "How do our efforts to liberate perpetuate the relations of dominance?” (p. 122). She furthers this notion in Teaching Positions (1997) by troubling the idea of dialogue—a primary critical learning tool and what she terms as a *mode of address*—as being a historically and culturally embedded practice. Borrowing the analytical concept of mode of address from film and media studies, Ellsworth defines it within pedagogical terms as “one of those intimate relations of social and cultural power that shapes and misshapes who teachers think students are, and who students come to think themselves to be” (p. 6). This idea of dialogue being culturally and historically situated, leads Ellsworth to ask the following questions:
What happens when the supposed two-way bridge of dialogue between student and text, student and teacher, student and student, is an unsteady one that oscillates, slips, and shifts unpredictably? What happens when that two-way bridge is populated by fears, human horrors, history, and difference? (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 49)

As a feminist drama pedagogue, these questions are indeed critical for me to ask both during and after the process for *Surviving in the Cracks*. They reflect that feminist pedagogues understand that when engaging in dialogue, in any role (teacher, student, partner, friend) that our histories, interests, ideologies, and ignorances have an unavoidable influence within the communication.

bell hooks (1994), a renowned feminist scholar and practitioner, recognizes the gaps within critical pedagogy while also acknowledging and respecting the contribution that Freire’s writings attributed to the foundation to her own *engaged pedagogy*, which is relevant to students’ lives, reflective of their individual realities, and responsive to their particular personal and social circumstances. hooks, like Freire, believes that learning should be liberatory; that education should be the practice of freedom and not used to reinforce dominant societal structures. Engaged pedagogy, as with engaging performance (Cohen-Cruz, 2012) described in Chapter One, views the classroom or theatrical space as a communal space that enhances “the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community” (bell hooks, 1994, p. 8). This collective effort is a means for generating trust, motivation, and excitement. Articulating that the classroom dynamic is influenced by and should value everyone’s presence, hooks explains that each student contributes tools used in the creation of this open learning community. However, she also suggests that a good teacher does not ensure a collective effort, that this is up to the
community being formed. Engaged pedagogy recognizes each classroom as different and views teaching as a performative act. hooks (1994) suggests, “strategies must constantly be changed, invented, and reconceptualised to address each new teaching experience” (p. 11).

Drawing on hooks’ theory of engaged pedagogy and Cohen-Cruz’s engaging performance (2012), in relation to Surviving in the Cracks, I conceptualize that a learning space was created where the youth generated trust, motivation, humor, and the comfort to accept and resist each other’s ideas. The context of what they were teaching to and learning from each other was relevant and reflective of the realities they had lived or were living and was “spiritual because a purpose [was] imbeded in the process” (Cohen-Cruz, 2012, p. 2). Individual circumstances changed on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis and attitudes toward the play, each other, to other researchers, facilitators, youth leaders and to me, went from engaged to extremely resistant. Further illustrating my understanding of engaged pedagogy and performance, I articulate in Chapters Four and Five how the ‘youth histories and discourses became a part of the process, synthesizing new ideas and emotions into the play creation.

Feminist theories and activism have prompted a rethinking of educational practice and research, identifying ways in which pedagogical practices can work with, engage and/or incorporate ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, gender, age, and disability differences. As a feminist scholar, I accept that the standpoints or perspectives I favour shape my understanding of the social worlds I study (Collins, 1990; Gallagher, 2007a; Henry, 2011; Smith, 1987). When facilitating learning within a community or analyzing a research project, I continuously reflect on who I am in relation to the community that I am working
with, synthesizing feminist theories and pedagogies into my thoughts to bring my actions into a new engaged learning space.

**Embodied and performed pedagogies: Encompassing experience.**

In *Places of Learning* (2005), Ellsworth reconsiders pedagogy as:

the impetus behind the particular movements, sensations, and affects of bodies/mind/brains in the midst of learning, and it explores the embodied experiences that pedagogy elicits and plays hosts to: experiences of being radically in relation to one’s self, to others, and to the world. (p. 2)

Here she accentuates experience as education, and in connection to our bodies, emotions, and subjectivities. Ellsworth describes learning as the “experience of knowledge in the making” which is “also the experience of our selves in the making”, explaining that we are always in the process of making knowledge and not claiming knowledge as an end-point (p. 4).

Meaning-making as a corporeal and spatial experience becomes an ongoing event - articulated with, in and through the body. Perry and Medina (2011) articulate that “embodiment isn’t simply an interesting possibility for education, nor is it an alternative practice or method: embodiment *is*” (p. 63). The body with the mind and our spatial surroundings coexist; all physical, mental, emotional, and social states affect our ways of learning. The subjected body becomes a form of signification that has meaning in itself. Embodiment here, seen through the lens of critical literacy—spoken, written, and physical semiosis—interprets and constructs multiple life experiences (Medina & Campano, 2006). This embodiment is part of a performative pedagogy, where how we perform pedagogy becomes a conscious reenactment of our ideologies (Pineau, 2002). Experience is
performed in relation to our being a member of society, making it possible to critically examine forms of power within pedagogy and how these forms impact marginalization.

**Public pedagogy, popular education and popular theatre.**

Critical youth studies demonstrate that learning is not just occurring in formal school settings; children and youth also gain critical awareness through their own cultural practices that are often outside the classroom walls (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Woodson, 2007). Sandlin, Schultz, and Burdick (2010) describe public pedagogies as “spaces, sites, and languages of education and learning that exist outside of the wall of the institution of schools” (p. 1). They argue that these spaces, places and languages have an influential impact on social formations and identities as pedagogical processes that occur in the classroom. Henry Giroux (2000), in linking public pedagogy and cultural politics, takes insight from Stuart Hall suggesting that “public pedagogy is defined through its performative functions, its ongoing work of mediation and its attentiveness to the interconnections and struggles that take place over knowledge, language, spatial relations, and history” (p. 354).

Public pedagogy is rooted in popular education—often found within adult education with marginalized populations—and is considered a more informal method of education ingrained in community-based practice and education for social justice (Greene, 1998). With its roots in critical pedagogy, popular education calls for critical thought by examining and acting upon pertinent issues of the people, or students. It creates a space where “people themselves can define their own content and can create their own forms of education” (Arnold, 1985, p. 5), often being critical of how school curriculum lacks a connection to students’ social conditions. Popular theatre has been used as a tool for popular education because of its history with groups of youth who desire to raise “people's capacity for social
change through a collective problem-solving approach emphasizing participation, reflection, and critical analysis of social problems” (Bates, 1996, p. 225).

Popular theatre as popular education offers a public pedagogical space in which individuals may gain political agency through questioning, response, and reflection in everyday learning while becoming “instrumental actors who confront an external political field” (Boal, 1995, p. 13). It can potentially represent a pedagogical space where youth multiple perspectives are shared, creating opportunity to critically engage with their community and beyond, regarding social and political pertinent issues.

**Physical and imagined spaces: Places of learning.**

The body, like any signifier, exists in relation to its environment: therefore, space matters. Acknowledging the role of space can help us open up our understanding of the body as ‘being-in-the-world’ in order to move to a fuller perspective on bodies and texts. (Perry & Medina, 2011, p. 73)

Places and spaces have come to play a significant role within current theories and practices, and how our spatialities play on our imagined and real worlds within our daily lives. Cresswell (2004) defines the differences between space and place; place suggests the material, the local, the detailed and familiar while space symbolizes movement, energy and freedom. In recent years, the spatial turn has spread through many different disciplines, with much emphasis put on the current trend of globalization. Human geographer Edward Soja (1996), suggests that:

The spatial dimension of our lives has never been of greater practical and political relevance than it is today. Whether we are attempting to deal with the increasing intervention of electronic media in our daily routines; seeking ways to act politically
to deal with the growing problems of poverty, racism, sexual discrimination, and environmental degradation; or trying to understand the multiplying geopolitical conflicts around the globe, we are becoming increasingly aware that we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities. (p. xiii)

Within this doctoral study, the youth and university researchers wrote a script based on the unsafe spaces where street youth end up due to lack of safe spaces to live. A safe space was represented in the first act within the setting of the underage safe house. Each of the scenes from the second act takes place after the safe house closures and they depict five unsafe spaces where the youth ended up because they had no safe space to turn to (in a hospital, an adult shelter, a squat, a laundromat bathroom, and in a stranger’s house). Our rehearsals took place within the people's homes, a community centre, and a hospital. Our two performances were in a community centre and a performance venue in Vancouver’s downtown eastside. Spatial influence on the youth lives, both real and imagined, played a significant role in explaining their histories and how this production actually came to life.

As well, the imagined space of the theatre became a tool for the youth to express themselves in multiple places and various literacy forms, including improvisations, journaling experiences, and telling stories. Finley (2011) brings to light that arts-based research “makes use of affective experiences, senses, and emotions. Its practitioners explore the bounds of space and place where the human body is a tool for gathering and exploring meaning in experience” (p. 444). Within the imagined drama space, the youth shared their histories through layered and imagined storytellings. These differed depending on the personal spaces they were in at the time and the situated places we rehearsed and performed.
Critical youth studies: By, for, and with youth.

The words, opinions, and sense-makings of marginalized youth remain underrepresented in educational research. (Loutzenheiser, 2007, p. 111)

Critical youth studies are interdisciplinary in nature, as the study of children and youth is integrated across many disciplines, including sociology, psychology, cultural studies, and education. The core of critical youth studies lies within the boundaries of power and authority, and how these two aspects influence research being conducted and disseminated with children and youth (Best, 2007; Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Studying children and youth is characterized as studying down in “consideration of the robust ways power is present as an active force at every stage of research” and this “necessitates sustained and rigorous reflection on the part of the researcher” (Best, 2007, p. 12). Youth has been defined in many ways, but most often youth are thought of as “underdeveloped people not quite ready for self-determination” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 4), while the mainstream view of youth culture “maintains that any problem (poverty, educational failure, drug and alcohol abuse, etc.) faced by youth results of their own volition, thereby blaming the victim for the victim’s problems” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 4). The assertion within critical youth studies is that young people are capable of analyzing their own social context by engaging in critical research collectively, both challenging and resisting the powers that impede them.

This interdisciplinary approach highlights perspectives and activities of youth in various contexts while providing a more complex portrait of young people as engaged, independent social actors. The main idea embedded in critical youth studies is to look at who the children and youth ‘are’ rather than viewing them as the adult that they are ‘becoming’ (Qvortrup, 1994). Amy Best explains that numerous youth studies scholars, working in the field since the mid-80s, respect children and youth as “reflexive social agents and producers
of culture, active in the complex negotiations of social life and contributing in significant ways to the everyday construction of the social world, not as subjects-in-the-making but as subjects in their own right’ (Best, 2007, p. 11). Taking into consideration Ellsworth’s theorizing, together with these perspectives of youth studies, I question how youth can be viewed as subjects in their own right while they are—as we all are—constantly creating knowledge and self through embodied pedagogical experiences.

**Resistance: Pushing the limits of desire.**

Resistance makes networks, rhizomes really, of communication, of linkages between ideas, experiences, ideals, aspirations. Even when the actions are over, when the pace of tweets and emails slow, those pathways, like a dry riverbed before the next rain, are waiting. (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 15).

These happenings and pathways resulting from youth resistance, which Tuck and Yang suggest above, are often expressed and created through many different forms, such as through struggle, ambivalence, aggression, desire, silence, play, repulsion, humor, failure, ridicule and absence, all of which are in response to the many discourses of authority within society. Youth resistance, an overarching characteristic found within critical youth studies, has a historically negative connotation, but is often times what produces, prompts, or prevents future happenings with youth (Tuck & Yang, 2011).

The effects of colonization are apparent within societies today, especially within impoverished urban communities, and result in a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. Youth cultures, such as street-involved youth, are constantly being shaped by histories, migration flows and diasporic shifts, while navigating through discourses of authority and continuous policing in now ever-changing and structured global
neighbourhoods, schools and cities (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Gallagher, 2007a). Youth resistance identifies and exploits issues that are the root of systems of domination. Anticolonial scholars describe youth resistance as creating feelings of ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994), a “refusal to be absorbed” (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 20) and evidence of the non-total power of the nation-state (Jefferess, 2008).

Classic resistance and reproduction theory focused on youth can be traced back to Willis’ (1977) classic ethnography, Learning to Labour. Within the text, Willis asserts that the working class lads’ resistance to education—especially to uneven educational practices—reproduced and repositioned the lads in the same working class as their parents - thus the youth resisted any upward class movement. In Youth Resistance Revisited (2011) —a special issue within the International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education—Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang also challenge readers to “think about youth negotiations of educational injustices in ways that defy the ubiquitous dichotomy of reproduction or resistance” (p. 523). These scholars argue that many resistance theories are situated in Western ideas where resistance creates change, and change creates progress. Ideas surrounding youth resistance are grounded in colonial perspectives of teleological resistance theories with the end purpose being that of improvement or progress; such as from savage to civilized or unschooled to educated or oppressed to liberated (Tuck, 2009a). Building from the philosophical ideas of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Tuck and Yang describe non-teleological resistance theories as “messy”, “unfixed”, and “always taking shape”, while “understand[ing] that change happens in ways that make new, old-but-returned, and previously unseen possibilities available at each juncture” (p. 522).
Bringing resistance theory to a postmodern light, various scholars re-characterize it as something that moves beyond structural transformation and/or to educational mobility, through four different categories of youth resistance: “cultural resistance” (Duncombe, 2002), “everyday acts of resistance” (Scott 1985, 1990), “youth development as resistance” (Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006), and “social justice frameworks of resistance” (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Cultural resistance is described by Duncombe (2002) as “culture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic, and/or social structure” (p. 5). Scott (1985, 1990) articulates everyday acts of resistance as informal, covert, and concerned with immediate gains, as opposed to institutionalized forms of politics concerned with systematic change. Ginwright, Noguera and Cammarota (2006) explain the connection between youth development and youth resistance to social injustice, arguing that “sociopolitical conditions, collectivity, youth agency, and youth rights must be at the foreground of any conceptualizing of youth development” (as cited in Tuck & Yang, p. 524).

My past experiences and this current research with youth and resistance connects with “social justice frameworks of resistance” (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001), which critique how youth resistance has been connected to “self-defeating resistance [that] helps to recreate the oppressive conditions from which it originated”, and suggests instead the need to explore “resistance that is motivated by a desire to create more just and equitable learning environments” (p. 310). When using drama as a pedagogy with the youth from Surviving in the Cracks, I look at the learning environment created through the drama project and forefront the youth desires and resistances that occurred during pedagogical moments.
Throughout my time as an educator, I have found resistance to lead to moments that shape the educational experiences of the children, youth, and adults I have worked with. It is through moments of resistance that we have been forced to pause and observe how small or large acts of resistance have unfixed our, my, or the greater community’s expectations for the learning outcomes. Tuck and Yang (2014), again drawing from Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 31), define resistance as “effective in that it produces a new reality, a new condition from which to resist. It ‘works’ even by not doing what we want it to do. It works by breaking down. Resistance has an impact, or maybe the word is an after-math, whether we are disappointed or not.” (p. 13). Although the VYVC movement and production were a collective act of resistance to the Ministry’s political decision to close the underage safe houses, my reflections of working with these youth and through readings of the data brought to light the youth everyday acts of resistance (Scott, 1985, 1990) and how these became an integral part of the formation of the production. My analysis foci in Chapter Five on pedagogical moments of resistance within data from Surviving in the Cracks, is a direct result of questioning what the impacts, or after-maths, that everyday youth resistances caused throughout the production process.

As a feminist pedagogue and critical youth scholar, I put emphasis on the conceptual shift from youth as “future citizens,” to youth as “present civic actors” (Ginwright et al., 2006, p. xx), and consider pedagogy as experience, which is always in-the-making for children, youth and adults. These experiences happen in multiple places and spaces of our everyday lives: a classroom, a home, the playground, a museum, a theatre space, a hospital, on the street, etc. We—children, youth, and adults—are constantly taking in information and learning from our environments, both individually and collectively with each other.
Literature Review: Relevant Research for a Scholar-in-the-Making

As an interdisciplinary study, my research spans the fields of drama, education, public health, sociology and cultural geography. Throughout my prior theoretical framework, I drew on various scholars across many disciplines and how their work provided a foundation for my inquiry. Within this literature review, I build upon this foundation and specifically focus on approaches and methods taken up in the fields of literacy and arts-based research, including drama and theatre practices. I review six key areas of research within arts-based research and literacy studies: arts-based inquiry, applied theatre, performance ethnography and popular theatre, stories and spaces of learning among Indigenous youth, Thirdspace literacy studies, and critical multimodal literacy practices. I draw on these areas to analyze my drama work with street-involved youth, describing how these studies contribute to my own research, while also addressing unanswered questions and gaps, particularly through a further interpretation of how meaning-making is constituted within the embodied pedagogical spaces of a drama project.

Arts-based educational research inquiry.

A people’s pedagogy.

In the past 30 years, a growing number of arts-based researchers emerged. Elliot Eisner (1981, 1998) made a pivotal distinction between scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research, giving rise to arts-based educational research in the early 80s (as cited in Finley, 2005). Currently the use of arts-based qualitative inquiry as political activism is strongly supported by many, such as Norman Denzin who describes arts-based inquiry as contributing to a “radical ethical aesthetic” (as cited in Finley, 2005, p. 681). Susan Finley, who in Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd Ed.) argues that
arts-based research is a “purposeful turn to a revolutionary, performative research aesthetic [that] facilitates critical race, indigenous, queer, feminist, and border studies” (Finley, 2005, p. 681). Postmodern foundational shifts in the last decades have troubled ethical issues between researchers and the communities that they work in, leading to what Denzin and Lincoln coined the “crisis in representation” (as cited in Finley, 2005, p. 682). This crisis questions how researchers can present their findings without ‘othering’, exploiting, or silencing the participants. In response to this crisis, arts-based and participatory action research (PAR) has grown in popularity since the late 1990s. While I agree with Finley regarding the potential that arts-based and participatory research dissemination forms have in reaching a wider audience (than academics), I continue to question if these forms of research continue to “other”, to exploit or silence participants. Methodological agendas, such as Best’s (2007) critical youth studies agenda cited in the following chapter, are important for researchers to continuously review so they are committed to a “reflexivity that interrogates the varied points of difference that intersect in our own lives and those we study” (p. 9).

In the most recent edition of Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research Fourth Edition, Finley called for what I believe are public pedagogical spaces for arts education to take place rather than just being in the often-privileged areas of society. She believes in the “possibility that the unschooled minds of untrained artists can construct and express ideas through the media of arts. . . . [and that] there is every possibility that the vernacular street performances of poetry, tagging, and fire dance are potentially meaningful experiences of inquiry” (Finley, 2003, p. 292). Supporting public pedagogical spaces of inquiry, she challenged arts-based researchers to create a “people’s pedagogy” that defines “arts education through the informal venues of streets and
communities, rather than through institutional delivery systems” (p. 294). My ethnographic study directly responds to this call while using an applied theatre approach.

**Applied theatre: Points of departure.**

The growing number of researchers using applied theatre as a research methodology cover a wide range of drama and theatre fields: drama/theatre in education, popular theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, theatre for health education, theatre for development, prison theatre, community-based theatre, museum theatre, applied theatre research in education and reminiscence theatre (Nicholson, 2005; Pendergast & Saxton, 2009; Prentki & Preston, 2009; Thompson, 2008). In *Applied Theatre: Bewilderment and Beyond* (2008) James Thompson, an applied theatre practitioner whose work ranges from working within prisons to refugee camps in international settings, calls for other practitioners to articulate how applied theatre affects (rather than focusing on the resulting effect), how it is powerful, and how it touches upon the feelings of the participants. Thompson paid great homage to Augusto Boal (1974/2008) by situating his theatre work in Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*, spanning from praxis to education to advocacy. Proposing the following three social-cultural positions, Thompson qualified these to be “meant as challenges more than certainties,” which the applied theatre practitioner can use as a point of departure (p. 47): role theory is reductive and it must be acknowledged that roles are not fixed but that they are socially constructed from a range of resources “learnt, witnessed, and embodied”; the need to focus on action rather than behaviour because action views “human activity as adaptations between people” rather than a behaviour emanating from within one individual; and to value the practices created within workshops and rehearsals because “perhaps the revolution will not be rehearsed”. These points of departure underscore how drama can create pedagogical spaces.
through roles, actions, and rehearsals and how drama roles are not only socially constructed, but—I would add—are also collectively constructed socially, historically, and spatially.

**Performance ethnography and popular theatre: Data crafts.**

Arts-based approaches, such as performance ethnography and popular theatre, are increasingly being drawn on for conducting and disseminating research in scholarly settings (Alexander, Anderson, & Gallegos, 2005; Barone, 2002; Belliveau, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Denzin, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 2000; Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995; Gallagher, 2007b; Mienczakowski, 2001; Saldaña, 2003; Wager, Bellieveau, Beck, & Lea, 2009). Typically the objective of the process and performance of these two forms of theatre are to create a space of social and political change as well as individual change, enabling the participants to “collectively examine and analyze causes of specific issues, explore avenues of potential action, and create an opportunity to take such action” (Conrad, 2004, p. 7).

Conrad used popular theatre to investigate incarcerated males at a Canadian young offender facility. In *Arresting Change: Popular Theatre with Young Offenders* (2006), Campbell and Conrad used a performance text to examine how popular theatre might impact social change and personal growth for the participants. The researchers used participatory drama activities with young offenders to explore relevant issues of their lives in the hope to affect change. Campbell and Conrad, as actors, disseminated their data findings through the staged dialogue and movement of performance ethnography.

Performance ethnography is borrowed from African-American feminist performance artists and scholars, Dr. Robbie McCauley (1994) and Anna Devere Smith (1993), whose tradition of performed autobiographies/ethnographies created “a radical pedagogical positioning” (hooks, 1994) that is “intended to subvert the dominant white patriarchal
capitalist paradigm . . . to present research in an alternate form that would not necessarily adhere to the rigid structure imposed through the academy” (Medina, Belliveau, & Weltsek, 2007, p. 132). It is argued that this form of research dissemination manipulates the readers’ and audience members’ views of the data because it is the researcher/script-writer who is shaping and molding the data to become something that it originally was not. Tara Goldstein (2001) addresses this issue by making the argument that all readers inherently manipulate data depending on the tones and moods they impose on the text while reading. This same argument is reflected by Thompson (2003):

Applied theatre is understood to work with a community’s constructed accounts of itself and competes with the narratives that are more often created by others. This perspective insists that there is no account, story or description that is anything more than an incomplete interpretation, and that therefore one cannot automatically claim authority over another. (p. 26)

_Hong Kong, Canada_ (2001), Goldstein’s performance ethnography written as an ethnodramatic script is at times illustrated in verbatim text and reports an array of students’ thoughts and emotions. This fictional play is based on Goldstein’s ethnographic case study’s data and analysis concerning social and linguistic dilemmas present for both Canadian immigrant and Canadian-born youth. Engaging the audience, Goldstein personified different perspectives of the dilemma, leaving the reader with interpretive understandings of how colonial and racist issues present in Canadian high schools affect both immigrant and Canadian-born youth in the “silencing” of students.

In this case, performance ethnography was chosen for the specific purpose of sharing analyzed data to a wider array of audience members, including and most importantly to the
students, teachers, and parents of the targeted school (to whom it was read and performed various times). As another means of dissemination and to reach a larger audience, I include the scripted performance piece of *Surviving in the Cracks* as a chapter within this dissertation. It is important to note that performance ethnographies are often written solely by the researcher(s) as an analysis process and a method for disseminating findings, where as in *Surviving in the Cracks* it was a collaborative creation and performance between the youth and university researchers.

**Indigenous youth: Stories and spaces of learning.**

In a similar study to my own, Conrad and Kendall (2009) used PAR methods and arts-based research practices with homeless Aboriginal youth. The youth expressed themselves through oral traditions, stories, life histories, photographs, radio, music, and myths to create digital art video narratives about their lives. Conrad and Kendall theorized that identities are consistently constructed, and that attitudes about youth can be altered through arts–based practices. Drawing on this premise, they developed workshops to educate service providers, while investigating the inherent resilience of youth in order to best meet the needs of the high–risk populations they serve. The youth in Conrad and Kendall’s study were uniquely and respectfully offered opportunities to voice opinions and to refute assumptions made about them.

Conrad’s work with homeless Aboriginal youth, as well as my research, draws on pedagogies consistent with Indigenous Knowledge pedagogies, such as oral traditions, land-based pedagogies, experiential learning, and intergenerational learning (Hare, 2010). My study can be seen to explore land-based learning, but in an urban street-involved context, bringing to the forefront multiple “funds of knowledge” that youth from *Surviving in the
Cracks—the majority being Aboriginal—learned through living on the streets (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2013; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Tejeda, & Rivera, 1999; Moll, 1992).

**Literacy studies.**

**Thirdspace: In- and out-of-school literacies.**

Drawing on literacy, cultural geography and postcolonial theorists such as Bhaba (1994), Gutiérrez et al. (1999), and Soja (1996), a study by Moje et al. (2004) investigated the multiple funds of knowledge that US Latino high school students bring to the classroom. Their ongoing ethnography found that youth funds of knowledge were shaped by the urban space in which they lived. Within their study, they addressed:

the premise that the fields of adolescent and content area literacy research and practice need more information about the funds of knowledge and discourse that youth draw on if educators are to construct classroom spaces that can integrate in- and out-of-school literacy practices. (p. 41).

These funds of knowledge derive from such places and spaces shaped by home, school, peers, and communities. Moje et al. described this area of knowledge as a *Thirdspace* (Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Soja, 1996) because it incorporates the first space knowledges of home and community together with second space knowledges of formal institutions such as schools. This team of scholars found that, within a high school science classroom, rarely did students introduce these first space knowledges of home and community. Devoted to the concept of building a Thirdspace in the classroom, the research team gave back to this community by writing a high school curriculum that draws from the various knowledges and discourses learned from these youth, incorporating such resources as informational texts—local and world news articles as well as popular cultural texts. Within my study of informal
pedagogical spaces, I also acknowledged the youth multiple funds of knowledge, primarily in the spatial context and discourses of living on the streets but also through their knowledges gained from previous years of formal learning within schools.

**Critical literacies: Multimodal artistic representations.**

The multiple funds of knowledge (González et al., 2013; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Moll, 1992) that the youth bring are often expressed through various forms of literacy. Researchers studying critical arts pedagogies as modes for literacy learning and identity construction within social contexts (e.g., Belliveau, 2012; Gallagher, 2007a; Grady, 2000; Medina, 2004; Nicholson, 2011; Rogers, Winters, Perry, & LaMonde, 2010) use arts–based and critical multimodal representations (e.g., play scripts, poems, drama, art, photography, film) to demonstrate how youth negotiate their beliefs and opinions. These scholars argue that within situated contexts multimodal literacy experiences (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear and Leu, 2008; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; New London Group, 1996, 2000; O’Halloran & Smith, 2011; Street, Pahl and Rowsell, 2009) are tools used by youth to construct knowledge and their own identities.

For instance, Rogers and her teams of researchers (including Winters, La Monde, Perry, Wager, Schroeter, Hauge) explored identity constructions within homeless communities, to better understand participants’ subjectivities and use of satire. Through multimodal representations (e.g., play scripts, poems, drama, art, photography, film) of their study participants, they demonstrated that homeless youth negotiate their own identities by assuming and assigning subject positions, ultimately creating more nuanced types of critical discourse (Rogers & Winters, 2010).
In one of Gallagher’s research projects (alongside Wessels & Ntelioglou, 2012), she brought homeless youth and affluent theatre audiences together in a downtown Toronto theatre to study equity and power. Addressing questions of subjectivity, space, and representational modes in a diverse urban context, Gallagher and her colleagues demonstrated how drama aids in construction of identity. Drama situates participants, both homeless youth and affluent audiences alike, in a space to be simultaneously inside and outside of economic barriers, while at the same time “circling [their own] histories and class structures” (Grumet, as cited in Gallagher, 2001, p. xi).

The youth in Surviving in the Cracks expressed themselves through multimodal literacies, including journaling, acting, poetry writing, interviewing, filming, and drawing. The script is a multimodal representation woven with various aspects of each of their identities: their histories of living on the streets, within the safe houses, within foster care, being controlled by the Ministry of Social Services, and their present day realities of being parents, employed or unemployed, and members of society.

**Pushing Further**

This study sits at the nexus of drama and literacy practices, critical youth studies, and informal learning spaces, building on previous studies informed by theories and practices of arts-based research and research on contemporary, informal literacy practices. In order to explore learning spaces in which embodied forms of pedagogy provide resistant moments in which youth create meaning and negotiate differences, critical research methods will support my investigation of how meaning-making is collectively constructed within and between youth knowledge systems, critical multimodal literacies, power, desire, and space through the lens of youth resistance in this particular site. Though the studies reviewed above draw on
critical perspectives, in this project I push the notion of critical further by invoking feminist perspectives and critical youth studies theories and methodologies that unpack youth resistances, power, and desires within collective and spatial pedagogies.
sitting in the same place that I sat yesterday – in my home theatre that I created for davina⁴ and myself to begin the long journey of watching the raw footage video together and begin the analysis process. the task has seemed daunting since the day that greg gave me the almost full 750gb external hard drive and announced that there were around 35 hours of footage to watch. then when i first opened up the files, i realized that almost all of them ranged from 38 seconds to 13 minutes. fragments. fragments of our lives then. 35 hours of fragmented moments. not pieced together. and often reflecting the new documentary film-makers need to learn how to use the camera. clicking his hands. off focus. looking at walls and hearing voices in the distance. besides using a few fragments for a paper or conference, i have been scared to look at the footage ever since. the external hard drive comfortably living in its original box in my drawer.

yesterday, davina and I started the long process. in one sense i think it was a good thing that i had minimal contact with the footage. it made this process new for both of us. throughout the play process, especially towards the end, i felt that davina and my roles were very much woven together. the power of the production and possibility of success and completion very much relied on the two of us. we both are multitaskers and passionate hard workers. davina lived in the safe houses, she began this project, and brought all of the participants to it. i have the background of play creation and have lots of experience working within communities, pulling together strengths (while dealing with weaknesses) to produce something – whether it be something individual or collective. davina definitely holds these same characteristics; she is a youth worker, we are both people people. we made a really good team. i believe that we hold a mutual respect for each other; we have shared this with each other – it is deep. it means a lot. it has made this work.

⁴ Davina Boone is the founder of Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition. She lived in the safe houses the longest in comparison to other cast members and was one of the three youth leaders for this research project. She was 13 when she was pulled off the street and placed in the safe houses, 24 when we began the play project, and 28 when we met to review the data.
davina has offered to analyze and member-check the video data with me on friday afternoons for the next few months. in exchange i help her on a weekly basis write and edit her papers for her child and youth care counseling degree. i couldn’t ask for a better partner. re-opening this raw footage, i decided to leave the possibilities open for davina to decide what to do. i told her to pick any piece (of the 35 hours of video) and that we would watch it. i didn’t give her much background information. i had just bought a composition lined notebook after picking her up from the bus. we were sitting in my living room with my computer hooked up to a big screen. she would tell me which fragment to play and we would watch it while commenting. davina has two children, who are now six and eight years old and basically driving her crazy. my memory is that they did at the time of the play too. they are usually with davina — by her side. they always were. she is able to get childcare so that she can go to her college classes. her mother is sleeping on her couch right now—she’s currently homeless—funny how they switched places, so she chuckles about how she has live-in-childcare at the moment. but her kids won’t listen to their grandmother for a second. they know too much. they see how davina treats her mom because of the history they have. reminds me too much of my mom.

anyways, although we did do some analyzing of the space and the personalities from the footage, most of the time davina commented on how small and beautiful and cute her kids were. laughing at what they were saying. for instance there is a point where her son is looking at his knees and davina comments “oh look i have knees” and then he looks over at my knees and she says “oh look she has knees too”. i completely understood the need to talk about her kids. considering the night before when i was trying to rearrange my hard-drive to have space for all this footage, i found many videos of eric, my 2 year old son, as a small baby. i became pregnant with my first child in october 2009, just after the final performance in july. last night eric and i sat together and watched his videos. if eric had been in the raw play footage, i don’t think my eyes could have gone anywhere else. davina is an amazing mother. she never stops taking those kids to swimming, soccer, ice-skating, parties, everything. she inspires me to be a better mom.

so when you add together the sorting through of fragments and the memories of your own children, we can safely say that we did not analyze too much. but i think it was a great start. we both talked about ‘our new beginning’ while walking to the bus when davina was leaving. we agreed that this is how a long
process should start: a comfortable viewing space, creating a summary of what we are viewing, and ending with an open-ended summary of our weeks to come. and a bit of gossip along the way. got to get that stuff out in order to really dig deeper.

my task for next week is to try to put all the video fragments into one long movie and then into whatever data analysis software I eventually use. this way by next friday davina and i will be able to go through the larger pieces together in the data analysis program and i can actually add in our analysis as we are doing it instead of scribbling it down in the composition book.

a successful beginning.

**Methodology: A Room with Multiple Views**

Using theatre, as we did, to reframe the research context often meant positioning the researcher as “doer” rather than “observer”. And as a “doer”, you run the risk or gain the benefit of being in an area of not knowing how it is you know something.

(Gallagher, 2006, p. 67)

Critical research is value-laden. From the conceptual to the methodological, no aspect of inquiry is neutral because of the power, meaning, and intent that the researcher(s) inherently carries. Within this critical ethnography, I investigated pedagogical moments constituted within the youth-led, participatory theatre production of *Surviving in the Cracks*, which was created with eight street-involved youth. My research questions were: How does drama and theatre with street youth open up embodied pedagogical spaces? What are the critical multimodal meaning-making processes that populate these spaces? And how do moments of resistance explore the negotiations of power, desire and space within these spaces?

As a critical researcher, I paid close attention and made explicit the ways in which data are co-constructed. This included considering where and how the scriptwriting,
interviews, and observations took place and how they (both the researcher and the subjects) were re-shaped in the process (Fine, 2006). Within this research, I utilized critical ethnographic methods to uncover how power is negotiated between, by, and against youth and university researchers, both within the theatre project and the public pedagogical social structures that surrounded the project. In order to more fully understand the power relations between the members of the project, I spent more than 40 hours analyzing and member-checking data analysis with Davina Boone, one of the youth leaders.

Over the course of this chapter, I will further explain the design of the study, the various methodological tools used throughout the project, information regarding the context and participants, the multiple data sources used, an overview of my data analysis process, and detail how trustworthiness was incorporated into many areas of the project.

Design: Critical Ethnography

Originating from the field of anthropology, traditional ethnography situates the researcher as an ‘outsider’ who is living within and observing how another culture functions, with the ultimate goal of providing “thick descriptions” of the culture for outside audiences (Geertz cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To further develop an understanding of the particular culture, the researcher carries out ethnographic research methods, such as conducting in-depth interviews, writing observations within field notes, and analyzing historical documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Heath & Street, 2008). Traditional ethnographies therefore assume the researcher has been immersed within a culture for at least a year or more, and within that time they have the ability to understand and report about the signs and symbols used within the culture, while not interfering with the culture being studied. It is also expected that the ethnographer suspend
cultural biases throughout data collection, analysis, and report. These practices and assumptions have led to many misrepresentations of peoples and cultures throughout time. As well, several neo-Marxist and feminist scholars have observed that ethnographers’ subjectivities—their complex relationships and influence on individuals during fieldwork—are absent from studies (Behar & Gordon, 1995; Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

In response to criticism from neo-Marxist and feminist ethnographers, ‘critical’ ethnographies emerged and expanded on methods used within traditional ethnographies, but then drawing from neo-Marxist and feminist theories and politics (Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1996; Lather, 1986). Consistent with the critical turn in social research after World War II, critical ethnographies’ main goal is to expose the power relations within a given social context (Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1996; Gallagher, 2006; Madison, 2005; Simon & Dippo, 1986). As well, researchers using critical methods of inquiry and practice are expected to be reflexive researchers by re-evaluating their methods throughout the research process to ensure that they are not naively creating more situations of oppression and domination, but instead moving towards a goal of social equality (Madison, 2005). Therefore, conventional ethnography has been described as trying to explain “what is”, while critical ethnography attempts to unpack “what could be” by “identifying, describing, and understanding how and where power and oppression take place” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). In doing so, critical ethnography challenges “taken for granted assumptions” by moving beyond descriptions and revealing underlying structures of power and repression (Madison, 2005, p. 5), while also troubling and questioning the representation of participants and the positionality of the researcher within the study.
Researcher positionality and reflexivity is a key change from conventional ethnographies to critical ethnography (Anderson, 1989). It presumes that the researcher cannot enter into the research without their cultural biases, turning the gaze towards how the researcher is positioned and reflexive within and beyond who and what they are studying. This positionality and reflexivity is evident throughout the research and writing process—in and out of the field—and forefronts the many structures and power relations that the researcher has, be they political, social, economic, or religious (to name a few) (Madison, 2005; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). Critical ethnography incorporates how such forces position all actors in the research—be they participants, researchers, or facilitators (Anderson, 1989).

Within this critical ethnographic study, data are analyzed from Surviving in the Cracks through a critical lens using a participatory theatre-driven model of research. As a model, I draw particularly on the work of Gallagher’s critical ethnography The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times (2007) that speaks to critical ethnography’s impact on educational ethnography, asserting it to be an insightful methodology to examine social and artistic relationships and performances inspired by drama work. Borrowing from Gallagher, I am framing my methodology as “porous” because it is pedagogical and methodological all at once (Gallagher, 2006, p. 72). As a researcher and the director of the play, my work “became embedded in the practice of working and creating with students [youth]; any semblance of neutrality or objectivity was eradicated completely” (p. 73).

When doing critical ethnographic research, Gallagher (2006) identifies three questions for the researcher that may expose and even challenge unequal power relations: “how we represent, how we evaluate the legitimacy of representations, and whether it is
possible to effect change in the world” (p. 65)? In my own work, these questions push me to identify the nature of power in the positioning of the subjects, including that of the researcher’s impact on the study. These questions and considerations were particularly helpful to my positioning as a researcher and director because they illustrated how theory and practice must speak to each other and be equally present within any given moment of the research.

Richardson (2000) argues that ethnographies are “not alternative or experimental; they are in and of themselves valid and desirable representations of the social” (p. 930). While scripting and performing Surviving in the Cracks, the youth were co-authors and performers of the analysis of their lived stories. Their two performances were an “evocative representation” (Richardson, p. 931) of their own and other street youth loss of access to safe and stable housing. I like to think of the ethnographic script, which follows in Chapter Four, as what Loutzenheiser (2007) described as the youth being “experts and theorists of their own lives” (p. 119); however, I cannot deny the power that I had within the process because of my background knowledge of both playwriting and artistic direction.

This critical ethnography, anchored in a critical youth studies framework, moves messily and delightfully between spaces of research and theatre pedagogy by, for and with the youth from Surviving in the Cracks. The inquiry has been significantly shaped by the interests and even diversions of the youth collaboration, but I solely analyze a large amount of the data. This journey of analysis, without complete youth guidance, and the time length of the project (six months of rehearsal and performance, followed by six months of post-interviews and three more years of follow-up interviews) situates it as a critical ethnography that utilizes participatory methods of inquiry.
Methodological Tools of Inquiry

Within this study, I borrowed various methodological tools from critical youth studies, participatory research, and popular theatre. These tools were important in continuing to do research that is by, for, and with youth instead of ‘on’ youth.

Critical youth studies.

Essentially, when I think back about this project I will determine if it is successful based on the final results: did it appear as though the play was their play, in their eyes, with their ownership? If it appears otherwise I will feel ashamed. We have pressure as researchers to publish and present...and really often we are pressured to take ownership. I hope that we can somehow create a space where they have ownership for their time, courage and even the meandering life path that lead them to this project. (university researcher, blog field notes, May 30 2009)

Power structures within critical youth studies are viewed from a conceptual and methodological standpoint. I defined the critical youth studies conceptual standpoint in the previous chapter, but feel further explanation of the methodological agenda that accompanies this framework is both necessary and helpful. A critical youth studies methodological agenda, in line with this critical ethnography, continuously examines the power structures between researched and researchers in order for children to be “freed from the process of containment that produces them as ‘other’ and in turn continues to silence them” (Caputo, 1995, p. 33). Within Representing Youth: Methodological Issues in Critical Youth Studies (2007), Best suggested a methodological agenda for critical youth studies as necessitating:

- A sustained concern for and consideration of the complexities of power and exploitation in the research encounter.
- An acknowledgement of the connection between power and knowledge. Such an acknowledgement requires that we recognize that the accounts we provide shape and construct reality as much as they describe it. Youth researchers play a significant role in shaping the social experiences of children and youth through the discursive constructions or accounts we provide.

- A desire to conduct sound ethical research that empowers youth and children to find ways to improve the conditions under which their lives unfold.

- A commitment to a radical reflexivity that interrogates the varied points of difference that intersect in our own lives and those we study. (p. 9)

In order to be a ‘radically reflexive’ researcher, I examined my own experiences and scrutinized my thinking when working with youth, with the goal of being transparent and reflexive in the positions that I have held. During Surviving in the Cracks, I pushed for the youth to guide many aspects of research and rehearsals, including the script-writing, youth interviews and focus groups, directing the acting at times, youth advertising for the play, and finding other youth from the community to do the backstage work during the productions. As demonstrated in the above quotation, conducting research alongside a team of university researchers and youth leaders established a continued check-in by providing many moments of discussion—on a shared blog as well as in person—surrounding concerns and considerations about how power was playing out between youth participants, leaders, and university researchers throughout the six months of rehearsal and performance.

**Popular theatre as participatory research.**

Participatory research, specifically Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), often accompanies studies within critical youth studies research. Stemming from the 1970s
along with popular education and critical pedagogy, participatory research has been viewed as a “transformative praxis” (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991) used by, for, and with the research participants. Researchers employ participatory research to produce knowledge and mobilize action in education, striving to attain a space where the participants are co-researchers throughout the process. The participants, like the ones in my study, ideally co-construct the research project from the beginning to the end, often co-disseminating the implications of the project using non-traditional media, such as photography, theatre, and visual art.

Cammarota and Fine (2008), two of the most influential YPAR researchers, consider YPAR as a “formal pedagogy of resistance” where youth can create systemic and institutional change to promote social justice. Through the role of the researcher, youth learn that conditions of injustice are “produced, not natural; are designed to privilege and oppress; but are ultimately challengeable and thus changeable” (p. 2). Within sites of critical inquiry and resistance, such as within YPAR, youth have the ability to provoke ripples of social change, beginning with the youth themselves and working their way upwards. As with the youth from *Surviving in the Cracks*, especially with the youth leaders, their desire to create the play was ultimately to impact institutional change by promoting the re-openings of the underage safe houses.

Popular theatre shares goals and is a useful approach with participatory research (e.g., Fals Borda and Rahman, 1991; Forester, Pitt, & Welsh, 1993; Freire, 1988; McTaggart, 1997), as it is a politically motivated, participatory theatre that involving specific communities in identifying, examining and taking action on matters that they believe need change (Conrad, 2004; Prentki and Selman, 2000; Little, 2006; Salverson, 2010).
Participatory research, like popular theatre, is used with community groups whose members bring to light issues that are in need of political, social, and economic development. Conrad (2004), a popular theatre practitioner and participatory researcher, explains that participatory research:

- stresses the inherent capacity for participants to create their own knowledge based on their experiences. In the process, “popular knowledge” is generated by the group, taken in, analyzed and reaffirmed or criticized, making it possible to flesh out a problem and understand it in context. (para. 14)

Like popular theatre aspects, Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) attribute three particular characteristics of participatory research to distinguish it from other research genres: “Shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action” (p. 560). When popular theatre is used as a form of research—due to the strong emphasis on community identification, examination, and action—it may be considered inherently participatory research.

This thesis as a critical ethnography draws on ethnographic methods, such as observations, interviews, field notes and video footage, as well as the methodological tools and assumptions of YPAR as a theatre project with youth. For example, within YPAR, youth knowledge is tied to an action or change that they have previously identified as desirable, and within this study the youth were advocating for the reinstatement of the safe houses. The focus within YPAR is that the participants are the researchers from the outset - they determine their questions and then proceed with owning/doing the research project. The ethnographic script (found in the following chapter) was written with, by and for the youth and was the basis of the theatre production – their way of disseminating their interwoven
narratives accumulated through focus groups, journal entries and interviews. As well, it is the basis for my analysis of how critical multimodal literacies were used to represent the youth lived and imagined experiences within the spaces of drama pedagogy.

**Methods**

**Context and participants.**

Researcher (Amanda): What would you say your ethnicity is?

Youth: My mom’s East Indian, my dad’s Irish, English, Newfie and part Native.

Researcher: Newfie?

Youth: Newfie. Like he’s a Newfoundlander.

Researcher: So how would you describe yourself?

Youth: Yeah, I’m just mixed. I actually like mostly just describe myself as Canadian cause I didn’t grow up with my family very much and then I grew up in Canada and kind of in the Ministry and society kind of raised me so and then pretty Canadian. So, I don’t know, when people are like oh, you’re colored, you must not be from here and I’m like no, I was born here, I’m Canadian.

Researcher: Okay, and how would you like me to describe you in the study? So for an example if I can describe someone as a black female, 22 year old, like how would you, how would you like me to describe you?

Youth: 28 year old.

Researcher: Okay.

Youth: Female.

Researcher: Female.

Youth: I don’t know. However, with an accurate, an accurate, just accurately.

Researcher: Is there any sort of descriptors, words, that you would want me to use to describe you?

Youth: You know like brilliant, amazing ...
Researcher: I’ll definitely do that. (D. Boone, interview, September 29 2012)\(^5\)

As previously stated, eight youth ranging from ages 16 to 25 participated in the project. Three of these were youth-leaders from VYVC, who facilitated focus groups and one round of filmed interviews. Four youth were First Nations, two female and two male, two of them being siblings (brother and sister). One female youth was of mixed descent: half South Asian, a quarter Irish/English/Newfoundlander, a quarter First Nations, and amazingly brilliant. The three other youth were White, Euro-Canadians, one female and two male. All participants came from working or lower class backgrounds and had or were currently part of BC’s Child Welfare system living in foster care (two youth were living in foster homes at the time). Only two of the eight were living on the streets during this period, but all had at one point in the past. Three of the participants had children - a total of six children under 10 years of age could be present at any rehearsal and thus childcare was always needed. Often times it was difficult to find childcare and youth leaders or university researchers reluctantly took on this role. The three VYVC leaders—covering roles such as leadership, researcher, child minding, actor, script-writer, stage manager—were compensated with part-time incomes, while the other youth actors were paid $20 per hour of rehearsal.

All of the university researchers were between the ages of 20 and 35; two female and two male graduate students were White, Euro-Canadians and one male was Japanese-Canadian, while I am a female White Euro-American. Three of the five university researchers were paid as research assistants, while two were volunteers (Jenn and I). University researchers were current graduate students, with the exception of Jenn who had

\(^5\) The youth provided self-written descriptions for the play program, which are included in Chapter Four. All names are included as they requested I not provide pseudonyms in place of their names.
completed her graduate degree the year before but was dedicated to continue working with the VYVC youth during this project. Almost everyone involved in this project moved to Vancouver from other Canadian areas including Victoria, Bowen Island, Calgary and Edmonton – I was the only person who came from outside Canada. All youth leaders, participants and university researchers acted in the final performance, besides one female youth participant who missed various rehearsals due to an unexpected pregnancy.

Rehearsals initially took place on Sunday afternoons at The Gathering Place, a community centre that “offers programs and services to the Downtown South community… [who] primarily serve vulnerable populations, including people on lower income, people with disabilities, seniors, people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, the LGBTQ community, youth, and people who are homeless” (http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/gathering-place-community-centre.aspx). During the fourth month of rehearsals, the script was collaboratively written in Davina’s home by VYVC youth leaders and a few of the university researchers, and at a café nearby, with three scenes independently scripted from one of the youth’s actors’ journals by university researchers, Laura and myself. In the last two months of rehearsals, more rehearsal times were added on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and were held in meeting rooms in the basement of St. Paul’s Hospital, which were reserved by Sean Nixon, one of the university researchers, as he was a hospital employee.

Data sources.

Using ethnographic field methods of the theatre production during periods of creation, performance, and post-production from January 2009 to December 2012, a rich set of ethnographic data was collected: video footage of the rehearsals and performance, one focus

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6 In order to protect this youth, I have chosen to keep this youth anonymous due to the intensity and trauma involved in the journaled stories.
group interview, nine youth-led interviews during the production, 12 post-production semi-structured participant interviews, the script, a youth actor journal, researchers’ observational field notes, and a director’s journal. Using the NVivo 10 Software program, I coded all data for the themes of power, resistance, and desire as seen through the youth imaginaries.

**Footage.**

The raw footage is a primary data source for Phase II Analysis of this inquiry. As the director of the production, I was also a participant in the research. Approximately 35-hours of raw footage were filmed during the last three months of rehearsals and both performances by documentary film student Greg Masuda (Masuda, 2011). Rehearsals began on January 11th, 2009 and Greg joined our production and began his documentary film recordings on May 20th as a final project for his documentary film degree. His brother, Jeff Masuda, was one of the university researchers and asked the youth if they were interested in Greg creating a documentary film of the play process. Everyone was enthusiastic about the idea and Greg in turn created an hour-long documentary using footage from our project (http://www.gregmasuda.com/blog/?p=1705). All video data was obtained between May 20th, 2009 and August 13th, 2009. As this was Greg’s first documentary while a being a film student of Langara College, there are several instances where it becomes obvious to the viewer that he is in the process of learning how to work the camera.

This raw footage covers a meeting between VYVC youth leaders and PCHR researchers, six rehearsals during the last month of the project, a tour of the locations of the three safe houses by Davina, costume shopping, youth travels and visits to see family members, the dress rehearsal, the two final performances, and many interviews with the youth, safe house workers, and university researchers. Through revisiting, transcribing and
analyzing moments from this footage, I had the opportunity to review the study more as a researcher than as the director.

**Focus group.**

Trevor, Davina and Fraggle led one 10-minute focus group directly after a rehearsal on March 29, 2009. They created the questions and participated in the focus group that aimed to understand and contextualize the lives of the street youth. The actors (Amethyst, Cody, Davina, Dave, Fraggle, Mike, Natasha, and Trevor) explored how their participation allowed them to reflect critically on their lives and expressed whether or not they felt the need to share their stories with a wide-ranging audience. Due to the room’s echoing acoustics, the audio recorder had to be passed around for each participant to speak into while answering; many of the youth passed on their turns and those who did not had very short answers.

**Interviews.**

During the rehearsal process Davina and Fraggle interviewed five youth actors and four safe house workers while Greg filmed the interviews. These interviews were used as multimedia components for the performances, which is further explained within the script in Chapter Four. Fraggle composed the interview questions (see Appendix A for this list of questions), with topics including individual histories, their experiences within the underage safe houses, and their reactions to the closings and the unsafe spaces that youth ended up in due to the closures.

Two months later (approximately a month after the final performance), Jenn and I held 12 semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B for this list of questions). Final interview questions were created based on email discussions by the five university
researchers, and concerned the experiences, motivations, and perspectives of being involved in the play and spanned the fields of health literacy to pedagogy to future drama work. The venue—a room in a youth home—where we were supposed to privately interview four of the participants was unavailable the day of the scheduled interviews. Due to the large amount of planning required to gather the youth participants for the final interviews and the lack of compensation and assurance that the participants would meet again, we chose to do the interviews that day in an open space—sitting outside the youth home—in front of other participants. The remaining four post-production interviews were conducted later in a more confidential manner, individually in private settings where the participants and researchers were able to conduct in-depth conversations.

The lack of confidentiality during the post-production interviews combined with a need for more data concerning the youth personal histories in regards to formal education necessitated my meeting with four of the youth individually—those I was able to still locate—to do another two rounds of interviews (seven interviews in total as one participant only met me once) over the next two years. Within these follow-up interviews, I inquired about the youth personal histories, educational histories and perspectives on the importance of the pedagogical role that drama (and other art forms) might play in education, their reflections on the play process, feelings of security and anxiety within spaces on the street and spaces that they find themselves now and any thoughts regarding desires and constraints of street culture.

*Script.*

The script was collectively created and I consider it to be a cornerstone of the data. It holds multiple youth voices, or a “polyvocality” that Loutzenheiser (2007) describes as
offering “different avenues to use students' words and stories to create a momentary voice” (p. 114) when working with marginalized youth. This process in Surviving in the Cracks consisted of multiple sittings where the youth and researchers created graffiti boards capturing ideas that led to the framework of the script, used the graffiti boards as a framework to create and narrate the story while I transcribed their oral words into a performance text, rehearsed and performed the play. The characters, story and language within the script originated from the youth collective. As well, three of the ten scenes were scripted from one of the youth’s journal. As the artistic director, I directed the six months of weekly rehearsals, and on the days I was unable to attend rehearsals, various youth leaders and university researchers facilitated the rehearsals. Immediately after both public performances, the youth invited the audience members to participate in an open forum discussion, or what Mienczakowski describes as “a form of public-voice ethnography” (as cited in Beck, Belliveau, Lea, & Wager, 2011)

**Observational field notes.**

One of the four university researchers was present at almost every rehearsal, and took observational field notes that were then posted on a collaborative VYVC and PCHR blog that the other researchers and youth leaders commented on. The field notes were full of detailed observations and contained scaffolding comments by VYVC and PCHR members. Moments of power inequalities within and outside of the rehearsal spaces, specifically resistances and complications that occurred throughout the production, were often commented on.

**Youth journals.**

Each youth was asked to keep a journal throughout the rehearsal process, but only one (who I will keep anonymous) consistently did so. Three of this youth’s stories were
scripted and included in the final performance. The journal includes details regarding many of improvisational, role-playing, and character building activities we did during rehearsals, and also records many of the youth reactions and thoughts throughout the play process.

**Director’s journal.**

As the director of the play, I also kept a journal throughout the production process with many enlightening and bewildering moments highlighted in this document. I include an agenda of what we did each rehearsal, as well as my thoughts and feelings about how the play is progressing or digressing. I often describe events that happened between cast members during the rehearsals as well as my own feelings about the direction the play was heading in.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of this data consisted of two phases. For Phase I, I designed and directed a contextual framing analysis where I co-analyzed the script along with Davina, a youth collaborator-researcher, exploring the collaborative ethnographic script, *Surviving in the Cracks*. Along with the script comes a spatial context of the many places that were part of the production, discourses of the street youth, as well as historical images and details, narrated by Davina and myself, which further illuminates how pedagogical spaces were collectively constructed through moments of critical multimodal meaning-making during the script creation. Phase II analyses highlighted pedagogical moments of resistance from a production meeting and rehearsal footage, various interviews, and focus groups to explore the roles of power, desire as reflected through the youth imaginaries, and safe and unsafe space.
Phase I: The contextual framing analysis.

Overall, this first phase of analysis represents a formative analysis that reveals the many layers of data and the processes entailed in creating the play script. This analysis reveals the collaborative critical multimodal literacies inherent in the pedagogy and made possible the secondary phase of analysis of the pedagogical moments of resistance. My intention in this first phase was to design and direct a collaborative analyses to unpack how critical multimodal meaning-making is created and negotiated by youth, while simultaneously providing a landscape for a deeper analysis (in the following Chapter Five) of the roles of power, desire, and space within multiple pedagogical moments of resistance during the creation of the play. Drawing on examples of scholars who have published, historically situated, and analyzed scripts within publications (Edell, 2012; Edminston, 2000; Goldstein, 2001; Gonzalez, 2007; Medina, 2004; Medina, Belliveau, & Weltsek, 2007; Nogueira, 2006; Smith, 1993; Thompson, 2003, 2009; Tierney, 2001), I situate the script as a collaborative analysis of the youth stories while living on the streets. These youth chose to disseminate their analysis in the form of a theatrical production as a way to ‘educate’ the public on the consequences they faced from losing funding for the underage safe houses in which many of them once lived. The script is situated historically, culturally, and spatially in the following chapter in the form of a contextual framing analysis in order to better comprehend the study as a whole and best represent the youth explorations of their collaborative stories of living in the underage safe houses and the unsafe spaces they ended up in when the safe houses were closed. It is interwoven with multiple histories, collaboratively created by the eight youth actors, five university researchers, and one documentary film student in numerous sittings over the course of two months. The final productions of Surviving in the Cracks used a range of multimodal literacies to retell the
youth stories, including journal entries, narrated stories, media of interviews of past safe
house staff, local art work and music, CBC media footage, and theatrical costuming and
lighting.

In October 2012, three years after the play was written, I spent an afternoon reading
through the script with Davina in order to historically and spatially situate the events and
stories. I typed our notes as we both dictated how, where and why certain stories or moments
were captured within the script. Davina’s thoughts are articulated in italicized text on the
right hand side of the script in Chapter Four. Along with these contextualizing thoughts are
my added images and non-italicized thoughts. Permission has been given to use all images,
which were taken from the play program (Beck, 2009) and the public documentary film,
Surviving in the Cracks (Masuda, 2011). The script included in Chapter Four seeks to reveal
the multiple reals of the youth and researchers involved in the study (Talburt, 2003), and is
layered with memories and realities of all who were involved in the creative process. The
university researchers’ intent was to do research with the youth to deconstruct their authority
in the research and/or writing process. Interest in this type of research has led to:

“multivocal” texts and explorations of attempts to let the data, the subjects, speak for
themselves. Researchers have tried differing writing and representation styles to
accomplish this including writing data as a play, as a literary story, or as a split
multivoiced text (Eisner, 1997; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Richardson, 1994; Sanders,
1999) … These “textual reflexivity” (Macbeth, 2001) practices attempt to address and
at times problematize the work of writing representations. (Pillow, 2003, p. 179)
Davies et al. (2004) also suggest that “any tale told is merely one of many possible depictions” (p. 5). Thus, your reading of the *Surviving in the Cracks* script along with the corresponding analysis will be yet another depiction.

**Phase II: Coding and visual analysis of pedagogical moments.**

The purpose of the Phase II analysis (findings reported in Chapter Five) is to look at how and why resistance is evident within embodied forms of pedagogy by exploring how:

- power is negotiated between the youth, youth leaders, and university researchers
- desire is manifested through youth imaginaries related to living on the streets,
- and how safe and unsafe spaces are generated by the community of youth.

To further illustrate an example of desire within the data, I frame it as being reflected through the youth imaginaries while acting within the rehearsal space; their desires were magnified through the use of drama. For instance, during an improvisation while rehearsing ‘Scene 2: A Social Worker’s Office’, Davina, in-role as a social worker, explained that she had too many papers to look at and she proposed that the Ministry distribute moneys to all underage safe houses. This improvisation, having not been scripted, demonstrated how Davina embodied an imagined desire through the use of drama, along with the other youth who join the improvisation in the rehearsal space.

My unit of analysis are 10 selected pedagogical moments of resistance that reflect moments that changed the direction that the production was heading, pointed out conflict, that moved the youth towards or away from a goal, or that aroused intense feelings.

*Visual methodologies.*

Chapter Five’s visual and textual discourse was initially informed by a visual methodologies analysis framework suggested by visual ethnographers Gillian Rose (1996)
and Sarah Pink (2007), as well as by visual methodology dialogues I had with colleague Anne Wessels (Wager & Wessels, 2014). Pink (2007) suggested that the practices of traditional ethnography made use of the visual by translating it into textual format, and she engaged in this practice by stating that visual ethnography demands more than just translation, suggesting that it is more productive to “explore the relationship between the visual and other (including verbal) knowledge” (p. 119). Within my contextual framing analysis in Chapter Four and my pedagogical moments of resistance analysis in Chapter Five, I form just one representation of the research through a contextualization and weaving together of words and images.

In the initial stage of analysis, I co-analyzed footage with a participant, expanding on similar video co-analysis research completed by drama pedagogue Julie Dunn (2010) and Kathleen Gallagher (2007a, 2007b, 2008) as well as her more recent work with Barry Freeman (2011), which puts to use participatory digital drama methodologies and shared modes of data analysis. Dunn (2010) offered practical examples from her data analysis experiments while viewing video with a colleague through collaborative conversations during the video-analysis stage, and suggested that this form of representation captures multiple perspectives while thickening the data set. As I describe in my research journal at the beginning of this chapter and again below, the initial stage of my collaborative video analysis began by viewing the video data with Davina, a youth leader who was also a participant within the research:

davina has offered to analyze and member-check the video data with me on friday afternoons for the next few months. . . . re-opening this raw footage, i decided to leave the possibilities open for davina to decide what to do. i told her to pick any piece (of the 35 hours of video) and that we would watch it. i didn’t give her much background information. i had just bought a composition
lined notebook after picking her up from the bus. We were sitting in my living room with my computer hooked up to a big screen. She would tell me which fragment to play and we would watch it while commenting. Davina has two children, who are now six and eight years old. . . . They are usually with Davina — by her side. . . . Anyways, although we did do some analyzing of the space and the personalities from the footage, most of the time Davina commented on how small and beautiful and cute her kids were.

(A. Wager, researcher journal, October 19, 2012)

Our conversations while viewing the footage collaboratively thickened my data set, but also led me to ask more questions, such as: How do my participant’s commentaries (while watching the videos) relate to other parts of her life then and now (e.g., her children, her relationships with other cast members), and what discourses does she refer to in her comments and discussions of the footage (Pink, 2007)? Realizing that these questions were beyond the scope of this study, and with a desire to expand on Chapter Four’s collaborative analysis with Davina, I chose to continue the Phase II analysis found in Chapter Five independently after two 3-hour viewings with Davina.

However, while viewing the footage with Davina and more recently with colleague Anne Wessels for a conference presentation, we recognized that our seeing was shaped, however unintentionally, by the filmmaker (Wager & Wessels, 2014). Firstly, each rehearsal or meeting was filmed in 20 or more fragments, which ranged from a few seconds to a few minutes long. Secondly, the filmmaker was very much in the process of learning how to use the camera and microphone, which was often evident in his interruptive “testing, testing” or while the camera was out of focus, either on a wall or the floor, and many unedited clips during drama work excluded certain cast members who were in the room. Consequently as a researcher, I determined that video data filmed with one camera represents only one point of view and excludes what lies beside and beyond its lens (Wager & Wessels, 2014) and
therefore it cannot be anything more than a partial representation of what was happening in the room, imbued with power relations that both structure the image and the subsequent meaning making (Rose, 2007, p. 283).

For this reason, Rose (2007) claimed that it is important to analyze the “mode of production”, to explore who is producing the video and to what ends. Emphasis is also placed on the reception of the work and the positionality of the researcher(s) observing and analyzing the data, instead of only focusing on the content of the video. Like Pink, she does not seek to analyze visual data as “straight forward mirrors of reality” but focuses on the ways in which images function to “produce a particular representation of the world” (p. 283).

Woven through my analysis are questions of construction, creation and reception of the video images and content. Much of the rehearsal and meeting footage shows the youth awareness or discomfort towards the presence of the camera, and their decisions to be in or out of the spotlight. As Rose (2012) suggests, it is important to expand the analysis beyond the content and discourse of the video to also consider the conditions and practices of the video production and our audiencing.

*Visual and textual discourse methodologies.*

Discourse has a quite specific meaning. It refers to groups of statements that structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. In other words, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it. (Rose, 2012, p. 190)

Discourses can be articulated through a diversity of forms, including both images and text. Through an intertextuality of discourses, certain aspects are made visible in specific
ways while others are left unseen. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s (1978) notion of power and knowledge, I frame discourse as powerful because it saturates society in a productive form. Often times this productivity stems from the resistances that occur due to the discourses. Within the filmed data, I explored how “subjects and objects are discursively produced … paying attention to the more socially constituted forms of discursive power, looking at the social construction of difference and authority” (Rose, 2012, p. 194). In the footage, I paid attention to how the notion of discourse is unpacked through visual images and verbal texts. Language is key to discourse analysis, but within drama and literacy pedagogy I depicted language as being embodied, communicated orally and through the body. Drawing on Rose’s (2012) interpretation of a Foucauldian visual discourse analysis, I analyzed the film data using the following method (p. 220):

- Viewed rehearsal footage with a youth leader during two 3-hour sittings. Jotted down notes/phrases of our observations while watching the footage.
- Independently viewed footage of two specific rehearsals.
- Independently:
  - Uploaded the footage to NVivo 10, a qualitative data analysis software program.
  - Divided the rehearsal footage into five-minute increments.
  - Added previous notes taken with the participant to the software program.
  - Used initial and descriptive coding for each five-minute increment (each five minute increment had approximately 25 codes).
- Grouped the 581 total codes into 19 thematic groups.
• Reviewed the 19 thematic groups, identifying the key theme of resistance with sub-codings of power, desire, and space.

• Uploaded all data to NVivo 10 (interviews, focus groups, etc.).

• Coded all data for key themes of resistance with sub-codings of power, desire, and space.

• Viewed data for ten pedagogical moments of resistance containing relevant themes of power, desire, and space.

As previously stated, my film analysis began with two 3-hour collaborative viewings of the footage with Davina, a youth leader. After taking and incorporating notes on our discussions of the data, I then conducted an independent analysis of two evening rehearsals, using open coding methods with NVivo 10 software to find key themes within the data. After splitting the hour and half long films into five-minute segments, I descriptively coded minute-by-minute, choosing thematic words to represent pedagogical moments that I saw occurring.

These rehearsals took place between 5pm and 8pm at a local hospital, with the first rehearsal on May 21st, 2009 and the second on June 11th, 2009. Footage for the first rehearsal is one hour and 33 minutes in length while the second rehearsal footage is 56 minutes. These two particular rehearsals were chosen as initial coding sources because of the variety of youth who attended, the power dynamics between them and also because of the institutionalized space and its impact on the rehearsal that day. In the first rehearsal footage, only four participants (Amethyst, Cody, Mike, Dave) and one youth leader (Trevor), the filmmaker (Greg), and the director/researcher (Amanda) were present. In the second rehearsal footage, four youth participants (Cody, Mike, Amethyst, Dave) and all three youth
leaders (Davina, Fraggle, Trevor), the filmmaker (Greg), and the director/researcher (Amanda) were present.

Following my first round of collaborative analysis and further rounds of individual descriptive coding of footage from both rehearsals, I had 581 codes. Looking for similarities and overlaps, I grouped these codes into 19 groups (in order of the most codes to least codes): acting, organization, leadership, food, life history, resistance, progress, comfort, physical presence, spaces, discomfort, pick and play, interruption, money, imaginaries, drugs, camera recognition, final performance, community. This initial round of coding reassured me that the themes of power, desire, and space during resistant moments were present throughout the data. I then used NVivo 10 software to code pedagogical moments of resistance within the remaining footage, focus group, interviews, script, field notes, youth journal, and director’s journal for sub-codings of power, desire, and space. Finally, I re-viewed the data, searching for ten pedagogical moments of resistance where either power, desire, or space was evident. After choosing the 10 moments, I completed a detailed visual discourse analysis (Rose, 2012) of each pedagogical moment of resistance, noting complexities and contradictions, and the visible as well as the invisible. The 10 pedagogical moments presented in Chapter Five include a description of each resistant moment and discuss themes of power, desire, or space that are unveiled within layers of data.

**Core Research Values: Reliability, Reflexivity and Representation**

There is no final textual solution, no way of resolving the dialogic of the interpreter/interpreted or subject/object through efforts to ‘place’ ourselves in the text, or to represent the ‘fieldwork experience’, or to gather up the voices of the other as if they could speak themselves. (Stewart, 1996, p. 210)
A major critique of critical ethnography is that the emphasis on the researchers’ positionality and reflexivity produces a biased, subjective report, which contrasts with the foundations of traditional empirical approaches to research (Anderson, 1986). As critical ethnographer Kathleen Stewart reflects above, there is no way to truly represent those being studied – all is left to interpretation and representation by the ethnographer and yet even more layers of interpretations by those audiences reading the work. Through reflexivity, critical ethnography may represent a more complete picture of what occurs during the fieldwork, acknowledging that research reports are merely representations of the researchers’ historical, social, cultural, and spatial positioned perspectives. In this regard, it is hard to acknowledge ethnographic work, both conventional and critical, as anything other than “inherently interpretive, subjective, and partial” (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 45).

In order for my work to have reliability, I used tools of inquiry such as multiple data sources, interviews and follow-up interviews, collaboratively analyzing the script and data footage with a youth leader, and carefully laying out my visual discourse analysis to account for complexities, contradictions and invisible aspects, all while paying attention to detail (Rose, 2012). Collaboratively analyzing the script with a youth leader offered multiple perspectives of the same data, especially since much of the time we analyzed ourselves within the data. This shared analysis generated valuable dialogue and opened up this work to the possibility of collaborative analytical practices. I also extended an invitation to all youth, youth leaders, university researchers, and professors involved in the project to review my analysis, and send email updates on any conference presentations and publications.

As a researcher, I strive to be continually reflexive by journaling throughout my fieldwork, analysis, and writing process, carefully coding all data multiple times, checking
my coding with supervisors and professors, and continuously member-checking and conversing with the youth. My relationships with many of the youth are ongoing - I converse with Davina on a weekly basis, as I often edit her university work and continue our conversations about my analysis of the play, and I meet with Trevor and Fraggle sporadically to talk about their life happenings and to member-check my analyses. Over the years, I have visited Natasha several times, who could not participate in the play due to an unexpected pregnancy, to discuss my analysis of the play and our current lives as mothers while our children play together.

My ongoing praxis of reflexivity takes into account both my social locations as the author (autobiographical) and issues of representation (text), as I believe that both autobiographical and textual reflexivity are a central process of critical qualitative research (MacBeth, 2001). Autobiographical reflexivity being when I interrogate and make explicit my multiple social locations (gender, race, cultural background, sexual identification, class and so on) as active influencers on the co-construction of every aspect of my research; textual reflexivity being when I conduct the process of de- or reconstructing the textual representation and interpretation of my research. As such, I am moved by and drawn to postmodern theorists who epistemologically describe a subject as “multiple, as unknowable, as shifting” (Pillow, p. 177), while also drawing on methodologies situated in critical theory, striving for change and social justice.

What I do know, in regards to my research, is that I am not a youth anymore. I am a teacher, an artist, an activist, and a researcher who is engaged in researching the Other. No matter how much I would like to look at it in other terms, I cannot deny this. With the eight street youth participants, we built particular relationships together, with certain relationships
much stronger than others. Undeniably, I accept that I am the interpreter, and that this thesis is my interpretation from this particular time and space in my life.

**Framework Summary**

This chapter explained how I framed my design of inquiry as a critical ethnography, reiterated the purpose of my research through articulation of my research questions, explained the methodological tools used, characterized the context, participants, and researchers, described the multiple data sources, explained how I analyze the data in the following two chapters, and how I sought reliability within this study. The following two chapters dive into the data through a contextual framing analysis of the script analyzed with a youth participant and through a selection of key pedagogical moments of resistance.
Chapter Four: *Surviving in the Cracks*: A Collaborative Ethnographic Script

Greg (documentary filmmaker): What’s the whole objective of the play?

Davina (youth leader): To create awareness about what it’s like to live on the streets and how vital resources are to young children. (Masuda, 2011)

This chapter is a contextualizing analysis of the script *Surviving in the Cracks*. The script and performances are critical multimodal literacy representations of the youth analyses of their collaborative stories of living in the underage safe houses and the unsafe spaces they ended up in when the safe houses were closed. As noted earlier, Davina (one of the youth leaders) and I spent an afternoon reading through the script together, noting historical events and spatial elements to further shape the story. Davina’s thoughts are included in *italicized* text on the right hand side of the script. Along with these contextualizing thoughts are my added images and non-italicized thoughts, including a map, photos, set floor plans for the various scenes, costume and prop information, and still images taken from the public documentary. All images are taken from the play program (Beck, 2009) and the documentary film, *Surviving in the Cracks* (Masuda, 2011).

*S surviving in the Cracks*: The Creation Story

After the first two months of rehearsals doing community building, initial brainstorming, and journaling, in the midst of a rehearsal the youth resisted exploring characters any further and demanded that the three youth leaders and university researchers write the script, postponing all future meetings until this task was accomplished. Prior to that meeting, we collaboratively brainstormed and created an outline for the play (see Figure 2 below), as Jeff a university researcher describes below on the field notes blog:
Amanda brought along a pile of cardboard and markers. We spent the entire time in a circle around the cardboard throwing out general and specific ideas about the play. From a process perspective, it seemed to be quite a useful exercise for everyone - it was a very participatory way of getting the youth to see how their individual experiences could 'fit' into the overall story they are aiming to tell:

- The play should be a juxtaposition between mainstream discourse and individual experiences/consequences. This could be accomplished through the use of visuals (news headlines) and oral excerpts (letters to the editor) which would build up a sense of 'noise' that deafens the audience to the real and lived consequences of society's negligence toward vulnerable youth.

- Individual experiences could be based both on recreating specific events and relationships as well as through testimonials

- There should not be a 'resolution' in the play (i.e., happy ending, tragic ending) - no ending at all! Rather, the play should be about the loss of individuality/identity

One idea was to have the actors go through gradual costume changes from very creative expressions of their individual identities to complete black. This could set the stage for the last scene, which would be the actors lined up, all in black, with signs or masks covering their faces showing them as numbers/statistics and reading these statistics in the same way as the 'news/noise' that formed the background of the earlier scenes. Numbers could include mortality rates, disease statistics, crime, etc., etc. - the individuals literally/metaphorically become numbers (they 'disappear', fall into the cracks) (J. Masuda, field notes, March 22, 2009)
The next all-cast meeting/rehearsal I described as ‘slow’ below because we did not have a script written:

**Director’s Journal: Sunday, March 29, 2009**

Present: Dave, Cody, Raven, Mike, Davina, Amethyst, Laura, Sean, Amanda, Fraggle

Yesterday was a bit slow. We are at a stand still right now because we really need to write a script. It was decided at break that next Sunday Laura and I will go to Davina’s house to write the script. I think this will really come in handy. It takes a lot longer than any of us realize to write a script. So hopefully we can at least get started and move on from there. So other than making that decision, we did start doing some improves concerning the ideas we already had written down on the cardboard last week. It was not the most successful rehearsal. But nothing is going to be until we actually get a script on paper.

We canceled the next meeting so that the three youth leaders—Davina, Fraggle, and Trevor—together with two of the five university researchers—Laura and I—could write the play. The script was created from a diverse collection of experiences: journal entries from time in a community centre where rehearsals took place, home journal responses for the play, stories of life in the safe house and unsafe experiences of living on the streets, and collaborative youth and researcher script writing meetings in Davina’s home and a nearby café. The first three-hour sitting was in Davina’s living room, with the Cardboard Brainstorms Images (Figure 2) hung on Davina’s living room walls to support our playwriting process and to help us stay as true to the youth desired outline as possible. Fraggle, Davina, and Trevor created and narrated the dialogue of the play while I scripted the play. We wrote the majority of Act I during this meeting.
The next week, Davina, Fraggle and I continued to write the play during another three-hour sitting in Davina’s living room. Davina and Fraggle again created and dictated the script while I typed. Using my playwriting experience with elementary youth in my past classrooms, I would at times interrupt the dialoguing process to help push the scene forward. We finished writing Act I and wrote Act II Scene 7: Bated Youth, together that evening. Following the second sitting, Laura and I scripted three scenes for Act II from one youth journal. These three youth journal entries were responses to the following homework assignment:
The homework for the week is that each participant is to write down a one page 'testimonial' of an event/place/encounter that they have experienced (e.g. living in a squat, prison, foster care, etc.) that 'didn't have to be that way' if things were different in their lives. (J. Masuda, field notes, March 22, 2009)

After Laura and I finished scripting the scenes separately, I read all three scripted scenes to the youth author. The youth author then approved of our scripted interpretations and felt comfortable having the scenes performed by the cast and presented to the public. The last two-hour playwriting sitting was at a café near Davina’s house where Davina and I wrote Act II Scene 6: Suicide Survival. After script completion, Trevor and Fraggle edited the entire script. During rehearsals the youth made various edits, usually specific to discourse used on the streets; the youth did not perform the script verbatim; there was always room for interpretation and improvisation in our rehearsals and the two final performances.

Notes to the Reader Prior to Reading the Script

For a smoother read of the following script, I suggest reading a scene in the left hand column in its entirety first. Then, re-read each scene with the corresponding notes on the right hand side for added context and insights.

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7 In order to protect this youth, I have chosen to keep this youth anonymous due to the intensity and trauma involved in the journalled stories.
A Map: Spatial Understandings

As a spatial contextualization of the play within the city of Vancouver, I provide this map highlighting locations that are within the following script and accompanying contextualizing analysis. The purpose of this map is to provide the reader with a visual spatial experience in order to ground what follows in a spatial representation.

Figure 3. Map of Underage Safehouse Project
### Script and Contextual Framing Analysis

**Script:**
VYVC Play: “Surviving the Cracks”

| Act I | Scene 1: A Safe House | Scene 2: A Social Worker’s Office | Scene 3: Bad News | Scene 4: The Closure | Scene 5: The March | Intermission: 15 minutes | Act II | Scene 6: Suicide Survival | Scene 7: Bated Youth | Scene 8: Squatted | Scene 9: A Broken Xmas Eve | Scene 10: Becoming a Statistic | Question and Answer/Discussion |

**Contextual Framing Analysis**

The title: “Surviving in the Cracks” comes from a year before the play even started. In 2008, another VYVC youth leader (who did not participate in the final creation and production) came up with it – a random idea, in a CHIUS/VYVC meeting, and suggested we create a play about the closure of the underage safe houses.

CHIUS: Community Health Initiative by University Students (www.chius.ca) in UBC’s Faculty of Medicine, was a student-run health clinic that began in 1998 to support individuals living in the downtown eastside.

VYVC: Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition was created in 2004 in response to the closures of underage safe house in Vancouver. The original group of youth took to the streets, talked to media and empowered themselves by trying to stop the closures of places they called home. Unfortunately, these houses were eventually closed and many youth lost safe, stable housing. VYVC is still fighting for the reinstatement of these houses.

In 2006, CHIUS wanted to administer programs specifically for youth living on the street. They contacted VYVC and proposed a partnership so that youth would lead and educate youth about issues they may encounter while living on the streets. VYVC created and led workshops for CHIUS on mental and sexual health issues, fitness, first aid, and pregnancy. Fraggle, Trevor, & I [Davina] all participated and led CHIUS workshops.
Cast:

**Dave Forrester** - Raymond (house parent), Nixon (street youth), Lou (man in shelter), Jarues (bad boy). I am firstly a Father of 3. Originally came from Merritt, BC. While living in Merritt there really weren't any places to go. This has been my first experience in a play. I originally took interest in this project when my friend suggested I should come take a look. After becoming fully aware of the purpose of the play I decided to stay involved. While living in Merritt as a teen there wasn't always a safe place for me to go and this is how I related to the play. I also thought it would be a great way to raise awareness.

**Fraggle Rawk** - Keisha (street youth being bated)
Lives by the quote "It is better to die on your feet then to live on your knees." Rowdy and rebellious. Passionate and persuasive. Although this is my first venture into the art of live theatre, I’ve found much inspiration within the process. I am very happy to have been a part of this group!

**Mike D.** - Liam (safe house youth), Cliff (suicide youth), John (man in shelter), Seth (bad boy).
Mike was born on a Military Base in CFB Gage Town, New Brunswick. He moved to East Van to live with his mother in a two bedroom apartment in the Mount Pleasant area when he was 13 years old, he has taken Drama 8, 9, 10, and Theatre 11 & 12 during high school. Mike has been an extra in some major budget films since 2004.

**Trevor Coturn** - Kevin (safe house/street youth).
I am 21 years of age and I have been involved with Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition for about three and a half years now. I am so very pleased to be apart of this play because of what the Safe houses mean to my peers. I have currently not worked in theatre, but am passionate about advocating for young people’s rights.

Figure 4. Cast Bios

Acts and Scenes:

The stories of Act I, life within an underage safe house, are based on Davina’s memories. She lived at the underage safe houses for the longest period of time, in comparison to the other cast members. Act I, Scene 2: A Social Worker’s Office was a collaborative story created by the cast, incorporating their similar experiences of living in care. Act II consists of unsafe stories of living on the streets that the youth shared during our rehearsals, either through journal entries or narrated stories. Scene 10: Becoming a Statistic was Fraggle’s idea of how to embody the idea that youth living on the street are not just a statistic, but are surviving every day.

The Cast:

These photos and bios are from the *Surviving in the Cracks* program. The photos were taken by Greg Masuda, documentary filmmaker, and the bios were written by each cast member during a rehearsal one month prior to the final production on June 19th, 2009. Jaime Beck, a UBC master’s student in Education, graciously volunteered to design the program.

Natasha, who is not pictured on the left, played all of Trevor’s and Fraggle’s parts up until a week before the production. Prior to this, Trevor and Fraggle were youth leaders, organizers, provided childcare, and stage managers; they had no desire to act in the play. The last two months of rehearsal, Natasha stopped showing up due to an unexpected pregnancy. One week before the final production, Trevor and Fraggle officially took on Natasha’s roles.
Cody had the most difficult part being the “bad boy” in Act II Scene 9; although no other male [in the cast] would have played the part as well. In retrospect, since Cody was the youngest cast member, it would have been better to give such an aggressive male role to an older cast member.

We decided as a group that roles written from youth histories would not be played by those same youth. In all cases, in order to protect the youth identities and from reliving traumatic experiences, they never played themselves.

Set:
Ironworks Studio was awesome because of the lay out of it: a very open stage from one wall to the other wall. We created different spaces in one large open space. It was too small though. It was very packed for our one night. People were standing. I wish we could have afforded to rent the studio for more nights.

We did two performances: one at the Gathering Place, an adult shelter, and two nights later another at Ironworks Studios (http://www.theironworks.ca/events09_June.htm). Our main focus was the performance at Ironworks. We had a very difficult time finding a venue that was available and that we could afford. The cast chose Ironworks as the main venue, but we only had funds for one performance. That performance sold out and we had to turn people away at the door. The main audience members were community members, friends, and family. Ministry members did not respond to our invitations nor did they attend the show.
**Set:**
Two stages on either side of a large street scene backdrop. Each stage will be used for different scenes.
*Stage Left: Safe House, Drop-in Centre, Squat*
*Stage Right: Social Workers Office, Shelter, Hospital, Laundromat, Party House*
Street scene backdrop in the middle: one large street scene graffiti art (Laundromat in background painted all the way on left side, a bus stop is painted all the way on the right side)

**ACT I**
Lights up Stage Right.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR:**
(All letters to the editor are read by an actor sitting at a table Stage Left pretending to type on a computer during scene changes. Actors are dressed in civilian clothes, some in suits, etc.)

**Sheila:** Dear Editor, I have been an avid reader of your newspaper for 25 years. I must say, I’m not surprised to see your article from last Thursday about how BC is the number one destination of homeless people in Canada. I live on Granville, and I have to say that over the last several years, I’ve noticed more and more kids on the street, either sleeping, or panhandling, or just loitering about. Now, I consider myself a socially...
progressive kind of woman. Heck, I even voted for the NDP last election – for whatever worth that was. But I’m starting to get concerned about the impact of these people on my community. It seems like every week, I hear my neighbours and local business folks talking about crime, the fights, and the impact on businesses in the area. Where are all these kids coming from, and where are they staying? Signed, Greta from Granville.

Black out.

Projection:
The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) defines “Safe House” and “Youth” according to section 12.1 of the Child, Family, and Community Services Act. “A safe house is a voluntary youth-centred service intended to provide short-term protective accommodation on an emergency crisis-intervention basis to primarily high risk youth.”

Interview Video (around 2 min.)
Question: How would you define a “safe house”?
(Filmed interviews of safe house staff projected for all Interview Videos.)

Davina’s two friends, local community artists, volunteered to paint our street scene backdrop. I got the larger material for the drop from some random theatre artists while walking down the street. They had a garage full of theatre stuff and I asked them if they could donate the material. The spray-paint was donated from the City of Vancouver’s RestART (Restorative Justice through Art) community program (http://vancouver.ca/news-calendar/restart-workshop-and-mural-deterring-illegal-graffiti.aspx). Davina contacted RestART and explained the purpose of the play. We then visited their centre and were given a healthy supply of spray paint for the community artists to use.

Figure 8. Community Artists Painting Street Scene Backdrop

Interview Video:
Between each scene there was footage projected of interviews Fraggle and Davina conducted with cast members and staff members from the underage safe houses. I (Davina) came up with idea of the interviews and projections. Fraggle came up with the questions (Appendix B).
SCENE 1: A Safe House
Lights up on the Safe House (Stage Left). There is a couch, a table and four chairs to eat at. People are waking up, eating, watching TV. Normal morning llam activities. Liam is playing video games. Kile is sleeping in the other room. Kevin is bugging Raymond.

Liam: This level is so hard. I can’t believe that I have been up for three hours trying to beat this shit!

Raymond: Maybe you should take a break. You can come back to it and beat it in a minute.

Liam: I’ve been waiting to talk to Kile, but he’s still asleep. Can you go get him?

Kevin: (carrying a fairy costume) Hey Raymond, you remember last Halloween when I got you to wear my fairy costume!

Laughter from Liam.
Liam: Eh Raymond, I bet pink’s your favourite colour?

Kevin: I liked your big hairy chest.

Raymond: Ok that’s enough – uh – it’s March. Halloween was like a year ago . . .

Kevin puts on the fairy wings.

We wanted to get as much input as possible from the people that were part of the safe houses, in order to create the most accurate picture. Greg agreed to go with us and film the interviews. All interviewees were asked the same questions and then we picked a couple of the best answers/interviews to have playing back-to-back for each question and projected during the play.

Scene 1: A Safe House
These were typical events that happened at an underage safe house from my experiences of living at safe houses. Fraggle, Laura, Trevor, me and Amanda wrote this scene while sitting in my apartment with the Cardboard Brainstorms hanging around us. Amanda typed the play while people dictated [role-played] the language. We would debate some words and say “come on, who the fuck says that?”

This is based on the true events of Mitchell Pleet, who lived and worked as a staff member in the safe house when I lived there. One of the youth was going to come trick-or-treating with us but she came home really high. She asked him to wear her fairy costume and go trick-or-treating for her. And he did. There were other staff working there – there were always two. A staff member lived in the safe house for four days on, three days off. Trevor was so angry at Natasha for having to take her part and wear her fairy wings.

What kind of language did youth use in the safe house? I swore all the time. The first time I met Mitch I walked in the back door, said “Who the fuck are you?” and then back out the front door of the safe house. Police said “oh don’t worry we will catch her again in a few hours”. I hung out on Granville Street downtown. The police interrogate you all the time. They know you after a while. They took me to Adolescent Street Youth services at first – the social worker agency. An intake social worker decided what
**Liam:** Where is Kile? Can you wake him up?

**Kile:** (coming out of his room and very grumpy) . . Could you all keep it down! I had a rough night last night. I’m trying to fucking sleep.

**Kevin:** Kile it’s 11:30 in the morning. You should be awake anyways.

**Kile:** (angry and then realizing that Kevin is wearing fairy wings.) What the hell are you doing? (laughing) Nice wings ya weirdo!

**Kevin:** Oh thanks, they’re Ray’s.

**Liam:** Hey dude can you help me get passed the Temple Boss. He keeps killing me with his fireballs.

**Kile:** Oh yeah I know exactly where that is. (Kile goes on the couch with Liam and plays the video game.)

Kevin becomes bored and starts flying around throwing fairy dust. He first goes to Raymond who is cooking. Raymond laughs and continues cooking. When there is no reaction, he then heads for the boys.

**Kevin:** (In front of the television – so boys can’t play). “You can fly! You can fly! I am Tinkerbell!” (He trips over the extension should happen to you. I was taken there quite a few times and in-and-out of the safe houses a bunch.

Did youth who lived in the safe house go to school? **You didn't have to do anything** – it was **very low barriers but the staff would work with you to try to achieve your own goals**, such as to getting off drugs or going to counselling. **I remember a couple of people going to school.**

![Figure 9. Scene 1: Natasha in-role as Keesha](image)

The role of “Kevin” was originally named “Keesha” when Natasha had that part. When Trevor took on that role we changed the name to “Kevin”.

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chord, TV unplugs, Liam is pissed and throws the control and stands up.)

**Liam:** (screaming!) WHAT ARE YOU DOING? DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THIS?

**Kevin:** You haven’t been working hard. You’ve been in the same place for the last three hours.

**Kile:** (laughing) Shitty deal man . . .

**Liam:** You think it’s funny!?!? I thought you were trying to help me!

Kevin is laughing in the background. Liam goes to hit him. Raymond comes in between them.

**Raymond:** (to Kevin) You need to find another place where you are not bothering anyone else to play fairy. (to Liam) and you need to calm down. It’s just a video game.

**Kile laughs.**

(to Kile) And you need to stay out of this if you can’t be supportive. Chill the hell out everyone. Let’s eat lunch.

Silence.

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![Figure 10. Scene 1: Trevor in-role as Kevin](image)

It was the norm that youth would get pissed about something stupid, blow-up, then be done and move on.

Our favourite meal at the safe house was pancakes. I used to tell Mitch I liked pancakes just to mess with him so he would make them. But we decided that pancakes were too hard to make for the play and BLTs were easier.
**Kevin:** (looks down, hesitantly says) Sorry man. I was just bored.

**Raymond:** That was cool. Thanks for apologizing . . .

**Liam:** Okay fine. I’m going to go have a smoke first though. *(Liam exits to street scene.)*

**Kile:** (looking at Raymond . . . sarcastically) Ok then, I guess I’ll go talk to him.

**Raymond:** *(yelling after them)* Made your favourite for lunch – BLT’s! Quick Black out. Lights up Stage Right.

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**LETTER TO THE EDITOR BEING READ:**

**Doug:** Dear Editor, Now that we know the Olympics are coming to Vancouver, and soon enough the eyes of the world will be gazing upon our mostly fair and beautiful city! The reason I say "mostly" is that there is a certain element of our population that is going to be a HUGE embarrassment to us all if we don’t find some solutions fast. You know who I’m talking about - all those dirty bums that I have to keep stepping over every time I walk down the street. This problem is not only in the Downtown Eastside, but it’s spread like a virus all over the city - on Commercial Drive, Main, 4th Ave, even Point Grey! Why don’t the cops do something about

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*Figure 11. Scene 1 of our Performance at Ironworks Studios*

*Figure 12. Davina and Fraggle’s Interview with Safe House “Parent” and Youth Worker Yvette*
this and start giving more tickets to these people to get them off the street. And the street kids are no better – if something isn't done these kids are just going to graduate from hobo school and become full-grown adult bums themselves. Can't someone at the city just buy a few buses and ship them back to the reservation and hick towns where they all come from? Signed, Doug from the Drive

Black out.

**Projection:**
The Underage Safe House was one of the community initiatives that came out of the British Columbian Provincial Government’s Vancouver Action Plan for Sexually Exploited Youth in 1994 (Ministry of Social Services, 1996).

**Interview Video (around 2 min.)**
Question: How do you feel the safe houses played a role in sexually exploited youth?

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**SCENE 2: A Social Worker’s Office**

Lights up Stage Right on Social workers’ office. Claudet and Carol are sitting at a desk stacked with papers talking.

**Scene 2: A Social Worker’s Office**
Fraggle came up with the name Claudet – I remember her goofy-ass laugh. We were thinking of the evil 101 Dalmatian’s lady. But actually her name is Cruela!

All of the information in this scene was accurate. We wanted it to be accurate. We took the information from articles. There were a lot of youth, children, and women programs cancelled at the end of the fiscal year 2004 when there was one authority change to two authorities – one was Aboriginal the other non-Aboriginal: Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Aboriginal Support Services (VACFASS) and Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The government decided to give Aboriginal people back the ability to decide what would happen to their kids. The Aboriginal monies were allocated to five hubs in BC. And then they were given the power to distribute money and the contracts. They were given less money to give to the hubs. The hub for Vancouver came from a Native Youth Organization (UNYA). They had to allocate the money. The majority of kids in care are Aboriginal, but the money was still split in half between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authorities.

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**Figure 13. Scene 2 in Rehearsal at the Gathering Place**
**Claudet:** *(complaining, looking through files)*
I can’t believe this – I have 56 cases. 10 of which have court this week. Five are moving into new placements. And they want me to take on seven new kids.

**Carol:** Oh I know. They just keep piling them on. I can’t even see my desk!

*Carol finds a piece of paper on her desk between the stacks. Picks it up, reads it.*

**Carol:** uuum . . . did you read this memo about the Safe houses?

**Claudet:** No, haven’t got to that one paper yet. What’s it about?

**Carol:** Well it says here . . . that yeah, apparently there are 134 contracts being terminated . . .

**Claudet:** *(cheerily)* well it’s OK. They’re just women shelters and housing for youth.

**Carol:** I don’t know if that is OK. What’s going to happen to those people?

**Claudet:** I don’t know. I just, I, I care, but there’s just so much to deal with right now . . . I have enough on my plate right now!

Quick black out. Lights up Stage Right.

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All letters were written by researcher J. Masuda who commented (personal communication, October 29, 2012):

“To re-iterate our 'process' - since the play was fictional, I simply ran some Google searches for news articles featuring topics related to our own - homeless youth, shelters, and such. Then, I read through the 'comments' section of these pages, and wrote our own letters in a way that was consistent with the overall impression I got from these. Unfortunately, I didn't take down copies of the original comments - but as you could expect, they were rife with ignorance and prejudice.”

*The Letters to the Editor were public opinion based on Jeff’s thoughts of what people were saying. All letters were Jeff’s thoughts and Jeff’s investments.*
**LETTER TO THE EDITOR BEING READ:**

**Ronald:** Dear Editor, Well, thank God, or should I say Gord, that someone is finally paying attention to what’s really important in this province, and that is the economy, stupid! I’m commenting on your newspaper’s article on the closure of those youth safe houses. While it may be sad in the short term, I believe in the long run these shelters are not only bad for the communities they’re in, but they implicitly condone kids running away from home since they provide a “safe” place for them to live! I’m of the belief that if there’s no where for kids to go, maybe they’ll be convinced to stay at home and think more carefully about their life decisions. Signed, Ronald from Kerrisdale.

*Black out.*

**Projection:**

The underage Safe Houses operated from 1995 to March 18th, 2004 at a cost of $800,000 per year. This amounted to $20 a day/per/youth. Yet, in 2004, the provincial government, citing fiscal “reorganization” released a budget that resulted in funding being cut for these safe houses: 3 safe houses in Vancouver were shut down as a result of this decision.

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**Figure 15. Davina and Fraggle’s Interview with Safe House “Parent” and Youth Worker Mitch**

**Scene 3: Bad News**

This scene might sound cheesy, but it was the reality we (the youth living in the safe houses) lived in. The safe houses were a stepping stool. The youth had people (staff members) advocating for them, supporting them, people
Interview Video (around 2 min.)
Question: Do you recall the reason for the closures of the safe houses?

Scene 3: Bad News
Lights up Stage Left on Safe House. Youth wearing different clothes. All are sitting at a table eating dinner. Billy is on the phone.

Kile: I had this math test today. It was stupidly hard.

Kevin: (laughing) What, you can’t add?

Kile: That’s right. Two plus two is five.

Liam: Well which teacher do you have? Maybe I can help you out.

Kile: Ms. Stewart. You have any of your old tests?

Kevin: Oh . . . I don’t even go to school. I’m money orientated.

Kile: Well I used to be too until I moved in here . . . until I got my life on track . . . for the first time ever.

Kevin: Your life’s on track? (laughing)

Kile: Well yeah . . . before I was on the streets selling drugs . . . and now I am at to drive them to school. The sadness and anger in this scene was definitely a reality for many of them. Some people it didn’t have any effect on, but for a lot of people it did.
the Holiday Inn!

Raymond gets off the phone.

Liam: Yeah man, tell me about it . . . this is one of the first times I’ve actually felt good about where I’m livin’!

Raymond paces distressed.

Kevin: Maybe you got a point. (eating) Food sure does taste good.

Raymond: I’ve got some news that you guys aren’t necessarily going to be all that happy about.

Kile: Great.

Raymond: I need you guys to try to be mature through this. It’s gonna be pretty hard to hear. But it’s final.

Liam: Could you get to the point? I want to go have a smoke.

Raymond: There’s no need to get angry. So let’s all stay calm.

Kevin: Ok. Stop with the build up. Let’s have it . . . did we forget to put the dishes away or something?

Mitch told me that this is how he told the kids. And this was their reaction. One of them was quiet and cried, two got angry, and the last one left. One of them talked it out with Mitch. That’s very much how it was. Kids were very desensitized to important decisions. Meaning they did not show any feelings to intense situations.
Raymond: Okay here it goes . . . the safe houses are closing.

Uproar! Kids start yelling.

Kile: What the fuck?

Kevin: Where are we supposed to go?

Liam: Are you kidding?

Raymond: No I’m not kidding. Funding has been cut.

Kevin: Well what are we supposed to do?

Liam: Fuck this. (He walks out.)

Kile: What? Didn’t you just hear what I was just talking about? This is the first time I’ve ever begun to have my shit together and NOW YOU ARE JUST GOING TO TAKE THIS ALL AWAY FROM ME . . . this is the story of my fucking life.

Black out.

Projection: With no where to go, many of the youth living in the Vancouver’s safe houses decided to organize themselves. A coalition was born: Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition.

From the program (by Davina): VYVC is a totally youth-run coalition of young adults who have been providing support to our community in various ways for the last three years. We started in early 2004 as pack of individuals defending the Underage Safe House Project. The safe houses were kept financially afloat temporarily, due to efforts from the group and others, but they were eventually knocked off the map during the market-minded “restructuring” of services that was enacted on March 31st of that year. Youth who had been so actively involved in this process refused to accept this loss of valuable support for youth in need. This energetic bunch of youth-workers-to-be decided to continue meeting weekly to both support each other and to learn ways that we can affect change on a larger scale. We called ourselves the Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition. Since then we have discovered many things about the “system” and have engaged in numerous projects with other youth serving agencies. Ray-Cam Cooperative Community Center has provided us space to work and nurturing guidance for the whole journey thus far.

Things that we do as a group include:

* Provide Peer to Peer Support
* Bridge between Youth and Services/Community
* Community Awareness/Education
* Facilitate Workshops

If you need information on accessing a youth safe house in the lower mainland please contact Davina at VYVC: dawe_ena@hotmail.com
Interview Video (around 2 min.)
Question: Do you recall the day of the closures? What was the mood?

SCENE 4: "Eviction Day"
Music playing: Johnny Cash – Hurt.
Stage Left lights up on Safe House. Darker lighting.
Raymond is taking down pictures. Kile is rolling up his bed-roll. A bunch of flyers are sitting on the kitchen table. Kevin grabs his belongings and a handful of flyers (actual flyers from the march) and walks out the door with her head down. Liam does the same. Kile grabs pamphlets and his bags, walks out the door and joins Liam in the audience. Raymond looks around the house, shakes his head, grabs some flyers and walks into the audience passing them out.

Black out.

Projection:
On March 31st, 2004 an estimated 300 supporters of the safe houses marched and protested from City Hall down to the Social Worker’s Office and then returned, continuing to protest, back to City Hall.

Interview Video (around 2 min.)
Question: How did the youth feel on the day of the closures?

In the play we used actual CBC footage from the 2004 march from the CBC archives. I collaborated and created the entire protest when I was 15, or 14. I was pretty young. I was well spoken. We thought that it was going to create awareness and show that people cared about the situation. I remember feeling really awkward leading an entire group of people - like “oh shit there are bunch of people following me”. I felt really incompetent. I didn’t like the microphone. I got lots of positive feedback and by the end of it I was ok.
SCENE 5: The March Downtown
Lights up on both stages? Actual news clips are played of the Safe House March. Actors are holding signs.

Quick black out. Lights up Stage Right.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
Diane: Dear Editor, The other day I encountered quite a spectacle that I just had to share with the citizens of Vancouver who didn’t get a chance to see it. I’m talking about the march of homeless kids I saw protesting the closure of their social housing shelters. Geez, if these kids could just put as much effort into getting a job and doing their homework, maybe we wouldn’t need these shelters in the first place! I’m glad to see the government getting tough with these free riders. Diane from Davie Street

Black out for at least five seconds – house lights come up for intermission.

INTERMISSION: 15 minutes
Music video playing: The Main Offenders: Slum of the City, Four/tay: Problems (plus lyrics)

ACT II
Throughout Act II actors are wearing half masks (mouths are not covered). The masks represent that the actors change characters. Actors clothes have become dirty dark and
raggedy from living in the streets.

Black out. Lights up on Stage Right.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:
Bob: Dear Editor, I am a commuter who lives in Burnaby and works downtown. Needless to say, I’m doing my part as the city gets prepared for the upcoming Olympics every morning and afternoon as I wait in long lines of single lane traffic trying to get across the construction along Cambie. So what is with all of these “anti-Olympic” activists who feel like they’re not getting their fair share of the pie, so to speak, when it comes to fringe benefits of the Olympics. To all those activists out there, listen, we are all suffering our fair share! Signed, Bob from my Blackberry while Backed up on Broadway

Black out.

Projection:
On the street, youth, many of whom suffer from mental illness, are exposed to drug dealers who would exploit their vulnerabilities. The 2005 Homeless Count revealed that just over half of homeless youth had addictions. Seeing no way out of their circumstances, many of these youth turn to thoughts of suicide. Suicide and overdose are the two leading causes of death to street youth in Canada.
Interview Video (around 2 min.)
Question: Do you think the safe houses played a role with suicidal youth?

SCENE 6: Suicide Survival
Lights up Stage Right on a hospital discharge room.

Nurse: All right Cliff. Is someone here to pick you up?

Cliff: (lying) Oh yeah sure. My aunt is waiting outside in the car . . . (confidently) she can’t come in because she has her kids in the car with her.

Nurse: (hesitantly) You know, I would really feel comfortable if I was able to speak with her in regards to your medications.

Cliff: No worries, I am sure she would like to be up here too, but she knows I’m bi-polar . . . she’s been paying for my prescription for years. Plus when I get them refilled the pharmacist can go over it again with her.

Nurse: Ok, well here is 5 days worth of lithium and paxil. And here are some sleeping pills to continue with regulating your sleep schedule. You are on some pretty high dosages so follow the directions on the container carefully. You only have 5 days though, so your aunt needs to bring you to the

Scene 6: Suicide Survival
This was the last scene written. Davina and I sat on a café patio around the corner from Davina’s house. At one point during our writing session, Davina called her foster mother for advice on the uses of medications in this scene. A girl who lived in foster care with Davina had gone in and out of the hospital and psych ward because she had drug induced psychosis. Davina knew that if someone was bipolar or schizophrenic that lithium and paxil are possible medications given. Davina was the main writer of this scene, and I gave input.

Figure 25. Set Arrangement for Scene 6

Lighting:
For the Ironworks Studios performance we originally planned to have a volunteer lighting technician from Homeless Nation (http://www.homelessnation.org/). He had seen our first performance at the Gathering Place and asked how he could help. An hour before the Ironworks Studios performance, and after a terrible final run-through, the volunteer quit. In that hour I quickly created a script with the lighting cues
pharmacist soon. Remember there is no reason to wait until the last day.

Cliff: Sure. (trying to leave)

Nurse: Are you sure that you don’t want me to escort you out and I could speak with her?

Cliff is trying to leave.

Cliff: (very polite) No, but thank you. I’ll just go over it with her when we get home. She’s in a hurry and her kids really need to get to their soccer game. They can’t be late. Gotta run (starts leaving).

Nurse: (yelling after him). Well take care of yourself Cliff. I hope to not see you here again.

Lights down on Stage Right. Lights up Street Scene and Stage Left.

Cliff exits quickly onto the street scene. Looks around. Walks over to the other side of the street scene and sits down on the edge of the stage. This side of the stage is a Drop-in Youth Centre.

Cassidy: Hey, Cliff? Where ya been?

Cliff: You know I’ve been travelling a bit . . . back east.

(Figure 44). Ironworks had four stage lights: upward arrows referred to ‘lights up’ and downward arrows to ‘lights down’. Sean Nixon, instead of reading his Letter to the Editor, took over the lighting technician position at the last minute. Having only one hour to prepare and no view of the stage from where the light switches are, he did a fantastic job.

The name Nixon was taken from researcher Sean Nixon because he was super busy at the end of the project, so we found a way to keep him involved since he started the entire thing.

Sean Nixon was part of CHIUS and first contacted VYVC youth to come in
Cassidy: Wow – you look great!

Cliff: Yeah, thanks Cassidy.

Cassidy: See ya around.

Cliff walks over, grabs a sandwich and sits down on a couch. A friend walks up, Nixon, they give each other props and Nixon sits down on the couch with him.

Nixon: Good to see you man. You weren’t doin so well last time I saw you. Scared me shitless. What’d they do to you while you were in there?

Cliff: Ah, I just had to see these doctors over and over again. They put me on a whole bunch of meds, and some sleeping pills, fed me some really bland food, made me talk to all these psychiatrists every damn day. And then they put me to bed at nine p.m.! Pretty much like lock down!

Nixon: No way! Did they tuck you in too? Just kiddin . . . sounds pretty rough. (Cliff laughs) Well let’s see your arms . . . did they heal up?

Cliff quickly pulls up his sleeves. His wrists are bandaged up. He puts his sleeves down.

to do youth-led workshops for CHIUS. This is where the initial relationship between VYVC and UBC began, ultimately leading to this and other research projects. One earlier research project was a literature review “Underage Youth Safe House Project: Summer 2008” written by Sarah Elliot, a UBC undergraduate student, in collaboration with Davina, Fraggle, and Trevor (Elliot, 2008).

‘Props’ means that the youth give some sort of welcoming symbol, such as a handshake or high-five.

When you go in a youth centre people don’t tell each other where they have been – because if someone says too much to someone else it usually comes back to bite them in the ass. So people go in and out of jail and hospitals. People lie and are very face value – unless they have something that somebody wants. Everything is always ‘fine’ even if your house burned down. It’s very superficial. Unless you have drugs, then I want to do them with you – then I’m more than face value.

If people do hear about what happened to you, then they just laugh at it. Never play the victim card. Because it makes you look weak and vulnerable and people feed off of it.

This is typical behaviour of someone that is bipolar. They start to feel good from being on medication and decide to stop taking meds and think they can do it on their own. They get really lows and really highs and it takes a lot for people who are bipolar to stay on meds. They go from psycho - I’m going to kill everyone in here to I feel great lets spend a thousand dollars. They have manic states.
Cliff: They said I have to keep these on for four days and then I have to change the bandages. After that they should be fully healed.

Nixon: Sounds good.

Cliff: Look at all this shit I have to take (pulls out pill containers from his backpack). I’m feeling good now though, I don’t think I will keep taking them though – it’s not like I have money to get more. So I think I should you know sell them or something. Make a couple bucks . . . So what’s up for tonight. Where you stayin?

Nixon: I don’t know. Safe houses ain’t an option. Gotta find a squat.

Cliff: Well we can chill here till closing. Then I’ll head out with you.

Nixon: Sounds cool.

Cliff: Let’s go for a smoke.

Blackout. Lights up Stage Right.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:
Margo: Dear Editor, When are the police going to crack down on all of these gangs who are wreaking havoc on OUR community? They keep saying they are on top of the situation and

Squats are empty abandoned building, parkades, furnace rooms, alleys with covers. People just knew where they were. They would just find them. Some people lived in there a long time. Cops caught you and they just told you to leave.

Almost all cast members were a part of the squat scene 8. The richest improvisations happened while the youth were acting in their roles as squatters. It was always very playful, while the youth improvised climbing into the squat through imagined broken windows and balancing on broken floorboards. They would have long improvised discussions about life on the streets and their desires to be off the streets, while acting in this scene.

Figure 27. Amanda Wager Reading a Letter to the Editor
arrests are going to be made. Meanwhile, the guns keep firing, and it’s not just in the Downtown Eastside or Surrey, but in wealthier neighbourhoods like Kitsilano, and Point Grey, and Richmond! These people are the scourge of society who in the past have fed off of the bottom feeders in the inner city. For those of us who are taxpayers, should we also become victims of these drug lords and pimps or should we demand to our politicians that something be done to put them back in their place? Signed, Margo from Mt. Pleasant.

Blackout.

Projection:
Nearly half of youth entrenched in street life are girls. Girls are almost invariably led into the gang-sponsored sex trade in order to “fit in” and survive.

Interview Video (around 2 min.)
Question: How do you think the safe houses played a role in keeping youth out of the sex trade?

SCENE 7: Bated Youth
Lights up Stage Right and Street Scene.
Gloomy setting – a shelter. Bed mats on the floor. Everyone is laying down. Keisha is sitting on her mat looking around scared. Throughout the scene 2 people are sitting in a corner playing cards. We hear their voices

Figure 28. Davina and Fraggle’s Interview with Safe House Staff and Dusk 2 Dawn Coordinator Steve

Scene 7: Bated Youth
Fraggle helped with a lot of the writing from this scene. We were trying to show that children between the ages of 11 and 15 should not live in a shelter with people between the ages of 16 and 19 because of age sensitive activities and experiences. That is why the “underage” safe houses were so important, serving youth between the ages of 13 to 15. Because obviously 16 to 19 year olds have a different range of experience with drugs. They have much more street experiences.

Somebody older usually introduces a younger youth to drugs, etc. – given that opportunity, it will happen.
here and there.

**John:** (to Keisha) Hey you’re looking good.

**Keisha:** Uuuuuuuuh . . . thanks. *(she turns a different direction)*

**Joe:** Hey you want some of this? *(sniffing)*

**Keisha:** No thanks. *(She turns again. very uncomfortable – not knowing which direction to face. Fidgeting. Arms closed.)*

**Cookie:** *(A heroine addict and a prostitute, sits close by eating a sandwich watching Keisha. She puts the sandwich down and goes to sit on the mat beside Keisha.)* Why the long face?

**Keisha:** It’s nothing. *(Tries to shrug away).*

**Cookie:** I know how you feel. *(Reaches out and tries to touch her shoulder.)*

*(Keisha shrugs away. Gives a dirty look and moves to another mat. She takes off her shoes and places them next to her. She then lays down to go to sleep. Cookie laughs and puts her boots on, gets up, puts herself together, and stumbles out of the shelter. Meanwhile the two men are still playing cards in the corner.)*
The passing of time is shown by the lights getting darker.

Both men nod towards the sleeping Keisha. They look at each other and do another nod. One of them goes to the door and looks back and forth, keeping six. The other quickly goes over to the girls mat and grabs her shoes. The other guy looks back over his shoulder. The one man with the shoes put them in his backpack. The men return playing cards.

The passing of time is shown by the lights getting darker and then brighter again.

In the middle of the night. Keisha sits up and rubs her face, shakes her head, looks around. Notices the men playing cards.

Keisha: Hey . . . do you know where the bathroom is?

Lou: Yeah, down the hall (motions with his hand).

Keisha rubs her eyes and starts feeling around for her shoes. She looks around both sides really fast. Stands up fast. Picks up the mat frantically looking underneath it.

Keisha: (looks at men) What the fuck? Did you see who took my shoes?

‘Keeping six’ means watching out for police or someone that will rat you out.

This is Fraggle’s part of the story. Her shoes were stolen while she was asleep when she lived on the streets, but she did not get them back.

Figure 30. Scene 7 in Rehearsal at the Gathering Place
Joe: (look at each other. Chuckle.) Fuckin twinkies . . .

Lou: Think they can just leave their shit around.

Joe: (to girl) What, you think you’re special?

Keisha gets up defeated with her head down. She walks over towards a bathroom and steps over a mat filled with belongings of Cookie. She looks at it and makes a shrugging motion. Sideways glances at the guys. Shakes her head. Can’t figure it out. She walks offstage, down the hall, to the bathroom.

Cookie stumbles back in and sits next to her belongings. The two men are laughing.

Cookie: (to the men) What the fuck’s so funny?

Joe: Oh we jacked that stupid twinkie’s shoes.

Keisha is listening in the background.

Cookie: Why, she’s a young kid. And as if at some point and time you weren’t ever in a similar position?

'Twinky' means the newcomers on the block that don’t know shit, you can just take advantage of them because they don’t know shit; they are naïve; they are teeny-boppers, they don’t know the ways of the land.
**Lou:** Well maybe she shouldn’t be so stupid to leave her shoes lying around.

**Joe:** This will be a lesson.

**Cookie:** Bullshit. What kind of shoes were those?

**Lou:** What does it matter?

**Cookie:** I bet they were Nike or Jordans or somethin’, right? Trying to make some cash or teach her a lesson?

**Joe:** Whatever. (they look away and try to start playing cards again)

Cookie walks over to them.

**Cookie:** No, seriously, up the shit or I am gonna have some of my boys come down and teach her a lesson.

**Lou:** Fuck, whatever. (They toss the shoes over)

Keisha walks in. Cookie grabs her shoes. She motions to Keisha.

**Cookie:** Here you go. Don’t mind those douchebags. You gotta stand up for yourself.

**Keisha:** Thanks. That was really cool. Those

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*That was my term too. I remember when I first came to Vancouver when I was 12. I hitchhiked with a group of eight kids from Calgary - everyone was considered a twinky, except for me. In Vancouver there are always a bunch of street kids that come during the summer and they are called twinkies by the year-round [street youth] Vancouverites. Nobody really fought me because I was nice, good-looking and young. We sold drugs on Granville downtown. The non-twinkys ratted my eight friends out and got them arrested. I was the only one who stayed in Vancouver past the summer.*

**VYVC Youth Leaders and Researcher Meetings:**
Meetings were approximately once a month to review how rehearsals were going, funding needs, and preparations for the performances. We usually met at a café or bar for a few hours. Many of our main concerns were due to lack of funding. We were given a grant by UBC’s Centre for Population Health Promotion Research (PCHR) for the entire project.

*Figure 33. Jeff and Fraggle at a VYVC and PCHR Meeting*
are my only pair of shoes.

Joe: Let’s get outta here. Let’s go make some real money.

(Men exit. Keisha sits down. She is warmer to Cookie now, but unsure.)

Cookie: Like I said before. I know what it’s like out here. (unzipping her boots) I’ve been in the same situation. You remind me of me when I was your age. People respect me now because I’ve earned my keep.

Keisha: How’d ya do that?

Cookie: It’s not easy, but I don’t take shit from anyone. I do what I can to get by. Ever since I got tossed out of government housing, I’ve had to learn the basics of survival on my own.

Keisha: Man I don’t have anything. I just lost the only place in the world that I feel safe and now I am stuck here.

Cookie: (Shaking her head) Get some sleep girl. I’ll take you out for breakfast in the morning. Don’t worry. I got your back. I’ll show you everything you need to know to make ends meet.

Blackout. Lights up on Stage Right.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR BEING READ:
Katy: Dear Editor, I am writing to express my frustration that the city isn’t doing anything about the increasing number of bratty teenagers who think they're being so witty and keep bothering me as I go about my own business. I see them more and more on the sidewalk, asking me for money, squeeegying my perfectly clean windshield as I wait at red lights, basically pretending to be homeless and getting money to buy cigarettes and designer clothes. Why can’t the police just pick these kids up and take them home to their parents for some good clean disciplining? Or is this just another testament to all the welfare moms and dads out there who can’t keep a handle on their offspring? Signed, Katy from Kitsilano

Projection:
Without emergency shelters, youth who find themselves on the street experience difficulty locating services that can help pave the way into recovery, as well as permanent housing options and health services necessary for their transitioning off of the streets.
**Interview Video (around 2 min.)**
Questions: What services did the safe houses help make available to the youth?

**SCENE 8: Squatted**
Lights dim on one Stage Right, Street Scene, and Stage Left. It is a bathroom in a 24 hour Laundromat. A boy is sleeping curled up in a ball. The manager enters (Bertha wearing a Laundromat manager coat) and finds him sleeping there. Bertha has a broom in her hand.

**Bertha:** *(at first surprised and then starts yelling, scared, swapping him with the broom).* Hey, what the hell are you doin’ here? Get outa my shop! What makes you think you can sleep here? I’m gonna call the cops! I’ve got a business to run! What the hell is wrong with you! Get outa here now!

**Liam:***(grabbing his belongings and leaving)*
I’m . . . I’m sorry mam. I just don’t have anywhere to go.

**Bertha:** And why is this my problem? I have no regard to what happens to you. This is my business! *(Forcefully pushes him out on the street. Exit Laundromat manager.)*

**Music:** THE SOUND OF RAIN W/O MUSIC - THROUGOUHT ENTIRE SCENE. Liam looks up, puts his hand out, to show that it has begun to
rain. Hugs himself because it is cold. He looks around, back at the laundry mat, looks down and starts walking along the side of the stage that has the street scene wall. Two kids, Kevin and Nixon, are sitting next to the street scene wall.

**Kevin:** (with his hands out feeling the rain. All are noticing the rain.) Aaaw, man, fuckin raining! What the hell?

**Nixon:** (trying to light a cig, but the rain is making it impossible.) Shit!

Kids notice Liam walking down the street.

**Kevin:** Hey, you got a light?

**Liam:** (very timid) No . . .

**Kevin:** (looking up at the rain) You have any idea where we can go find a roof?

**Liam:** No, I just got kicked out of the Laundromat washroom. Been sleepin there for the past few weeks.

All look up, it is beginning to rain really hard. They put their backpacks, jackets, etc. over their heads to cover them.

**Nixon:** Fuck! . . . (there is an awkward silence for a bit . . . not knowing what to
do) You know, someone showed me this spot recently, it’s a squat . . . if I just remember where the fuck it is . . .

Kevin and Liam start following Nixon. He starts walking to the other side of the stage (SR) looking around.

Nixon: I think it’s down this alley. (Kevin and Liam still following Nixon taking cover with their jackets and bags from the rain. They stop in front of something and all look up.)

Kevin: What’s this?

Liam: (sarcastically) it’s a boarded up wall.

Nixon: Yeah, we gotta climb through this hole here. There’s a broken window there, but you gotta watch out because as soon as you get in, there’s no floorboard. But there are these long boards that stretch out across to the other side of the room – whatever (looks at both of them) – just follow me . . . (starts crawling through the hole)

Liam: Are you kiddin’?

Nixon: No, come on . . . (crawling) . . .

Kevin: (calling to Nixon) There’s no light anywhere?
**Nixon:** If they put a fucking light here, then they would see our shadows and know that we’re squatting fool! Come on!

Lots of commotion as the kids crawl into the building and pantomine balancing walking on thin boards to get to the other side where there are two people, Valerie and Kile huddled on a mattress sitting next to candles, shivering. They look up and nod.

**Valerie:** Eh, fuckin raining . . . *(shaking her head)*

**Nixon:** Yeah . . .

**Kile:** Come on over. *(motioning for them to sit down.)*

**Liam:** Thanks.

The three sit down with the others. Nixon finally lights his cigarette and is relieved. They start making small chat.

**Kile:** That must have been pretty brutal getting in here in the dark.

**Kevin:** Yeah . . . *(shaking her head)* . . . that was fucking scary.

**Valerie:** Well now, just think of what it’s
gonna be like climbing down high! (chuckling, she takes out a baggy and starts preparing a jib pipe.)

Lights dim as all sit around watching, mumbling, laughing to themselves. Rain music gets louder and louder while we watch Valerie passes the jib pipe around to everyone. Candle is blown out.

Black out. Lights up Stage Right.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR BEING READ:**

**Nina:** Dear Editor, Tis the season, and even in this economy, we should all find time to be thankful for all of the blessings that we have. So we may not get that new iPhone this, or iMac that we’ve been waiting for all these months. I say that the best gifts are that we all should take extra care to appreciate this year is our friends, family, and faith. To all, a very merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Signed, Nina from North Van.

**Projection:**

There are common factors that cause youth to turn to the streets such as family violence, and emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. All of these are most often connected to poverty, which has been steadily on the rise in BC. Vancouver boasts the highest poverty rate in Canada.
**Interview Video (around 2 min.)**

Questions: Were the youth who accessed the safe houses below the poverty line? How do you think the safe houses offset the effects of poverty?

**SCENE 9: A Broken Xmas Eve**

*Lights up Stage Right and Street Scene. 2 Girls, Valerie and Keisha, leaving a party.*

**Keisha:** Hey, you takin off? Thought you were gonna hang out for the rest of the night? What's up?

**Vanessa:** This party’s kinda lame. I’m outta’ here.

**Keisha:** Whatever, you headin’ home early? I don’t think so, that’s so outa’ character for you. You jokin’?

**Vanessa:** No seriously, my mom’s asshole drunk of a boyfriend is in jail, so I get to hang out with my mom without him breathing down our necks. Since he’s gone, it’s gonna’ be the first Christmas I’ll actually enjoy spending with my Mom at home.

**Keisha:** Alright, fine.....see yah, have a good night *(They hug each other.)*

*Lights down Stage Right. Lights stay up on Street Scene.*

In retrospect, Davina and I talked a lot about how a counsellor should have always been present throughout the process. Prior to my involvement with this research, the decision was made to not have a counsellor present because Davina, Fraggle, and Trevor were youth leaders and chose to take on that role. Each of the youth leaders had many experiences counselling younger youth, either during workshops or in counselling programs. Davina is currently working towards a degree in Child and Youth Care Counselling, but on reflection I feel that the sensitive issues that were brought up in Act II demanded an experienced youth counsellor present at all times. It would have changed the dynamic of the production, as any addition of a new member would, but hopefully for the better. There were times throughout the production when the youth leaders called social workers to get advice on working with some of the youth, all of whom supported the production.

*Figure 45. Fraggle and Amethyst costume shopping with Jeff and Sean*

A meeting was organized one month before the final productions for everyone to go to a local second-hand store in search of their costumes.
Vanessa walks down the street scene to a bus stop. She waits there, impatiently looking at her watch. Time passes. She shivers in the cold. She starts humming to herself. Stops. Looks at her watch. Is thoroughly irritated. 3 boys, Matt, James, and Seth walk by. One of them is carrying a bag with beers in it.

Matt: Hey, you wanna’ come party? (raising the bag with beers in it)

Vanessa: (A little hesitant) Sure yeah, I guess so . . . this bus doesn’t seem like it’s comin’ anytime soon.

James: Yeah, no – this bus isn’t even running anymore.

Vanessa: Oh . . . I thought there was . .

Matt: (interrupting) You should just come with us. We can get you to where you need to go after.

Vanessa: Ok then . . . I just need a ride home. You sure you can give me a ride home after?

Seth: Yeah, um sure. Matt’s car is at his house over there. No worries, he’ll take you home.

Vanessa: All right, that’s cool then.

Only Fraggle and Amethyst showed up. One week before the final productions, Davina and I spent a day buying all the props and costumes for the show at a second-hand shop and costume store.

Figure 46. Davina and Fraggle’s Interview with Safe House Staff and Foster Parents
Mathew and Sarah

Scene 9: A Broken Xmas Eve

Figure 47. Set Arrangement for Scene 9
Lights up Stage Left. Music — Tragically Hip plays lightly in the background.

They walk over to a house. Vanessa is obviously drunk which is apparent by her stumbling. They sit down on the couches, all start moving to the music while drinking for a bit of time.

**James:** (Tosses beer can ahead of him. Gets up to leave.) I am so wasted. I’m crashing out now. Later.

**Seth:** Me too man. See ya. What’s your name again?

**Vanessa:** Vanessa.

**Seth:** Yeah, later Vanessa. Good to meet ya. See you around. (Goes up to Matt and gives a hand gesture.) See yah man, don’t do anything I wouldn’t do. (chuckling Seth exits.)

Matt and Vanessa are sitting on a couch, both are really drunk. Immediately after Seth leaves, Matt starts to move closer to Vanessa.

**Matt:** You’re pretty hot.

**Vanessa:** Thanks. *(she’s uncomfortable)* Actually, I think I probably should get goin’

This was another scene scripted from one of the youth journals. It was the most difficult scene due to the intensity of the subject matter. Davina and Cody were never able to do this scene with a straight face until the night of the play at Ironworks Studio.

*It [the scene] was really good at Ironworks. The tone of my voice made it very realistic. People in the audience got shivers from it. We did a really good job. I really wanted to laugh during it.*

*Figure 48. Scene 9 in Rehearsal at the Gathering Place*

*Figure 49. Scene 9 in the Final Performance at Ironworks Studios*
too. First bus is probably startin’ in an hour or so.

**Matt:** I don’t think so. (Grabs Vanessa and tries to pull her close to him.) Just hang out with me a little bit. I’m givin’ you a ride home (tries to kiss her).

**Vanessa:** (Pushes him away.) No, I’m not really into it.

**Matt:** As if your not into it. You’ve been flirting with me all night. You’re a total tease. Do you know that? You’re a total fuckin’ tease. (leaning into her. He’s really drunk.)

**Vanessa:** No I’m not (forcing him away).

**Matt** tries to kiss her again, but he is becoming aggressive.

**Vanessa:** (trying to push him off and get up) No, seriously, I have to go home, my mom’s gonna’ be freakin’ out. She’s expecting me.

**Matt:** (He’s holding her down now). As if you’re going home slut. Now shut up. (Tries to kiss her again.)

**Vanessa:** (Tries pushing him off her.) Get off of me, asshole. I am going to scream.

We sat there very uncomfortably knowing I was about to be raped. It was definitely the hardest scene to role-play because it is a very heavy uncomfortable issue.

It is where the chuckles started. The cracking of my voice. The inability to be comfortable. Out of all the dynamics in the cast, Cody knew me really well. Cody felt really comfortable that it was him and me doing it (as opposed to another girl). He was a little kid that looked up to me. Our friendship made it easier for us to do this scene. I don’t think anyone else could have done it. We put ourselves in quite a predicament!
Matt: No your not. (Grabs her throat surprisingly violently while his other arm up is up in the air about to hit her.)

MUSIC GETS LOUD!!!!!! Blackout for at least 5 seconds.

Music off. Lights up Stage Right. Matt and Vanessa are in the car. Vanessa is crying, holding herself.

Matt: Oh, shut up!

Vanessa: Where are we going? I have no idea where we are.

Matt: I am just driving. Just chill out, you’re a stress case (puts his arm around her).

Vanessa: (moves away from him) I have to pee. I really really have to pee. Please can we stop at the mall over there? I am going to pee in your car.

Matt: (Stops the car. Pushes her out.) Gross, get out of my car! (Leaning over the passenger seat.) Hey, I forgot its Christmas Eve. Merry Christmas. Thanks for the good time (smiling).

Vanessa: (Yelling full of emotion) Fuck you!!!!

I said “GET OFF ME ASSHOLE” screaming and did not say “I’m going to scream”. I didn’t find it necessary since I was already screaming.

Blackout worked really well. Nixon did well with the lighting.
Black out. Lights up Stage Right.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR BEING READ.
June 20th, 2009. Dear Editor. Last night, I attended a performance put on by a group of homeless youth advocates called the Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition. It was a play meant to awaken us all to the plight of vulnerable kids in our community. It was a sobering testimony of their own accounts of just how traumatic the lives of children and youth can be, right here in the shadows of our neighbourhoods. I think many of your readers will agree that it’s hard not to feel awkward and helpless when we come across these kids on the street. We have learned to render them invisible, to look right through them as though they don’t even exist. But this play, while put on by a group of amateurs with little theatre experience and on a shoestring budget, has helped me to see again.

To see that these youth are not just numbers, but they’re survivors, everyday facing the dangers and abuses in the cracks that WE have opened up in our society and in our communities out of our own ignorance and intolerance. Our inaction implicitly condones political and social priorities that can’t even sustain a few safe places for kids to go when they

Figure 53. Cast and Crew Backstage before Final Production

Scene 10: Becoming a Statistic
This scene was all about becoming faceless which is what statistics are. We started with the cast masked and only having a number [on their shirts] represent each statistic; at the end they took off their mask to become humanized.
flee from abusive parents or an uncaring, underfunded child welfare system. Places where they can find a welcoming home, a meal, a bed, and some professional guidance. But now I have been compelled to write this letter to your readers as an act of solidarity with the Vancouver Youth Visions Coalition, and to support their now FIVE YEAR LONG struggle to convince government to reinvest in our most vulnerable youth and provide more facilities, not less, that will keep them safe and pointed toward a more promising future. I hope I’m not the only one. Signed, you [look up at audience] Black out.

SCENE 10: Becoming a Statistic

Lights up Center Stage only – street scene lights up. All actors wearing black with a white statistic number printed on their shirt and a full white mask on. Recording of a voice stating statistics while each actor comes forward, being one of the statistics. Light focused on each actor from above.

Voice & Projection: Up to 700 youth are homeless or at risk of being homeless on the streets of Vancouver. Vancouver Youth Housing Options Study

Figure 55. Scene 10: Becoming a Statistic
(Actor with the number 700 steps forward)

**Voice & Projection:** There are an estimated 150 new homeless youth each year in Vancouver. 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count
(Actor with the number 150 steps forward)

Voice & Projection: In a single year, 400 youth have been turned away from a youth shelter in Vancouver. Covenant House
(Actor with the number 400 steps forward)

Voice & Projection: Approximately 39% of Vancouver's homeless youth are of Aboriginal descent. Social Planning and Research Council of BC, 2008
(Actor with the number 39 steps forward)

Voice & Projection: 44% of homeless youth have been in BC's Child Welfare System. McCreary Society in Vancouver, 2001
(Actor with the number 44 steps forward)

Voice & Projection: 56% of homeless youth fall prey to drug dealers and develop addictions. 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count
(Actor with the number 56 steps forward)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Question and Answer/Discussion</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>After the play was over we had a 15-minute break. Audience members were invited to return for a question and answer/discussion session with the cast. The audience asked questions about the creation of the play and experiences of the underage safe house closures.</td>
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![Figure 56. VYVC Youth Leaders Fraggle, Davina, Trevor](image)

*The population of audience members were well aware of the situation. By ‘population’ of audience members, Davina means that audience members were individuals who had background knowledge of the issues surrounding the closures of the underage safehouses. They were members of their community.*

*None of us thought it [the play] was going to work out. But it did!*
(Actor with the number 13 steps forward)

All actors take off their masks.

Projection:
We are not just numbers.
We are surviving in the cracks.

Black out.

Stage lights up for bows etc.

Black out.

House lights up.

**QUESTION AND ANSWER/DISCUSSION**
**Critical Multimodal Meaning-Making Constructions**

The contextual framing analysis above not only explains but highlights the critical multimodal literacies of the script, and is accompanied by the voices and discussions of a youth participant and researcher, along with multiple visuals. These conversations benefitted this analysis through articulation of how critical multimodal literacies were incorporated throughout the script creation, rehearsal process and performance. As an outsider to the community of these youth, this unique method of script and participant analysis drew on the discourses and multimodal literacies of the youth, their histories, and funds of knowledge (González et al., 2013; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Moll, 1992). Furthermore, the critical multimodal literacies incorporated into the script were a form of meaning-making, or learning, for the youth involved in the process. I consider these multimodal resources as critical tools of meaning-making for the youth, ways that they were able to deeper express themselves to the public. These literacies incorporated the youth visions and voices, along with those of other staff and researchers involved in the project. As well, there are moments referred to within this chapter that point to instances when youth resistance was evident. Overall, this chapter represents a formative analysis that reveals the many layers of data and the processes entailed in creating the play script. This analysis reveals the collaborative critical multimodal literacies inherent in the pedagogy and made possible the secondary analysis of the pedagogical moments of resistance. In the following chapter, I further describe and analyze pedagogical moments of resistance within a production meeting between the youth leaders and university researchers, as well as within rehearsals leading up to the final performances.
Chapter Five: Pedagogical Moments of Resistance

Director’s Journal: Monday, June 1, 2009

Frustration, yes lots of it. Yesterday I felt an awful lot of frustration at the rehearsal. First of all, everyone was late – it was ridiculous – how are we to get anything done when everyone is one to two hours late? Then once everyone decided to actually arrive – we tried to begin but Davina’s kids were there and there was nobody present to provide childcare – so it was absolutely crazy. They were wild as can be. I don’t blame them, but it was just about impossible to get anything done. Really difficult. Then Cody came and he was just in the worst mood – it was so difficult. I am trying to see what each individual wants to get out of this. Why are they doing this? Why do they keep showing up even though their lateness makes it seem that some do not care. My partner had some good insight that they are doing much more than they know. I just need to be satisfied and content with what I have – understand that it is not going to be a polished piece of theatre, but it will be the best we can do with what we have . . . as davina said ‘it is what it is’.

Data Analysis: Interpretations of Experience.

Within this chapter, I investigate 10 pedagogical moments of resistance within the last four months leading up to the youth theatrical production of Surviving in the Cracks. To deepen my analysis from the previous chapter and give a further understanding of how youth resistance relates to power, desire, and space within this popular theatre project, I analyze these moments of resistance that were evident in two main situations: during a production meeting and throughout six different rehearsals over the course of four months. I define a pedagogical moment of resistance as an instance that changed the direction that the production was heading, a moment that reflected or illustrated conflict, that moved the youth towards or away from a goal, or that aroused intense feelings. Within these moments characterized by resistance, I explore the play of power, desire, and space - safe and unsafe, sometimes putting emphasis on only one of these aspects, other times considering two or all
three simultaneously.

Consistent with the theoretical perspective that I bring, I look at points of resistance in terms of pedagogy (critical and feminist), youth power and desire (critical youth studies) and embodied space (literacy and human geography). I draw on critical youth studies and resistance theories, where Tuck and Yang (2009) reiterate that resistance which leads to change is “messy”, “unfixed,” and “always taking shape” and happens “in ways that make new, old-butreturned, and previously unseen possibilities available at each juncture” (Tuck & Yang, p. 522). In addition, I contribute the understanding that all pedagogical moments are affected by our physical, mental, emotional, and social states, that we are embodied beings, and highlight how moments within a production meeting and rehearsals leading up to a theatrical performance are embodied experiences interwoven with the play of power, desire, and space.

The 10 pedagogical moments of resistance I chose to analyze demonstrate the presence of power, desire, and space dynamics. I chose these specific events because they are diverse in their spatial locations, involve different members of the research team (university researchers, youth leaders, youth, director, filmmaker), and were filmed during the last month of rehearsals, which was a time when youth resistance was the most intense, messy and unclear. My process for selecting these moments began with open coding footage from one rehearsal using the NVivo 10 data analysis program where the key theme of resistance was evident with sub-codings of power, desire, and space. I then reviewed all the film data using Nvivo 10, searching for moments of resistance where at least one of the themes of power, desire, and space was clearly present. After choosing the 10 moments, I began with a visual discourse analysis (Rose, 2012), paid attention to detail of each filmed moment, noted
complexities and contradictions, and the visible as well as the invisible, as a way to examine how each pedagogical moment characterized by resistance related to power, desire and space.

Within Parts One and Two that follow, I provide analysis of these moments of resistance by discussing the highlighted themes of resistance, power, desire, and space that were revealed within the data. In Part One, I chose to highlight one extended pedagogical moment of resistance because it reflects the negotiation of the popular and participatory theatre project between the VYVC youth leaders and the PCHR university researchers, where individuals demonstrated resistances while negotiating for the upcoming production. Within this analysis, I use the video footage data as a point of departure triangulated with other related data including interviews, focus groups, observational field notes written on a shared VYVC and PCHR blog, photos, a youth journal, and the director’s journal regarding the closures of underage safe house.

In Part Two, I analyze nine pedagogical moments of resistance during rehearsals in three separate subsections, in terms of the negotiations of desires seen through youth imaginaries, power and space. Each subsection includes descriptions of each moment as well as my analysis. I chose this alternative format for Part Two because the nine pedagogical moments of resistance chosen during rehearsals were not consecutive, occurred during different rehearsals, and therefore did not build upon one another like the extended moment during the meeting analyzed in Part One. Throughout Part Two, I also use the video footage data as a point of departure triangulated with the other related data sources listed for Part One.
Part One: An Extended Pedagogical Moment of Resistance During A Meeting

This meeting took place at a local restaurant/bar on May 20, 2009, a month before the final production, and was a comfortable space that everybody was somewhat familiar with. Directly following this extended moment description, I provide an analysis of this extended moment for aspects of power, desire, and space.

Moment One: Description of site.

The youth leaders—Davina, Fraggle, and Trevor—and the university researchers—Jeff, Laura, Sean, Jenn, and I—met on a monthly basis to discuss the current state of the play and plan for the future. During this particular meeting, four of the university researchers (Jeff, Sean, Laura, Amanda), and all three youth leaders (Davina, Fraggle, Trevor) were present. There was loud music playing and a television broadcasting a basketball game in the background. It was late afternoon; most of us had an alcoholic drink and ordered food. The waitress interrupted our conversations regularly. Davina coloured a children’s menu with crayons throughout the hour-long meeting, while still participated in the meeting discussions. The following extended moment description covers the first 25 minutes of the meeting. We had long discussions and often disagreed about what more needed to be done prior to the final production, including ticket sales, ticket prices, creation of posters, flyers, and the program, interviews for the final production, and finding CBC footage of the march to City Hall in 2004.

Moment One: Resistance during a meeting.

The meeting began with Jeff (university researcher) saying, “We need to decide who is chairing this meeting and it’s not going to be me.” Laura (university researcher) volunteered to run the meeting, yet Jeff seemed to still be in charge.
Figure 58. Jeff, Fraggle and Trevor at the Meeting

The dominant voices throughout the meeting were Fraggle (youth leader), Jeff (university researcher), and Davina (youth leader). For instance, Davina asked Fraggle to clarify what was happening with the flyers, tickets, and posters – as this was Fraggle’s responsibility and she was asking a friend of hers to create them. Fraggle responded, “Well, I emailed it [the flyer] to all you guys!” We explained that the flyer image was too dark for any of us to see and, in turn, Fraggle explained what the flyer looks like. Jeff then asked for clarification on the number of things that needed to get done and explained that he did not think a flyer was necessary. Fraggle disagreed and said, “Ok. I still think we should have a flyer though. We need to promote it [the play]. It’s great that all of your [the university researchers’] guys’ people are going to come, but we [youth] need to promote it.” Jeff asked Fraggle where the flyer was going to go and she responded, “Some at Directions [a youth centre downtown]. The local peoples’ names who sponsored us will be posted on it. We will create more community awareness this way - make it more of a community event.” Davina agreed that it
needed to be advertised more in the community than at the university. Laura then talked about a university invitation that she sent out and Fraggle responded, “Yeah, I think a lot more people will want to come to it than just university people!” Throughout this entire discussion, Trevor, Sean, and I were rather quiet.

![Figure 59. Fraggle Discussing Community Awareness](image)

For the next 10 minutes a long discussion about the price of tickets and whether we should have a fixed price or ‘pay what you can’ took place. Davina suggested that we should ‘filter’ who was coming to the final production at Ironworks Studios by having a fixed price and Fraggle responded, “Cause this is Nazi Germany, right?” and then laughed. The subject of whether to serve alcohol at Ironworks Studios, the final performance venue, was brought up and the idea turned down because Cody was underage and Davina’s two and four year old children would be there. Davina responded, “My kids are my kids. It’s my parental right.” Jeff responded while nervously twirling his pen, “Let’s get to the task at hand and get to this agenda!” Fraggle responded by laughing and saying, “Isn’t that what we have been doing?”
Laura and Jeff started to discuss the creation of the program. Laura asked Davina and Fraggle which groups and individuals had sponsored and funded the project in order to include this information on the program and they named a long list of organizations and people while Laura wrote the names down.

Jeff still looked nervous and while taking notes said, “And that brings us to our next agenda item: money from Jim.” Sean explained that he met with Dr. Jim Frankish and that money was available and easily accessible. Jeff explained that within 24 hours we would need to send Jim a one-pager about the play, a copy of the script, and a wish list describing what we would do with the money. I started to compile the wish list, asking Fraggle and Davina how many hours it would take them to edit footage of interviews that they plan to capture with the youth participants and how long it would take for Davina to go to the CBC archives to get the 2004 footage of the youth march to City Hall. Other funding needs were discussed, such as paying the program creator and local graffiti artists who created the backdrop for the play.
Jeff then asked about the status on the research side of things. Sean thought it would be interesting to use Greg’s film footage within our research and Jeff explained that we did not have ethics approval for that [I gained ethics approval for this dissertation separately]. Jeff spoke about how he was worried that, “we are putting underage youth through sensitive issues in scenes [on stage].” Davina asked if Sharon, a foster parent to Davina and three other youth participants (including Cody) had a copy of the script and said, “in this situation we should be ahead of everything and so should the social worker and they should support him in it.” Everyone agreed about the importance of sharing the script with Sharon. Annoyed, Fraggle asked Davina “Why we didn’t do this already?” Trevor agreed with Fraggle by saying, “I know, that’s what I was going to say!” Davina said she assumed that since Cody was coming to rehearsal he would return to his foster home and explain what we were doing in rehearsals to Sharon.

We then discussed technical aspects of the production, such as lighting, interview
footage projections, and costumes.

It became clear that we were completely unprepared for the technical aspects of the production and did not know who would be in charge of them. I asked Fraggle, “Would you do the lighting and projectors during the performance?” and she responded, “No. I don’t want
to be responsible for fucking that up. I can do one, but I am not going to take that all on. I think it’s important that we don’t fuck it up. I don’t think we will fuck it up. But I don’t want to be responsible for choking” and suggested asking someone else to do the tech.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 62. Amanda and Fraggle Discussing Technical Aspects**

**Negotiations of Power, Desire and Space.**

Although this did not take place in a rehearsal space, I consider this production meeting a key pedagogical moment because it reflects the negotiation of the popular and participatory theatre project between the VYVC youth leaders and the PCHR university researchers, providing many moments of resistance when the youth leaders negotiate their desires for the upcoming production through highlighting conflicts of interest. Often during this meeting, Davina and Fraggle exerted control over the research, which further demonstrated how this project is anchored in work within critical youth studies and participatory research. I consider the negotiation of the theatrical process observed during this production meeting to be another form of drama pedagogy, one that is central to creating
safe pedagogical spaces for youth during rehearsals that lead up to a theatrical performance. In *Psychology Today*, Holtzman (2014) supports this idea through her description of drama programs as helping:

young people learn how to work cohesively as a team. Producing a play involves a great deal of cooperation among people of diverse abilities, contributions, and roles, each essential to the ultimate public performance. It often attracts young people who have difficulty fitting in with middle-of-the-road school social life. Participation in the whole of the theatrical production—the rehearsals, the set design and construction, the lighting, the music, the support crew—can provide the positive social updraft that can help youth overcome the feelings of alienation fostered by the impersonal emphasis on test scores. 

Through research and theatre meetings such as these, youth learn how to negotiate their differences, often times through demonstrating resistances to each other’s and the facilitators ideas. These moments of resistance are often an outlet for strong emotions, such as fears and anxieties, which may be present when youth or adults are acting in a leadership role and while working with others.

Throughout this meeting, there were many evident moments of resistance between the group members. First, there was a complex relationship between the youth leaders and university researchers. They have a well-established relationship; most (Sean, Jeff, Jenn, Davina, Fraggle, and Trevor) had worked together in multiple contexts comfortably and successfully for over three years, including creating health workshops for street-involved youth ([www.chius.ubc.ca](http://www.chius.ubc.ca)) and writing a literature review about the underage safe house closures (Elliot, 2008). This shared collaborative history created an ongoing space that was safe enough for the youth leaders and university researchers to express their desires and negotiate important aspects of the project.
Power works and shifts between members of this meeting often related to underlying anxiety about the success of the final production. The closer that the play came to the final production—our ultimate goal—the more intense relationships became. Resistances to each other’s desires, which were often evident within this meeting, seemed to be due to the build up of stress and pressure for the ensuing production. A lot of work goes into creating an aesthetically successful theatrical production, and since I was the only person involved in this project that had any theatrical background knowledge, the youth leaders and university researchers had to dedicate much more time than expected and take on tasks that they had no experience with, which brought about many resistances and power struggles as well as anxiety and blame from everyone at the meeting.

Complexities of resistance and power were always at play between the different members of the research team, and seemed to intensify between Fraggle and Jeff at this particular meeting, often visible in Fraggle’s looks of irritation towards Jeff when he dominated the meeting. These complexities also become obvious between the youth leaders, when Fraggle and Davina question each other’s actions, particularly when the other person had not done something that was expected of her (e.g., informing Cody’s foster mother about the content of the play). Trevor was quiet throughout the meeting, but often was in the presence of Davina and Fraggle as they both dominated the youth leadership roles. Trevor quietly sided with Fraggle the majority of the time, which was shown through nods and small agreeable comments. An example of this was when he said, “I know, that’s what I was going to say!” in agreement with Fraggle’s disbelief that Davina had not ensured that Cody’s foster mother and social worker had read and were in support of the play content.

Both Jeff and Fraggle took turns dominating the meeting and negotiating their
leadership role while resisting each other’s and other members’ dominance, articulating their own desires for the ensuing production. They both expressed things that they were anxious about - Fraggle was anxious about promoting the production to her community and didn’t want to be responsible for technical aspects of the production. Jeff spoke about the number of things that had to be completed prior to the production. This anxiety led to conflict between the members present at the meeting, but it also indicated each of their desires and furthered the youth leaders’ power over decision-making. This anxiety led to the powerful position that the youth leaders took up as a result of their negotiations of power and desire throughout the meeting, and confirmed that “negotiations of power, desire, and safety are not straightforward, and do not always lead to ‘a clear-cut story’” (Tuck, 2011, p. 522). These compromises can lead to emotions including anxiety and fear, humiliation, showing pride and frustration, and also to satisfaction.

Fraggle’s anxiety about the ensuing production became visible again two weeks later when she was interviewed by Greg, the documentary filmmaker. The interview data below deepened my analysis of Moment One by illustrating how powerful roles, such as Fraggle’s role as a youth leader during this production, could be ridden with fear and anxiety that, in turn, reveal her desire for the success of the project.

Greg: How are you feeling about the play?

Fraggle: Is this me being honest time? (she laughs) Um, I’m pretty worried about it. I know that there are a lot of kids that are really dedicated to what we are doing and there are a couple of kids that I am kind of worried about. We’ve tried since the beginning to make this a comfortable environment to work at but there is one person in particular that is kind of messing with the group dynamic. . . . I think we got a
group of kids that definitely are dedicated and then maybe a couple that aren’t so dedicated. But I think we will put it together and especially with Trevor here if he can take over some of those lines in case people don’t show up. I think we can do it. I hope we can do it. I’m pretty sure that if I didn’t think we could do it I would quit no matter how close we are till the end. So but uh it’s going to take some perseverance maybe especially on my part since I am so stressed out. (F. Rawk, filmed interview, June 6, 2009)

Figure 63. Fraggle During her Filmed Interview

Although Fraggle seemed to be overwhelmed with worry, her dedication and desire for the success of the project was what she eventually expressed; it was what kept her loyal to the youth participants and to the production. Quitting was not an option for Fraggle because she believed that she, and other youth leaders such as Trevor, could make this happen regardless of the youth resistance to attending the performances. This belief came with her desire to make the production happen. She reflected how she and other youth leaders tried to create a
safe space and form a community with the youth participants, and that within these safe
spaces the majority of the youth could and would demonstrate their dedication to the project
and become capable of overcoming their differences. She spoke about the youngest youth,
Cody, who was ‘messing with the group dynamic’ by constantly demonstrating acts of
resistance during rehearsals. However, she remained loyal to the process and was aware of
what she and Trevor needed to do as youth leaders in order to overcome the stress of putting
on the production by accepting that Cody might not show up to the final performance. I
therefore analyzed this as a moment of productive resistance – one in which desire became
evident in the face of conflict.

It is interesting to note that some members of the university research team expressed
on the blog field notes the apparent lack of ownership displayed by the youth during the
project:

My only frustration with the project at present is the lack of ownership on the part of
the youth. In my past work with street involved youth, I have seen youth take on
challenges such as this without any form of compensation and with great drive. What
might we have done or what could we do to change this? Does cash honorarium
distract some youth from more intrinsic motives for participation? Do the "university
researchers" observing the process create an environment that is so uncomfortable for
the youth that they don't really want to be there? (S. Nixon, field notes blog, May 26,
2009)

I would argue, however, that this deeper analysis of the play of resistance, power, desire and
space reveals a more complex understanding of youth engagement. Through resistance to
others’ ideas, their negotiation of power and articulation of their desires, Fraggle and Davina
revealed how invested they were in this production. For instance, within the meeting and in the interview quoted above, Fraggle was clear that she wanted to create as much community awareness as possible by posting flyers up in local places and making tickets affordable for other youth, and that she was dedicated to the success of the project in spite of the amount of stress it caused her. Davina demonstrated ongoing support for youth in the production through her unfailing dedication to create a safe space for them, especially for Cody, by sharing information with his social worker and foster parent throughout the rehearsal and production time. Although Davina and Fraggle were often late to rehearsals, when they—along with Trevor who was often on time—were present, they provided support to the youth participants and took on multiple extra roles (e.g., child minding, acting for missing cast members, and counseling youth). Their presence created a safer and therefore more productive space where the youth participants felt comfortable checking-in at the beginning and end of every rehearsal, narrating their stories, and playing and performing together during rehearsals.

This meeting illustrated the way that personal desires (e.g., Fraggle’s desire to involve community members and “not fuck up the play” and Davina’s desire to protect a youth participant) manifest through interactions inflected with power dynamics (e.g., between Jeff and Fraggle) and resistance (e.g., Fraggle’s resistance to doing the technical theatre work). Relationship building, surrendering personal desires to resistances and power struggles, and recognizing differences (e.g., feelings of whether or not a flyer is necessary) can be key to success during the process leading up to a theatrical production. I therefore see this as a moment of moving resistance – one in which individuals’ desires became clearer, and the youth and researchers moved through complex and messy discussions.
Within this meeting and the rehearsal process, power, desire and safety were negotiated and unpacked in multiple ways between the youth leaders and university researchers. Most evident in this extended moment characterized by resistance was how much power was being negotiated between the youth leaders and university researchers. As Foucault (1978) argued, although there is no grand theory that explains how power works in multiple sites, “where there is power there is resistance” (p. 95). Foucault went on to explain that power is everywhere; it is neither positive nor negative; it is a part of love and pedagogoy. Power was both important and productive during this meeting in how it created resistances where youth articulated and negotiated their anxieties and desires, and critically thought about ways to reach their community and further youth safety during the production.

**Part Two: Nine Pedagogical Moments of Resistance During Rehearsals**

In this section I focus on nine pedagogical moments that occurred during the 6-month rehearsal creation of *Surviving in the Cracks* where youth showed everyday resistances to activities such as doing warm-ups, memorizing lines and rehearsing the script. These moments of resistance from or between the university researchers, youth leaders and youth participants were accompanied by power struggles, youth desires as seen through the imaginaries of the theatre, and the creation of safe or unsafe spaces. By paying attention to these nine pedagogical moments, I am exploring how the pedagogical role of resistance in relation to power, desire, and space functions within the rehearsal phase of this popular theatre project.

Through reviewing the script, field notes, rehearsal footage, and post-production interviews, I identified nine pedagogical moments of resistance during rehearsals when youth resisted writing and rehearsing, questioning what these resistances did for the youth and the
production. I first analyze two moments in terms of the negotiations of desires seen through the youth imaginaries in the theatre space. This is followed by the analysis of four moments of resistance where negotiations of power within rehearsals were evident, and finally I conclude this section with the analysis of three moments of resistance where negotiations of safe and unsafe spaces played a role in the theatrical project.

**Moments Two to Ten: Description of sites.**

The first six months of rehearsals took place in a community center, The Gathering Place, in downtown Vancouver on Sunday afternoons between 1pm and 4pm. The Gathering Place is described by the Youth in BC website as “a community center that caters to the disadvantaged residents of the Downtown South community. Services include a low-cost cafeteria, health centre, reading room and a connected education centre” ([http://youthinbc.com/2008/06/13/the-gathering-place/](http://youthinbc.com/2008/06/13/the-gathering-place/)). We were given a large empty recreational room on the second floor in the back of the centre to rehearse in on Sunday afternoons only. The room had windows onto the street and into the hallways of the centre with blinds that could be drawn for privacy. In order to get to the room we had to take a small elevator or walk up a flight of stairs and walk through the centre. The space was clean and orderly with many so-called disadvantaged adults coming and going. At times, people visiting the centre would interrupt our rehearsals in order to find out what we were doing or just stand and watch rehearsals from the door or interior windows. After the rehearsals the youth were given a paid meal in the centre’s kitchen, which was just across from the rehearsal space. Moment Two and some of Moment Three take place at the Gathering Place.

During the last two months of rehearsals, we needed to add more rehearsal times and choose another space, as the Gathering Place was only available on Sundays. We chose
Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5pm to 8pm to rehearse and used small confined meeting rooms in the basement of St. Paul’s Hospital in downtown Vancouver. We were able to reserve these rooms because one of the university researchers, Sean, worked in the hospital. Moments Three through Ten are pedagogical moments of resistance that took place during two filmed evening rehearsals at St. Paul’s Hospital on May 21st and June 11th.

**Moment Two: Resistance to rehearsals continuing.**

Following the first two months of rehearsals doing community building, seeing cast members come and go, and initial scene and character brainstorming through journaling and improvisational exercises, the youth demanded a script be written by the youth leaders and myself, which is reflected in Jenn’s blog field notes entry:

The intention of Sunday’s rehearsal was to work through some writing exercises to help facilitate script development. This did not go quite as planned. And when Laura introduced the first exercise it was met with strong resistance from the group. I think there has been some feelings of frustration building up within the group and Sunday was the day to communicate those feelings – which I personally feel is actually a good thing. In order for this process to work everyone has to be comfortable enough with each other to feel they can express themselves in honesty. What followed was an honest and frank discussion of what everyone’s expectations were about the play and how they feel regarding the process and exercises they have been doing. Many expressed a sense of urgency and concern that we could not accomplish the staging of a play in 3 months. All wanted to stop doing exercises (some called them a “waste of time”) and get right into the writing of the script. I’m fairly confident that had Laura proceeded with the writing exercises some of the youth would have up and left, and
several would not return to future rehearsals.

So after a good venting session and a short break, the remainder of the rehearsal was quite productive and the group came up with their first scene! (J. Dixon, field notes blog, March 15, 2009)

**Moment Three: Resistance to memorizing lines.**

Davina, Fraggle, Trevor, Laura, and I wrote a script over two weeks and rehearsals then resumed on Sunday, April 26th, 2009. At that rehearsal, the cast did a reading of the entire script at the Gathering Place, making various edits mostly specific to language used on the streets. During this filmed rehearsal it was agreed upon that no one would play ‘themself’, in order to protect each other from having to relive the traumatic situations being portrayed. During the last months of rehearsals, five of the eight cast members resisted memorizing their lines and the script was rarely performed as written line-by-line; interpretations, imaginations and improvisations were ever-present. Participants’ reasons for not memorizing their lines were always due to time constraints (no childcare, school, work).

In rehearsal data filmed in the small confined conference rooms in St. Paul’s, I observed that pedagogical moments when the youth seemed most comfortable and safe were when they did independent improvisations during scene rehearsals. As the director, I would instruct the cast to rehearse a particular scene, and they would rehearse the scene together without following the script, acting in-role while improvising their own imagined scene. An example of this occurred when Cody and Davina roleplayed an extensive improvisation during the “Squat Scene.” They incorporated an imagined story about how they climbed up into the squat and where they had been the previous morning. While in-role as squatters, other cast members joined the conversation and there was complete focus and participation
from all actors in-role within the imagined scene.

**Negotiations of desires seen through youth imaginaries.**

In Moment Two, I regard the collective youth resistance to the continuation of planned rehearsals as the youth ‘call to action’ and desire to write the script. Without this ‘call to action’, we would have continued to brainstorm characters for another few weeks, stalling the inevitable and complicated process of collaboratively writing the youth script. The youth participants demanded the writing of the script through outright resistance to attending any more rehearsals and by detailing their frustrations, which Jeff described as positive in the shared field notes blog: “The very fact that people are getting ‘frustrated’ and ‘concerned’ is a good thing! It means they are invested and engaged in the project and want to see a good outcome!” (J. Masuda, field notes blog, March 24, 2009).

During the rehearsal when the youth participants articulated their desire for a script, we collaboratively brainstormed and created an outline for the play (see Figures 65 and 66). The resistance to the planned improvisational activities for the day led to pedagogical moments that contained critical thinking about the formation and maintenance of youth homelessness, while collectively creating an outline for the script by incorporating multiple youth stories:

Amanda brought along a pile of cardboard and markers. We spent the entire time in a circle around the cardboard throwing out general and specific ideas about the play. From a process perspective, it seemed to be quite a useful exercise for everyone - it was a very participatory way of getting the youth to see how individual experiences could 'fit' into the overall story we are aiming to tell. (J. Masuda, field notes blog, March 22, 2009)
Figure 64. Cardboard Brainstorm 1

Figure 65. Cardboard Brainstorm 2
The following all-cast rehearsal was canceled so that Davina, Fraggle, Trevor, Laura and I could write the play based on youth journals and stories. The following transcript was taken from a post-production interview and reflects how one youth, who I am keeping anonymous, felt about her histories being scripted and shared with the public:

Amanda: Are the scenes you wrote from your personal experience or people you know?
Youth Participant: Personal experience.
Amanda: So three scenes made it into the play from your own personal experience.
Youth Participant: Yeah, they [Amanda and Laura] did it from journals. And all three scenes that I wrote in my journal made it into the play. And it’s pretty empowering actually that my story is kinda out there. (youth participant, interview, July 2, 2009)

I define the second pedagogical moment of resistance, when the youth resisted the continuation of rehearsals, as a moment of telling resistance - by resisting future rehearsals from taking place, they dramatically pushed the production forward, prompting the space and time for the telling of multiple youth stories. In Moment Three, the resistance to line memorization paired with the decision not to play oneself can be seen to have given the youth a space to retell each other’s stories depending on how they re-interpreted them in that moment. The cast were able to rethink, reenact, and observe each other’s histories and narratives, and could change the historical situation through improvising different lines and reactions than those we had initially included in the script. I define this as an embodied critical pedagogy — where the youth critically thought about and embodied the imaginaries of each other’s experiences of living or working in the safe houses, surviving on the streets and working as social workers for the child welfare system. Through role-play, they imagined
their different positionalities related to age, gender, race, socio-economic factors, and life experiences (as parents, as youth leaders, as foster children) through the use of drama and came to understand different perspectives of individuals throughout their lives (e.g. social workers, safe house and hospital staff, shop owners, and other street-involved youth).

These improvisational and embodied pedagogical moments occurred throughout all rehearsals, but increased as the cast became more familiar with the script and more comfortable with each other. While they reflect the youth imaginations, comfort levels, and trust while working with each other, they can also be seen as everyday acts of resistance to the written script, to the facilitator ‘on book’ who was following the script line-by-line, and to the cast members who had memorized their lines. In a sense, these moments are also a resistance to the continuation of the scene, since those who knew their lines complained that they could not continue ‘on book’ in the newly improvised scene. For those who improvised, these everyday acts of resistances created a deeper sense of comfort in the real and imagined space of the theatre.

**Moment Four: Resistance to rehearsing.**

Leadership shifted between the youth leaders and the director/researcher. The cast did not rely on the facilitators to co-construct elements of the play. The youth took great pleasure when taking on leadership roles, and often teased each other when acting in-role, while at the same time demonstrated mutual respect through different modes of address, such as through gestures and silences. Below is a moment during a filmed rehearsal when Trevor was both facilitating and acting in-role during a rehearsal:

Trevor: Scene 6. So …

Amanda: Cody, you are not in this scene.
Cody: Yeah, well I can be [in the scene] because there’s like half the people here [at rehearsal].

Amanda: Ok. You be Davina, who plays Cassidy.

Trevor: Scene! (This symbolizes to the youth to start the scene.)

Cody (interrupting): I don’t want to be Cassidy. I get like two lines.

Trevor: (Stares over at Cody. Silence. Then looks at Mike.) Ok – start again.

... (Cody, Trevor, and Mike act the entire scene out. The following is the end of the scene . . . )

Mike (in-role as Cliff): So, uh what are you up to for today? Where are you staying?

Trevor (in-role as Nixon): I don’t know. Safe houses ain’t an option. Got to find a squat, man.

Mike (in-role as Cliff): Well we can chill here ‘til closing and then head out.

Trevor (in-role as Nixon): Sounds cool.

Mike (in-role as Cliff): Lets go smoke a smoke. (End of scripted scene. The remainder is improvised.) Let’s go for a joint.

Trevor (in-role as Nixon improvising): Oh, yeah I like the other one better. (the joint as opposed to the cigarette)

Mike (in-role as Cliff improvising): Yeah then, let’s go for a joint.

Trevor (in-role as Nixon improvising): Yeah I like that one.

Cody (not in-role anymore): Yeah, lets go smoke a joint.

Trevor (still improvising in-role as Nixon): We weren’t asking you Cassidy.

Mike (in-role as Cliff improvising smiling): No we weren’t.
(Cody and Mike smile at Trevor. Trevor laughs.)

Trevor: Scene! (G. Masuda, filmed rehearsal, May 21, 2009)

**Moment Five: Resistance to leadership.**

As explained above, Cody (the youngest cast member at 16 years old) demonstrated the most acts of resistance throughout the rehearsal process. In an interview at the end of the project, Cody said, “My least favourite [moment] would have to be showing up late, hung over and getting told what to do” (Cody, interview, July 2, 2009). Often his acts of resistance put a halt to a rehearsal and because of this I, along with other youth and university researchers, became very frustrated by his behavior. In the second filmed rehearsal at the hospital, Cody got into a disagreement with Fraggle about needing to leave early. Following this disagreement, we did a warm-up activity that involved throwing hacky sacks (see Figure 66).

![Hacky-sack Warm-up at the Hospital](image)

**Figure 66. Hacky-sack Warm-up at the Hospital**

Cody started throwing the hacky sacks *at* Fraggle, instead of *to* Fraggle. After Fraggle became increasingly frustrated and Cody made fun of her, I explained to him that he was not
being respectful and he walked to the side of the room and sat down angrily while yelling at me. A few minutes later I tried to invite Cody back to the warm-up circle and Davina (youth leader) said, “Cody when you feel like you can be productive and come back to the group and join in with everything that we are doing, just stand up and come back, ok? Thank you.” Cody looked up to Davina. He often looked to her for support. His facial reaction to this comment was calm and appreciative after being very angry with me. We then did an articulation activity and Cody, from his seat, yelled to me, “That’s not even right Amanda! You don’t even know what the words are!” I asked him for help and he added a bunch of new articulation exercises to our warm-ups, such as “unique New York.” The cast then followed Cody’s lead for three different exercises.

**Moment Six: Resistance through youth social interactions.**

The next rehearsal moment entailed Cody and Davina being challenged to focus while rehearsing the last and most difficult scene in which Cody’s character was coercing Davina’s character to stay at his house in order to take sexual advantage of her:

Cody (in-role as Matt): *You’re pretty hot.*

Davina (in-role as Vanessa): *Actually I think I should probably get going. First bus is leaving soon.*

Cody: (in-role as Matt sweetly) *No you should just chill with me for a little bit. I will get you where you need to go after.*

(We all start laughing because of how polite Cody is acting. Scene stops.)

Amanda (director/researcher): Cody you are being so nice!

Fraggle (youth leader): Channel your inner douche-bag, man! Let’s go!

Davina (youth leader): I know you have some!
(Group laughter.) (G. Masuda, filmed rehearsal, June 11, 2009)

Figure 67. Davina and Cody Rehearsing while Fraggle Facilitates

**Moment Seven: Resistance to attending rehearsals.**

During the second filmed rehearsal, Cody decided to leave the room to wash his hands while acting in mid-scene (Figure 69). I asked Cody to continue in-role until we
finished this scene and explained that he could leave right after.

![Figure 68. Cody Trying to Leave Mid-scene](image)

**Negotiations of power.**

In the fourth moment above, Trevor was in-role as Nixon for Dave who was absent during this rehearsal. The footage depicts Trevor facilitating certain aspects of the scene while I was taking notes regarding what costumes and props we needed. While Trevor was in the leadership role, Cody attempted to assert power through resistance to the continuation of the scene by complaining about having to be in-role as Davina’s character that only had a few lines. In response, Trevor silently looked at him, the power shifting to Trevor in order to silence Cody from further resistance to the continuation of the scene. Trevor’s silent stare made it clear to Cody that he had no choice but to continue to play the role of Cassidy. This worked and the scene continued with Cody acting in this role. Through improvisations at the end of this scene—another example of Trevor, Mike and Cody expressing desires through their imaginaries—Trevor, both as Trevor and imagined as Nixon, brought humor to the
moment by expressing his desire to smoke a joint while addressing Cody as ‘Cassidy’ still and teasing him within the scene. Trevor’s silent stare at first demanded respect from Cody, but then the moments of humor at the end of the improvised scene, created a mutual respect. In this instance, resistance to leadership created a situation where youth leaders negotiated power through silence and humor with youth participants, while also furthering the drama work.

In Moment Five, Cody demonstrated resistance to the hacky-sack warm-up, and the power relations transferred from Amanda to Davina to Amanda to Cody. His resistance to the warm-up and disrespect towards Fraggle and me challenged the members and leaders of the group causing frustration and anger, but it also prompted other new and useful practices in our warm-up activities and created a space for Cody’s leadership. This shifting and re-distributing of the power brought a new level of comfort, confidence and participation from Cody for the remainder of the rehearsal, which is captured in supportive data from a post-production interview with Cody:

Amanda: What has this experience meant to you?
Cody: Well, it really changed my view on life.
Amanda: How so? What are you going to remember most about this experience?
Cody: Teamwork works. (Cody, interview, July 2, 2009)

As shown in the data above, Cody often sought attention and support from Davina and would act out and resist the rehearsal process in order to get it. And at other times, his resistance did not lead to a shift in power, but frustrated and angered other youth participants. These resistances were often messy and at times continuous, leaving considerable space for laughter, frustration, and discussion.
As in Moment Four with Trevor and Cody acting in-role, the youth exerted power over each other through teasing. This seemed to be a way that the youth created connections though, if too harsh, could create distance. Cody and Davina consistently resisted rehearsing the scene depicted in Figure 67 because of the sexual theme and power dynamics between the two actors - Davina was Cody’s mentor, yet in this scene Cody was supposed to abuse Davina. Fraggle and Davina supported and directed Cody through this scene by teasing him, calling him a ‘douchebag’, which brought humor to the moment and created a much more comfortable space for Cody to rehearse his most uncomfortable role in the play. Only at the final play performance were Davina and Cody able to perform this scene, which followed many moments of resisting rehearsing it through acknowledgement of the embodied power reversal necessitated by the play and through discussions of the male act of dominance and oppression. I consider this a moment of intensive playful resistance, as it did not necessarily ever move the scene forward during rehearsals, but Fraggle and Davina’s humor dissolved the intensity of the theme being rehearsed. These humorous resistances often led to deep community building between youth.

Everyday acts of resistances (Scott, 1985, 1990) to rehearsing from all youth, in general, was the norm, and took various shapes including leaving in mid-rehearsal, not showing up, and/or being late, especially with Davina, Cody, Fraggle, and Natasha. When people did not show up, other cast members had to play their parts during rehearsals, and these absences were a frustrating form of resistance throughout the entire production that made rehearsals messy and unpredictable depending on who was performing whose roles.

Within interview transcripts, participants consistently questioned the success of any final production occurring due to these absences. In the interview below, Trevor expresses
how he questioned whether youth were going to show up to the final production and how proud he was of Cody for being present in the end:

Trevor: . . . And it’s the same with say Cody, the lack of interest that he showed through the process and even to the product . . . I wasn’t sure if anybody was going to show up [to the final performance], especially Cody. And to see Cody show up, um, I think to me was just like probably the proudest moment cause I think that out of everyone I think he did the best job. (T. Coburn, interview, October 11, 2012)

As well, Amethysts’ comment below in her post-production interview reminds me that there is no way of knowing when these youth absences or latenesses were purposeful resistances, subconscious resistances, systemic struggles of cultural resistances or interferences from other aspects of the youth lives:

Amanda: What would you say you are going to remember most from this experience?
Amethyst: The ups and downs. Dragging myself there when I really didn’t want to be there and laughing a lot. … Yeah. I was really kinda shut in for a while. I was really shut in. So this kinda built a bit of community. (A. Benallie, interview, July 2, 2009)

The after-math of these absences led to many frustrations and disagreements by youth over how much cast members should get paid if they only showed up for part of the rehearsal. It also created different dynamics depending on who was present for each rehearsal, a struggling resistance, as youth leaders and participants fought to understand and adjust to the ever-changing community dynamics created by the transient comings and goings of individuals at every rehearsal. As well, who acted in whose part was constantly changed depending on who was present at each rehearsal. This resistance to being present at rehearsals brought much doubt from all involved in the success of the production - during the
last few weeks of the rehearsal process, many of the youth and researchers reported that they felt there was little chance for a comprehensive performance to occur. The act of showing-up and being present, in the face of such large and ensuing pressures, became a successful moment for each youth.

**Moment Eight: Resistance to rehearsal space.**

With limited financial resources and spaces to rehearse where all youth could easily travel to, we had to ask familiar downtown urban organizations if we could use rooms in their buildings for free. The youth did not always feel safe at these locations, which created an additional obstacle to attending rehearsals.

During a rehearsal on March 1st, 2009 at the Gathering Place, the youth and I defined a safe space as one where physical harm was avoided, where we could rehearse in private, and where youth did not feel emotionally or physically threatened. The following field notes blog comments reflect our discussions from that day:

Today we spoke about the location: Saint Paul’s [hospital] or the Gathering Place [community centre]. We discussed trust and security issues and we drew on each participants’ opinion to decipher if the Gathering Place was going appropriate for rehearsals. The youth seemed to think it was okay, but I was worried that the quieter girls, in particular, wouldn't speak their true feelings. We discussed privacy and taking on new identities in private, so the idea to close the door and blinds [at the Gathering Place] came to fruition.” (L. Nimmon & S. Nixon, field notes blog, March 1, 2009)

And the director’s (me) response on the blog:

I believe we really started to dive into thoughts on trust and safety. I believe this to be
a central issue to our workspace. It was good to get scenes on their feet and analyze why we did or did not feel safe in certain situations. (A. Wager, field notes blog, March 9, 2009)

**Moment Nine: Youth resistance to the community centre space.**

Mike, one of the youth cast members, reported on our group Facebook VYVC page that he had been chased after leaving rehearsal at the Gathering Place:

Yesterday after leaving the group I went for pizza, [then I] walked back by the Gathering Place. I see this guy [from the Gathering Place] in a hat look at my laptop. I get paranoid, walk across the street, the guy in the hat walked up to his buddies [at the Gathering Place], they all looked at me, so I turn the corner and start to run, I look back they are all chasing me, I get to the Round House community center, hide in the mens washroom they come in, I ask the staff if there’s another entrance, they said no, so I book it out, they see me again and start chasing me, all the way to my work, one guy gets super close yells, hey that’s my laptop, I said no its not, I book it into my work he follows yelling I run into the back and he starts a scene, the owner kicks him out asks what happened, then the owner says, NEXT TIME DON’T COME INTO A RESTAURANT AND START A SCENE, arg, anyways I am still going to attend VYVC, but I would like it if some body walked me outside [The Gathering Place] to like Granville when ever it ended. (Mike, Facebook comment, February 16, 2009)

**Moment Ten: Youth resistance to the hospital space.**

As previously stated, the small confined rooms that we rehearsed in during the last two months were in confined rooms in the basement of St. Paul’s Hospital; we were given permission to use these spaces as Sean worked there as a part-time employee. Sean was
traveling while we rehearsed in the hospital and our reserved booking was not included on the bulletin board located at the front of the rooms; this added the possibility that we might be kicked out of the space during our three-hour rehearsals. The basement rooms were typically used as lecture spaces for hospital personnel and were difficult to get to; you had to take an elevator, stairwell and pass an autopsy room while walking through various basement hallways riddled with clean and dirty laundry carts, alarms, surveillance systems, and mirrors. The space had a very claustrophobic feel (as depicted in Figures 70-72).

Figure 69. Walking to Rehearsal Space Through Hospital Basement
Although there was an agreement among the group members that we needed more rehearsal time and therefore space, there was substantial resistance to working in these particular spaces. This is reflected in the following email from a youth leader:
I don’t know how we are going to manage the food budget from the hospital. Also, with the elevator wait time, it makes getting there on time/having short breaks an issue. I also have concerns about going in and out of a hospital (so many germs!) especially with the kids. (F. Rawk, personal correspondence, May 16, 2009)

**Negotiations of space.**

Spatial influence on the youth lives, both real and imagined, played a significant role in explaining their histories and how this production actually came to be. As you can see from the play structure below, a safe space was represented in the first act within the setting of the underage safe house. Each of the scenes from the second act took place after the safe house closures and they depict five unsafe spaces where youth end up—in a hospital, an adult shelter, a squat, a laundromat bathroom, and a stranger’s house—because they had no safe space to turn to.

**VYVC Play:**

“Surviving the Cracks”

**Act I: A SAFE SPACE**

- Scene 1: A Safe House
- Scene 2: A Social Worker’s Office
  - Scene 3: Bad News
  - Scene 4: The Closure
  - Scene 5: The March

**Act II: UNSAFE SPACES**

- Scene 6: Suicide Survival
- Scene 7: Bated Youth
- Scene 8: Squatted
- Scene 9: A Broken Xmas Eve
- Scene 10: Becoming a Statistic

The rehearsals took place within an urban community centre and hospital. The two performances were in the community centre and a performance venue in Vancouver’s
downtown eastside. Within this section, I selected three pedagogical moments during rehearsals when youth resisted the spaces we were working in due to feeling physically or emotionally in jeopardy at the community centre and the hospital, and I analyze how these resistances were calmed or negotiated.

Moment Nine reflects how community centres and other similar facilities do not necessarily create safe and secure spaces for youth, and reiterates how specific safe houses need to be created for youth underage and supports the theme demonstrated in “Scene 7: Bated Youth”, where the youth explored how and why female youth are driven into the sex trade when their only resources are adult shelters, or community centres aimed at providing services for disadvantaged adults. Rachlis, Wood, Zhang, Montaner and Kerr (2009) report how:

Interestingly, some research has suggested that the spaces often meant to provide a safe and secure place for homeless youth (e.g., shelters), are not, in reality, viewed as safe in comparison to public spaces where youth can remain connected within their peer networks and ‘street families’ (Pain & Francis, 2004; De Rosa et al., 1999). This explains why cast members from Surviving in the Cracks sometimes resisted rehearsing in the spaces that we had at our disposal. Youth leaders tried to create a safer rehearsal space for Mike to attend by offering to accompany him, acting as his street family, and speaking to the staff and clients at the community center. Fraggle publicly responded to him on our group Facebook VYVC page:

Hey Mike,

Im really sorry that happened to you!

I hope this doesn't discourage you from coming. If you would like, I can walk you out
of there when rehearsal is done. We want everyone to feel safe when they come out! I do know a lot of people around the Gathering Place and I will speak to some of the staff/clients about this to make sure that this kind of thing doesn’t happen again. (F. Rawk, Facebook comment, February 17, 2009)

Mike’s response, “… I will be returning to the program, if there was more support for [street-involved] youth this may not have happened” (Facebook comment, February 17, 2009) brought the focus back to the root of the problem, which was finding a safe space for youth to be able to live in, as well as safe spaces for us to create in, such as rehearsing in private rooms during the play project. This resistance to an unsafe place became a moment when Mike publically reiterated his engagement and reasons for doing the project, reminding the youth participants of their collective resistance to the Ministry’s decision to close the underage safe houses. Fraggle also demonstrated her power in terms of being in a position to talk to the staff at the Gathering Place to make it a safer space for Mike. As illustrated, the issue of safety arose in various ways and complicated the idea of what was safe and was not safe.

Like Fraggle’s comments on her sense of safety in the hospital site, all youth who attended the 10 rehearsals at St. Paul’s Hospital at one point or another expressed concerns of being in the hospital, either during our long walks to the confined rooms or during rehearsals. While at the hospital, we moved through the script quicker, took fewer breaks, and often ended rehearsals earlier. We accomplished a lot during these rehearsals, although this and the rising levels of anxiety were probably also due to the fast approaching performance dates.

Regardless of all these resistances to the physical and imagined spaces, the small group of youth that were a part of the production formed a community with each other, and
that in itself created a space of security and well-being. Their collective group resistances to the physical spaces we found ourselves rehearsing in united them, and I consider this a bonding experience because the resistance to the hospital space created a common ground and a stronger bond for the youth, which made it possible to continue rehearsing in the face of anxiety and concern. The imagined space of the theatre became a tool for the youth to express themselves through various literacy forms, including improvisations, journaling experiences, and telling stories. Within the imagined drama space, the youth shared their histories through layered and imagined story-tellings; they differed depending on the personal spaces they were in at the time, and how they resisted those personal spaces and places we were rehearsing in.

Embodied Pedagogical Moments of Resistance

This chapter explored how pedagogical moments of resistance resulted in negotiations and renegotiations of power, desire, and space, affecting the direction that the rehearsals were heading. As a result, I describe these moments of resistance as embodied, productive, moving, telling, comforting, messy, continuous, playful, frustrating, changing, struggling and bonding in terms of explaining how learning can take place. Works in the field of youth resistance (Best, 2007; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Ginwright et al., 2006; Soep, 2012; Scott, 1985, 1990; Tuck & Yang, 2014) prompt me to question if resistance is a necessary part of pedagogy in order for learning to happen. Youth resistance during the creation of Surviving in the Cracks was often so strong that participants shut down and came very close to quitting, which would have led to an abandonment of the theatre project as a whole. Through analyses of these pedagogical moments, I reveal how resistance within rehearsals often changed the direction in which we were heading and opened up new spaces
and possibilities for the youth to share knowledge and leadership, articulate their desires, and build comfortable spaces in unsafe places. I firmly believe that these resistances—although messy and unclear in the moment—also led to moments of comfort and intensified the youth’s engagement, critical thinking, independence and actions within the project.

The role of power in pedagogical moments of resistance was evident when the youth took ownership and leadership of the project. These moments often occurred when youth were resisting ideas or concerns that other youth, university researchers, or the director voiced. In response, the youth resistances created a negotiation of the power dynamics and opened up spaces for catalyzing youth leadership and advocacy for the project. This was manifested in two ways. First, as within the research meeting, the youth desires were expressed in response to their resistance to power demonstrated by other youth leaders and university researchers. Second, in regards to the drama space, the youth revealed their desires through the imaginaries of the theatre, through improvising their needs while in-role. These moments created an imagined space where the youth found common grounds to express their needs, concerns, and their conceptions of each other’s past, present, and future.

The pedagogical moments of resistance in relation to safe and unsafe spaces reveal the ways that trust and comfort created by the community that the youth formed are key to embodying spaces of drama pedagogy, even more so than the actual place the youth were in. When the youth were not comfortable in the community created space, they rarely acted or improvised – rehearsals were at a stand still. But when the youth found themselves in a comfortable space together, regardless of the institutional place, they were able to immerse themselves in the imaginaries of the theatre.

Throughout my time working with the youth in Surviving in the Cracks, I found
resistances led to moments that sculpted their pedagogical experiences. These moments of resistance forced us to stop, breathe, and take a closer look at how these small or large acts of resistance unfixed our, my, or the greater community’s expectations of the play. I can characterize the drama work with these youth as a mixture of complete chaos and humor as well as power negotiations, productive imaginings, and contemplations of safe and unsafe spaces. In spite of this seeming chaos, pedagogical knowledge and practices were being collaboratively constructed, and resulted in a powerful performance that had an imbedding effect on the youth lives and their community.

In the next and final chapter, I further theorize the role of resistance in embodied pedagogy and within the confines of systemic oppression. As well, I situate this project in the larger fields of pedagogy, language and literacy education, drama in education, critical youth studies, and methodological studies in qualitative research. I include the significance of this research within these fields and possibilities for future research.
Chapter Six: Applied Theatre as Pedagogical Inquiry

Fraggle: What do you want to get out of doing the play?

Dave: Awareness. Some guy in an office just pushing a pencil doesn’t really know what’s going on, so awareness. (Focus Group, March 29, 2009)

This applied theatre study defines a popular theatre project as a messy and rich site of pedagogical inquiry that can be examined through multiple theoretical and methodological frameworks. I drew on critical feminist pedagogy, critical youth studies and theatre and literacy research with the purpose of unearthing how drama and theatre spaces provide “anomalous” (Ellsworth, 2005) learning places, or out-of-the-ordinary learning spaces, that youth and researchers collectively embodied during an applied drama process and theatre production. In answering how drama and theatre with street youth opens up embodied pedagogical spaces, I analyzed the script with a youth participant as well as particular moments of resistance during performance creation and production. In conducting this analysis, I examined how meaning was collectively constructed, how multimodal literacy practices were used in critical ways, how power was negotiated, how desire was manifested through imaginaries, and how safe spaces were generated by this community of youth. In this final chapter I discuss my findings as well as their implications within the fields of pedagogy, language and literacy education, drama in education, critical youth studies, and methodological studies in qualitative research. I conclude with proposals for further research when thinking about theatre and learning with marginalized populations in both academic and non-academic settings.
Findings: Expanding Possibilities

This section expands on the possibilities that emerged over the course of this study, and the discussion is divided into two sections that describe my findings. First, I explain why the construction of alternative learning spaces and practices are important to reach a diversity of youth, especially when working with marginalized populations, and how critical multimodal literacies are a crucial element within learning spaces, both formal and informal. As well, I discuss how resistance has become a key finding within this research, specifically when working with street-involved youth.

Alternative learning spaces and practices.

Within this study, the youth used an abundance of alternative pedagogical approaches in order to create and produce a play that advocated for the reopening of Vancouver safe houses. These alternative pedagogical approaches consisted of critical multimodal meaning-making practices, including script writing, improvisations, role-playing, interviewing, and visiting old safe house sites. The inclusion of informal learning practices at non-academic sites created engaging alternative learning spaces for these youth, most of whom had left formal schooling before or during secondary school and had little motivation to return.

Two years after the production, while analyzing my data, I returned to interview three of the youth about their formal schooling years. During these post-interviews, Trevor, Davina, and Natasha, three First Nations youth, commented on the negative experiences and effects that schooling had on them. Natasha\(^8\) described her formal schooling experiences

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\(^8\) In my interview with Natasha, we were minding her two-year old son on a playground at the same time, which resulted in many of her responses being fragmented. This explains why I include phrases of her responses in comparison to Davina and Trevor's more extended answers below.
prior to Grade 8 as ‘boring. … they just didn’t have enough to keep my attention.” After
leaving school in Grade 8, she was forced to go to probational school a few years later and
she explained that it was easier for her to be focused in this schooling experience because
“they actually went out to do stuff, activities.” Natasha considered this a better form of
education for students because “they’re not sitting around all day” and “it might help them
keep focused maybe a little bit more” and described this form of schooling as “bringing it to
life,” because she was able to learn in alternative spaces where “you [do not] have to sit there
and sit there and look at a book all day. Cause I’m not one to sit there and read all
day.” Davina reflected on her past education by describing what she wanted to see in her
own children’s schooling, saying, “I think teaching by doing is really important. … so like
maybe having like discussions about stuff but then also doing … like let’s talk about farm
animals, so let’s go to a farm …”. She described how this was completely lacking in her own
formal schooling, which made her dislike school. Trevor reminisced about the times in
school when he continuously questioned “is what I’m doing in this class, um, gonna help me
in 20 years, or is it gonna help me in two years? Is it gonna help me in the work that I do in
my life and when I answer those questions, the answer comes out as no. It’s not relevant to
what I do.” He believed that learning from and with people and places was where real
learning took place – a point he elaborated on in the post-production interview:

I remember learning about the history of Native American, … of Canada and our
Prime Ministers and you know the war and how we got here and Christopher
Columbus, but it’s like is that really necessary to what’s happening now? And for me
I’d rather learn growing up and growing, and I guess later on in life living with my
last foster mom as I did, that I was able to learn from my grandma, I was able to learn
from my foster mom and her family and the Elders in her family, um, that I find that it’s easier to learn from actual people who have heard it from their parents and from their grandparents as opposed to a textbook and to me, I think textbooks don’t really tell the whole story and the whole picture…. And you know I think history is a lot more important but it makes it less fun when you’re learning about history through a textbook rather than being able to do it hands-on and actually have someone who say was in World War I or in World War II come and talk to kids about, um, just about the process and the outcome and what happened and how it felt and just everything associated to say the World Wars and I think for me a lot of that happened outside of school and away from school rather than in school. (T. Coburn, interview, October 11, 2012)

Through reflections of their own schooling and life experiences above, Davina, Trevor, and Natasha articulated how past schooling experiences included systemic exclusion and non-relevant curriculum, thereby strengthening systemic oppression of these youth. Their comments reflect how current and future educational spaces and practices need to incorporate safety from oppression (e.g., from racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.), these being crucial to motivation and engagement while learning. Their comments were reflective of how through writing and performing a script of their histories, making the learning relevant to their lives, these youth embodied and co-constructed pedagogical spaces together while creating the play and as ‘street-involved youth’ who taught the public about their experiences. These learning possibilities hold the potential to change our understanding of educational theory and practice while connecting education to living moments, to identities, histories, families, and communities.
Returning to my original question in Chapter One: what do the youth and researchers ‘teach,’ to each other and to the public, using drama as a pedagogy? For the youth involved in this theatre project, the spaces and places we rehearsed and met created pedagogical spaces in which the youth gained political agency through questioning, response, and reflection during rehearsals, meetings, youth interviews, and focus groups. These alternative learning spaces and practices represented an embodied pedagogical space where youth multiple perspectives were shared, creating opportunity to critically engage and resist within their community and beyond, regarding social and political issues that were important to them. In a focus group facilitated by Fraggle, where she asked the youth what they wanted to get out of doing the play, Cody answered:

Well, as you can see I got kicked out of my house so I’m wondering if it’s possible for us to open up more safe houses for those who experience the reality of what our play is about … What I want to hopefully get out of the play is that social services of Vancouver will hopefully open up more group homes, safe houses, etc. for those who don’t have anywhere to go. (Focus Group, March 29, 2009)

As illustrated by Trevor’s interview, the youth expressed time and time again, during rehearsals, focus groups, and interviews, their understandings of why they were involved in the project. For example, they discussed the new information they were learning about child and youth services and how they felt a call to teach the public about these systemic issues through the storytellings of personal experiences and the results of the loss of funding. Because these issues were important to the youth in relation to their experiences of living on the street and within foster care, the project drove them to continue creating,
sharing, and collaborating critical multimodal representations of their histories and realities, even during moments of conflict and resistance.

**Resistance as a negotiation of power, desire, and space.**

Once a person has engaged in deep participation, her bones will remember it, and will expect it, and set about creating it in other situations. (Tuck, 2013, p. 13).

Over the fifteen years that I have been conducting drama work as a classroom teacher with marginalized children and adolescents in public schools and surrounding communities, I have found that an element of resistance is a natural part of the created learning environment. As noted in Chapter Five, the youth expressed resistance in many different forms: ambivalence, aggression, desire, silence, play, repulsion, humour, failure, ridicule and absence. The elements of resistance can range from weak to overwhelming in practice, ignoring others, arriving late or not at all, constantly interrupting, employing improvisational tangents, refusing participation, asking to participate more, continuous joking about, throwing things, and/or expressing oneself with harsh words. In my experience, pedagogical moments of resistance often illuminated moments that lead to community-building, comfort and critical thought; moments that often changed the direction of participants’ thoughts or actions.

Through my findings, I discovered that resistance has many faces and produces multiple affects. For example, Fraggle as a young White female mother often showed everyday acts of resistance through humor and anxiety from a place of power as a youth leader, whereas Cody, as a young White male living in foster care, often portrayed everyday acts of resistance through frustration, humor, and anger, whereas Dave, as a First Nations male father, displayed everyday acts of resistance through silence and choosing not to
respond. The diverse identity positionings of the youth and the interplay of their different positionalities related to age, gender, race, socio-economic factors, and life experiences (as street youth, as parents, as youth leaders, as foster children) within the play project, played out in various ways within these moments of resistance as embodied, productive, moving, telling, comforting, messy, continuous, playful, frustrating, changing, struggling and bonding in terms of explaining how learning takes place with these particular youth.

Although I chose to analyze the data through a framework of moments of resistance in Chapter Five, I recognize that I could have addressed the particular ways that the individual youth enacted resistance based on their ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, race, age, and gender. However, I chose not to do that for ethical reasons because there were times when I had the personal back stories of some of the youth that would have shed light on such an analysis. But I chose not to share many traumatic stories to protect their confidentiality, especially because they asked that I not use pseudonyms within the research and because their identities are easily known through the public documentary film. As well, I explain in Chapter One that my intention in writing the dissertation is to more fully understand the context of the situations that resulted in these youth living on the streets through a desire-based lens. Through a desire-based lens, economically disadvantaged young people are not just viewed historically through the lens of oppression and imperialism—diminishing them into victims frozen in the text or history—but instead build upon their own temporal and spatial narrative experiences (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010). Digging deeply into local politics, youth speak across sites and historic moments to understand the long reach of injustice and resistance over time and place, unpacking causes of the deep social and economic problems they face that are beyond their own doing (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).
This situates youth learning in a socio-historical context, which is the basis of what some scholars believe is sound pedagogical practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

From the onset, this research project represented youth resistance: the VYVC youth organization chose to create a public advocacy theatre project resisting the Ministry’s decision to close the underage safe houses. Although the process was challenging, youth post-production interviews reflect that the community that formed made a powerful and positive impact on the youth. Audience feedback following the two final performances was inspiring and motivational for them to hear; unfortunately, the productions had no impact on reinstating the underage safe house program. Ministry officials were invited to the production, but none attended. The audience members were family, friends, community members and social workers. Although the safe houses were not reopened, in post-production interviews all eight of the youth expressed how participating in the play created a strong sense of community and that they would do it again, even unpaid.

Although this participatory research can be seen as a “formal pedagogy of resistance” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008) because the youth attempted to create systemic and institutional change to promote social justice, there were limitations to the youth civic engagement. In a system that chooses to not value or listen to the perspectives of these youth, as demonstrated by the Ministry members who did not attend any of the performances after multiple invitations by youth leaders and university researchers, the youth learned that conditions of injustice may be challengeable, but not always changeable. Within these sites of critical inquiry and ‘independent’ youth resistances (Vizenor, 2014), the youth provoked ripples of social change, beginning with the youth themselves. Many of their post-production interview responses, like those of the youth leaders below, express how, even during times of
resistance and conflict, the community that was built over six months of rehearsing together was very important to them.

Trevor: The whole process … was a huge eye-opener. Not only because of what the outcome was, but I think of the fact of being involved from stage one to say stage five and being able to have a voice and, um, just to see the process of it from you know doing the lit review to you know, um, to doing the journals and coming together and just looking at, you know, what part of it we want to include, you know, and then to actually go through it and to write the script and the long process that it took and then the rehearsals and the struggles that we had with the rehearsal. I think for me, um, I think a lot of us just would never have had the opportunity to be able to do something from beginning to end and so I think for a lot of us to actually be able to say, you know, that we created the play from beginning to end, that we created the script, we did the rehearsals, we did, you know, the set, we did everything. You know, it’s a huge accomplishment for a lot of the youth that were involved. And I think that there is some youth that really blossomed and there was some youth who, you know, yeah there was conflict, um, you know, but you know that comes with, that comes with being together almost every day for six months … (T. Coburn, interview, October 11, 2012)

The many pedagogical moments of resistance throughout the play creation unearthed how negotiations of power, desire, and space worked among, with, and for these youth. During pedagogical moments of resistance that reflected negotiation and renegotiation of power, the youth were often taking ownership and leadership of the project. Through resistance to each other, university researchers, or me as the director, they revealed their
investment in the project. The youth exerted frustration and anger in response to each other during these moments, but felt comfortable enough together to express these emotions and continue collaborating because they were also building a space of trust within the imaginaries of the theatre.

The group also revealed their individual desires within the drama spaces through many improvisational moments during rehearsals, when they felt most comfortable expressing their needs, concerns and conceptions of their own and each others’ lives through the imaginings of the theatre. These moments also revealed the productive aspect of resistance when it took the form of improvisation.

Finally, the pedagogical moments of resistance in relation to safe and unsafe spaces were foundational for the youth to embody spaces of drama pedagogy within these improvisations. This co-created space trumped feelings of lack of safety related to the location, or place, they were in. When the group members felt that they had created a safe space together, rehearsals would continue actively, and often with much humor, regardless of how uncomfortable they felt within the location. As well, these safe spaces further created safe research spaces, safe pedagogical spaces, and safe applied drama spaces for the study as a whole. In conclusion, these pedagogical moments of resistance, then, reveal the interplay of power, desire and space, and of resistance itself, in this project.

Significance of Applied Theatre as Pedagogy

In the following section, I articulate the implications of this applied drama work with street youth and how it contributes to the fields of drama-in-education, literacy, critical youth studies and the growing field of collaborative methodologies. I explain how informal learning spaces and youth resistances within education are crucial parts of pedagogy and
should be considered as future foundations and expansions of education. I conclude with implications for using multiple methodological lenses in order to work alongside, for and with youth, as well as being able to reach larger audiences of youth, communities, educators, and scholars through different analytical perspectives.

**Alternative learning spaces and practices for education.**

In this dissertation, I theorize that constructing alternative or informal learning spaces in various locations and settings is key to performance creation when working with populations of children and youth. As Cammarota and Fine (2008) assert, we should be attending to the critical awareness children and youth gain through a variety of cultural practices, which may happen outside the school setting. In this project, cultural practices were often taking place on the streets with other youth or in communities and with foster families, as when Trevor learned from the Elders in his foster family. This type of popular education (Arnold, 1985; Greene, 1998) and public pedagogy (Giroux, 2000, 2004; Sandlin et al., 2010) is ingrained in community-based practices where children, youth, and adults connect their social conditions to what they are learning, therefore bringing multiple funds of knowledge (González et al., 2013; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Moll, 1992) to their pedagogical practices.

Youth have many responsibilities in their lives beyond schooling. In today’s society, youth—especially marginalized youth—can find themselves overextended with commitments to family, work, education, civic engagement and extra-curricular activities. With all these outside commitments and due to differences in race, age, class, gender, and culture, it can be difficult for them to find a comfortable space to connect to what is being taught to their lives and to understand the need to learn what is not directly
relevant. Trevor explained, at length, his frustration with formal schooling while being an adolescent, and how he learned more from ‘living his life’:

… I was not interested in school. I was not interested in getting an education and I think that kind of, I think I was more interested in drinking and smoking pot and hanging out with my friends than going to school because to me I was learning, I was learning about life and sometimes learning how to live life and learning about what life brings is more important than going to school and learning about math and science and history and learning about things that are not going to help you succeed in life and I can tell you that going to school did not help me to succeed in life because nothing that we did and nothing that we learned was relevant to what was happening in our present day. And so to me that just was a fact of what’s the point of going to school. (T. Coburn, interview, October 11, 2012)

Trevor went on to explain that learning needs to be reflective of his reality—of his reading of the world—as someone who has lived on the streets and has learned from Aboriginal Elders within his foster care home:

Now if they [teachers] were going to teach me about you know how to live within society and how to behave in society and how to be responsible in society, very much so. But they didn’t teach that. And so for me I found that somewhere else and so for me my education was, you know, was definitely, you know, being in foster care, moving around, being homeless, going through drugs, and having this shit happen to me, to me that was my learning. (T. Coburn, interview, October 11, 2012)

These alternative or informal learning spaces that Trevor reflects on above, and that the youth co-constructed in the spaces of the community centre and hospital during the play
project, are places where the youth can connect to and act upon their commitments, and where they are not confined to classroom walls and rows of chairs and desks, spaces that may not be comfortable or welcoming for the youth.

Although informal learning practices and spaces may provide comfortable and inviting spaces for individuals to work together, my findings within this dissertation imply that these alternative spaces, such as the adult community centre and hospital, are not as important as the safety and comfort that the youth created between each other for embodied pedagogical moments to take place. During the play project, one youth expressed, “[Before the play] I had attempted suicide. I lost my home and my best friend. Everything. And I was really lonely. My foster mom took me in and she told me about this play that [VYVC] is doing. She said it would be good for me to get out and talk to people.” This youth, who lives with deep-rooted systemic oppression, wrote most often in her play journal and shared her stories with the group, contributing three of her stories as scenes in the final script. She explains her motivations to stay in the play as, “pretty much to keep up communications with people. To keep being out there. Talking to people and getting to know everybody.” By participating in the play, she felt welcomed and less shut-in by forming connections with others and creating friendships while writing her histories through poetry and journaling stories, acting, doing activities together outside of rehearsal time and taking part in ongoing discussions with other youth about the politics surrounding youth care work. For her, critical multimodal creations were constructed within the alternative learning spaces of this project—such as those created during rehearsals and while shopping for costumes—and these were important for her to embody a safe space to collaborate with others. Here, as with many moments during the play process, learning was not always the primary key issue, but it was
always happening for the group members through various cultural practices, and through living situations closest to their daily realities. Based on these examples, I feel that learning takes place through experiences with people and places, and often when we are not looking.

So if learning should include arts-based practices within public and community-based spaces, what does this mean for education? As argued in Chapter Two, individuals (be they children, youth or adults) bring multiple funds of knowledge (González et al., 2013; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; Moll, 1992) to formal and informal learning spaces. Youth funds of knowledge are shaped by the spaces in which they live, such as by home, work, school, peers, and communities and their raced, aged, classed, and gendered lives. Within this study of informal pedagogical spaces, I acknowledge the multiple funds of knowledge that the youth brought with them, primarily as raced, aged, classed, and gendered individuals in the spatial context of living in an urban context, both on and off of the streets, which they shared with each other and eventually with the public through critical multimodal literacy practices. These multiple forms of knowledge are an example of how literacy learning takes place in everyday life – in multiple roles – and is deeply connected to how we understand ourselves in connection to our worlds - through language, culture, and social practices of everyday life. Education may more effectively meet the needs of a diversity of individuals by providing a range of lessons in learning spaces both in and out-of-school contexts (e.g. Mahiri, 2004) such as in museums, parks, and communities—spaces where children and youth of our community are reading the world. Acknowledging a learning space as an ever-changing environment, be it formal or informal, reminds educators that creating safe spaces of inquiry requires flexibility, spontaneity, and subjective inquiry into individuals multiple funds of knowledge.
**Resistance within education.**

I believe that the strength of resistance is in the blood, and in the blood of every person, but the outcome is never the same because of individuality, family influences, and culture. I am purposefully not saying it is genetic, but saying that it is in the blood, a metaphor of resistance. Resistance is not a gene but a natural force of survivance. (Vizenor, 2014, p. 116)

Within this project I foregrounded youth resistances in relation to power, desire and space that occurred during pedagogical moments. I also furthered the work of critical and contemporary feminist pedagogues (Davies, 2000a; Ellsworth, 1997, 2005; Gallagher, 2008; Grady, 2000; Grosz, 1994; hooks, 1994, 2010; Lather, 2007; Perry & Medina, 2011; Pierre & Pillow, 2000) in the belief that learning takes place individually, collectively, socially and contextually. Through multiple ways of expressing themselves, through critical multimodal literacies, in various informal learning spaces, youth engage in society as active participating citizens (Rogers et al., 2014). Their learning is connected to their daily lives where youth often demonstrate resistances to voices of their peers and the general public.

My critical youth studies work in resistance extends the work of Tuck and Yang (2014) who define resistance as “effective in that it produces a new reality, a new condition from which to resist. It ‘works’ even by not doing what we want it to do. It works by breaking down. Resistance has an impact, or maybe the word is an after-math …” (p. 13). Resistance is where the learning takes place and the ‘new reality or after-math’ is the outcome of the embodied pedagogical experiences. Through these resistances, individuals have opportunities to engage in critical and intense experiences together that are related to their everyday lives and may become imbedded into who they are. They can carry this new
gained information throughout their futures and can expand on it in new places. I argue that knowledge gained through pedagogical moments of resistance is knowledge that youth can carry with them, recycle within new experiences – in turn it potentially provides foundations for future networks of life.

As a contemporary feminist pedagogue and critical youth scholar, I argue that this work has implications related to youth resistance to education: as educators and researchers, it is our responsibility to create learning environments that are safe spaces where individuals may question themselves, be silent, voice opinions, and challenge the dominant discourses prevalent in our society. Creating safe learning environments with youth inside or outside of the classroom allows them to demonstrate these resistances. In this way, youth are living life as critical theorists, adopting a questioning approach to why and how they learn inside and outside of the classroom. Their resistances further demonstrate an ability to question how their lives are being shaped by larger political, racial, socio-historical, economic, and geographic contexts and forces by means of critically questioning the relationship between power and knowledge demonstrated by facilitators, educators, and imposed institutionalized systems.

**The affordances of multiple methodological perspectives.**

As stated earlier in this chapter, this critical ethnography is comprised of many different layers. The original project was guided by Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as it was a street youth generated activism project advocating for a governmental change in their own communities. My initial participation in the project was in a service role as the volunteer Artistic Director due to my background in, and knowledge of, theatre directing, performing, script-writing, and artistic design. After attending the first rehearsal, I
immediately realized the direct link this work had to what I sought to explore in my doctoral work: how drama is a successful form of pedagogy with marginalized youth. I worked on this critical ethnography with these youth for four years, generating my own questions, completing participatory and arts-based analyses with a youth leader while incorporating the script in Chapter Four and then solely analyzing the data using coding software in Chapter Five.

Two different methods of analysis brought multiple perspectives to this work. The contextual framing analysis depicted in Chapter Four that incorporated the script, may engage a vast array of readers (youth, scholars, educators, social workers alike) through the use of arts-based methods and the incorporation of participant insights and feedback. This analysis chapter emanates out of an ongoing conversation between the youth leader, Davina, and me about the historical and contextual framing of the script; it also serves as a process of member-checking the data from our time creating, rehearsing, and performing. Within these conversations and through viewing the script, we were exploring a deeper sense of how meaning-making, or learning, happened among the youth. Specifically, I name these modes of meaning-making in Chapter Four, and throughout the play creation, as critical multimodal literacies. Analyzing the script with Davina provided a participant perspective and a contextual framing, which drew on the discourses of the youth, their histories, and their multiple funds of knowledge. As an outsider to this community, I felt it was necessary to find a unique method to further understand the context of the project while working with a youth participant. Davina’s analysis of the script is important in demonstrating how critical multimodal literacies are deeply connected to the creation of the script. At the same time our conversations (in the right column) throughout Chapter Four are points of departure for
Chapter Five because they often articulate how resistance was apparent throughout the script creation and rehearsal process.

While writing Chapter Four, I discovered that my voice—the critical ethnographic researcher voice—was largely missing, and so I sought out another method of analysis to expand on this initial participant/researcher analysis. At several times during and post-production, I (along with many other youth and university researchers) realized how close the play was to falling apart. Yet in post-interviews, the youth spoke about how meaningful this experience had been for them. In light of the intense resistances to the process and the paradoxical comments of the youth, I wanted to figure out how youth took away such rich experiences of meaning-making from the project.

In Chapter Five, I chose to explore resistance in the data through visual and textual analysis coding, using the NVivo coding qualitative program to analyze the rehearsal and meeting film footage and supporting data. This method of analysis allowed me to unearth how resistance worked when using drama as a pedagogy with these youth, especially in relation to power, desires within the imaginaries of the theatre, and safe and unsafe spaces. It helped me understand how, with respect to the multiple moments of near destruction of the play process and performances, a sense of community was created with these youth that trumped their need to quit. But, had I only used this method of analysis, it would have lacked the youth voice and member-checking that Davina captured in the first method of analysis presented in Chapter Four.

So what do these multiple perspectives of analysis afford? Through my analysis I was actively using multiple discourses, or languages: discourses of street youth, social workers, youth leaders, youth participants, youth researchers, an educator, a director, and
various researchers. Through the experience of using multiple analyses, the use of various discourses allowed me to uncover new understandings and to share these findings through multiple perspectives. The benefits of taking on a multi-pronged approach to analysis includes the potential of reaching wider audiences, by drawing on different discourses, tapping into different aspects of the experience, asking different questions of the data, and drawing from different pools of data.

The strength of the multiple methodologies I used is a direct result of the uniqueness of the community that I studied. As an outsider, I had to develop a method of analysis that incorporated the discourses used by the participants, such as those used in the script and script co-analysis with Davina. This is not to say that all studies need to use this form of analysis, but that every study is different and affords different methodologies and modes of analysis. I argue that methodological perspectives within critical youth studies research need to account for the uniqueness of the participants and their discourses in order for researchers and wider audiences to gain a fuller and more respectful understanding of those involved.

**Conclusion: Learning-in-the-Ordinary**

My ‘judgment’ or ‘choice’ has been made possible, thinkable, intelligible, because of ongoing intellectual, political, cultural, emotional, aesthetic, social, and physical labors of tens of thousands of people across decades. (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 128)

This inquiry further develops a critical feminist pedagogical model that incorporates youth voices, and contributes to research at the intersection of critical youth studies, feminist pedagogy, drama and literacy learning, and collaborative methodologies. Exploring how youth might creatively and critically co-construct pedagogy in community and educational contexts, I further build on theatre education and applied theatre literature by examining a multi-layered
theatre project using a critical multimodal lens. Also, with a focus on pedagogy and participatory research, my work sheds new light on popular theatre research through a critical youth studies lens, and through building upon the work of Prentki and Sleman (2000), Salverson (2010, 2011), Ted Little (2011) and others.

My hope is that the findings from this study contribute to urban teacher education programs, incorporating in and out-of-school literacy learning and ultimately helping conceptualize the construction of spaces in which youth, especially those marginalized, can publicly share critical perspectives about their lives and experiences through multimodal representations and drawing on their own funds of knowledge. Learning from the ruptures and contributions that a collective of youth can bring to education may further build humility and a deep respect within and outside of our classrooms. I propose that examples of pedagogy such as the one described through this study, should be considered an ordinary way of learning.

My writings are strongly influenced by my conviction that drama affords possibilities for working across differences—through acts of mimesis, resistance, and critical questioning—and leads to deeper understandings of self and other and the liminal spaces between self and other. I hope that this dissertation may lead to more creative pedagogical risk-taking with youth to create spaces where resistances can create new directions and possibilities within theatre and learning.

**Concluding Words**

It seems only fitting that the last words of this dissertation come from a youth leader. Below is a poem by Fraggle (Rawk, 2009). I hope this dissertation makes it a bit easier for us to hear her.
The Truth (hurts) by Fraggle Rawk

This one is for you
you with the starbucks 100 dollar haircut
you there, the one with mcmurder double cheeseburger super happiness
the one on the cell phone that drives 100,000 dead iraqi mobile
to all the girls with something to prove, mini skirt madness
on granville street
to all the pretentious hippie cats that think smoking pot will
solve the worlds problems
to all you douchebags, the roxy-roofie-colada-wet-dream-hair-gel types
the ones who listen to britney spears, lindsay lohan and think
they piss perfume
the suits with expensive ties that could feed an African family for a year
i know you probably dont hear me
im not sure that i speak your language
i know you probably cant see me
money seems to make one conspicuous enough to acknowledge.
now please, before you spit on me, study me or sweep me
underneath your carpet that stretches on like the sea
sit on this concrete
tell me how it feels
sleep under these stars
tell me how you sleep
if we strip away the layers
that make you who you think you are
what is left for you?
if we take away your cell phone
who is talking now?
If it were all to come crashing down
who will be the one left shivering in the cold?

I’ve come to find myself quite comfortable under this carpet below the poverty line
my comfort is in the knowledge of the life that i know is real
for life isn’t cocktail parties and orgy’s in oil
when it all comes crashing down
i will be the one to take your hand
tell you that there is life beyond your line of credit
money can’t save your soul
the truth shall set you free
but then again
you can’t hear me.
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Appendix A: Youth Interview Questions

(written by Fraggle)

1. Would you please give us your name?
2. Would you please tell us a bit about yourself?
3. What was your relationship/role with the safe houses?
4. What would you define a “safe house” as? (Scene 1)
5. Who did these safe houses serve?
6. How do you feel the safe houses played a role in sexually exploited youth? (Scene 2)
7. Do you recall the reason for the closures? If so, how were you involved? (Scene 3)
8. Do you recall the day of the closures? If so, what was the mood? (Scene 4)
9. How did the youth feel? (Scene 5)
10. Do you think the safe house played a role in supporting youth who were suicidal? (Scene 6... Do we feel it is appropriate to ask about suicide? Do we need an interview question for this? For continuity’s sake, I would say yes, however, this is a touchy subject...Ideas?)
11. How do you feel the safe houses played a role in keeping youth out of the sex trade? (Scene 7)
12. Did some of these youth go on to lead lives in the sex trade?
13. How did the safe houses make services readily available to the youth (i.e. medical, dental, detox, etc.)? (Scene 8)
14. Do you feel that without these safe houses youth have access to these services as easily as before? Why or why not? (Scene 8)
15. Were the youth who accessed the safe houses below the poverty line? (Scene 9)
16. How did the safe houses offset the effects of poverty? (Scene 9)

17. What do you feel life is like for youth now without the safe houses?

18. If this video were to be seen by a high-ranking official (MLA, MP, PM) what would you like to say to them, regarding this issue?

19. Is there anything you would like to add?
Appendix B: VYVC Theatre Project – Final Interview Q’s

1. Looking back to when you first became involved in this play, how has your life changed?
   Probes: Has your home life changed? How about personal life? Employment?
   School?
   Do you think being involved in the play has been responsible for any of these changes? Why? not?

2. What were your motivations to get involved in the play at the beginning?
   Add on's: What were your motivations to stay involved as the play progressed?
   Probes: Did they stay the same? Did the change? Why did they change?
   Was being paid for coming a big motivation? Was being paid as much of a motivation near the end?

3. What has this experience meant to you?

4. What are you going to remember most from this experience?
   Why?

5. What was your favourite/least favourite memory from the production?
   Why?

6. How has the play changed you or your perspective?

7. How has this play changed your attitudes and beliefs about health?

8. Do you think this experience will affect your future at all, and if yes, how? (in terms of health and also life in general...future actions...)

9. What did you want the audience to learn or take away from the play?

10. Have you heard people's reactions to the play?
If so, what were they?

11. Do you think this play had an impact (on you or others)?

   If so, how?

   What kind of impact?

12. Do you think the play accurately reflects the lives of you and your friends?

13. What else can be done in order to create further impact?

14. If you could turn back time would you still have been a part of this production from the start?

   If not, why? What would have to change?

15. What about this process influenced your capacity to work together? Did you feel a sense of community developed?

16. What about the process of developing and practicing the play did you like? dislike? What about the process would you change?

   Explore.

17. Would you be willing to do this again?

   Having participated in this process, are you interested or would you be willing to be involved in another play in the future? What if it did not include an honorarium for participation?

18. Other than reopening safe houses, what other issues in your life could you see yourself developing a play to address in a public forum? Why?