Nonprofit Youth Engagement:

A Normalized Industrial-Complex

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Acknowledgment

This paper was planned to be finished within the scope of a semester at Capilano University. This time frame entails the necessity of setting and working within a set of parameters to ensure feasibility. The main topic of this issue cannot be holistically encompassed within the span of a 4-month time period, and as a result contains a significant degree of limitations. In addition, this piece was completed from my perspective, which lacks some of the lived experiences that are referenced and written about in this project. This research paper is also intended to supplement curriculum being developed as part of the 'Extended Graduation Project', and thus will include references to that content (and vice versa).

It is imperative to recognize that as academics, students, and just as people in general there are always more ways in which we can embed intersectionality and anti-oppression values and methodologies in our work. It is my hope that this paper can encourage the use of an anti-oppressive analysis to examine the many intersections of seemingly linear issues, as well as the necessity of centering the voices of those excluded from institutional spaces and platforms.

This paper was written and submitted on the stolen, ancestral homelands of the Líl̓wat (Lil'wat), sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), seĺíĺwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), and shíshálh (Sechelt) Nations whose territories I have called home for the past 19 years.

- *Shukriyah (thank you)*

Note: *This research paper was written in tandem with a curriculum intended to serve as a free, accessible community resource. You can find this curriculum at:*
https://eportfolios.capilanou.ca/simransarwara/2020/05/02/lbst-495-6-extended-graduation-project/

INTRODUCTION:

The ability to exchange ideas, values, and interests across communities has been increasingly facilitated by new platforms for communication and collaboration. As discourses evolve in response to critiques that emerge from these exchanges, it is imperative to recognize how these shifts often occur as a result of marginalized communities taking on the labor of transformative advocacy while navigating inherently oppressive systems. This research paper seeks to highlight an example of this that pertains to the concept of "youth engagement" within a context that it is often associated with: nonprofit organizations. This dissertation will seek to draw from existing literature regarding the socio-economic and political foundations of these institutions, and how they interplay to reinforce an industrial complex. In doing so, the lived experiences of youth and young people who have experienced 'youth engagement' within those contexts will be applied to examine the interconnections between the nonprofit-industrial complex and young people. The reality of how both occur and relate to each other differs across cultural and geographical contexts. This paper will primarily seek to ground the following analysis within a North American - specifically the colonial 'Canadian state' context - while maintaining a transparency regarding limitations to both the extensivity of the content, as well as the researcher's own presentation of this information. In consideration of this framework, this research paper will seek to demonstrate how the structural mechanisms of the North American non-profit sector, as rooted in colonial values, perpetuate exploitive youth engagement practices.

SECTION 1 - Setting the Nonprofit Context

According to Powell and Steinberg (2006), the "modern" concept of "charitable nonprofit organizations" stems from the "generosity of philanthropists" (p.13). This "generosity" typically manifests in the form of financial "contributions" to the public on the basis of "spiritual or moral" obligations (Powell & Steinberg, 2006, p.13). The institutionalization of this idea of regulated,

obligatory responsibility towards the public - and more specifically the 'less fortunate' - can be argued to be specifically reflective of Eurocentric philosophy and values. If modern conceptualizations of philanthropy and community services are built on this foundation, it then becomes imperative to discern how the mechanisms and structures of nonprofits also in turn serve to legitimize these contexts of 'moral' obligation, regulation, and charity. The language that has emerged to refer to nonprofits organizations - as well as the overarching sector they are a part of - is argued by Powell and Steinberg as having been "[c]oined" by economists, lawyers, and policy scientists" during the post-World War II period (2006, p.32). The intention behind the development of this language was to be able to systematically "classify" and distinguish entities for "...tax, policy, and regulatory purposes" (Powell & Steinberg, 2006, p.32).

Powell and Steinberg explain how philanthropists and the wealth they retain control over for distribution in the form of grants (in the case of nonprofits), can be directly attributed to the oppression and exploitation of marginalized communities. A specific example provided is how the wealth of many American philanthropists of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia was accumulated via "direct or indirect participation in the slave economy" (Powell & Steinberg, 2006, p.40). The "cotton industry" itself also became a "major source of philanthropic funding" in the American context (Powell & Steinberg, 2006, p.40). The dynamics of Western philanthropy can thus be argued to be designed to legitimize exploitative economic systems that capitalize off the labor of multiply-marginalized[1] communities. This is facilitated through the intentional structuring of institutions to normalize the inequity and disparity in wealth that results from the system of capitalism. Powell and Steinberg discuss how these 'defects' were to be supplemented by philanthropic institutions who play a role in "moderating the excesses of

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[1] This term emerged from an interview with 'Maisaloon' – one of 16 interviews that were conducted to develop an accompanying curriculum that this research paper is intended to compliment. It refers to the intersecting identities of marginalized peoples and serves to recognize the different forms of oppression that are simultaneously experienced. Please note this curriculum is freely available at: https://eportfolios.capilanou.ca/simransarwara/2020/05/02/lbst-495-6-extended-graduation-project/

capitalism" (2006, p.48). It is imperative to recognize that often today nonprofits and other similar institutions are described using language that suggests their critical role in addressing and advocating for social justice issues. However, if the former principle holds true, this implies that a fallacy exists regarding the perceived role of institutions versus the origins of their structure and purpose as supplementing existing systems that perpetuate inequities. It is also important to note that while Powell and Steinberg detail this within the context of the United States, this historical antecedent and current reality is arguably just as applicable to the Canadian state context, given similarities in Euro-colonial settlement purposes and processes. A resource published by 'Imagine Canada' explains that the language used in the "Canadian" context to refer to these organizations and the general sector they are a part of includes "voluntary sector, non-profit sector, charitable sector, third sector, civil society sector, and community-based organizations" (Hall, 2005, p.3). This resource also articulates the historical evolution of this sector within Canada, ascribing its roots to the "tradition" of "voluntary activity" that became formalized by European settlers to eventually result in the "Canadian welfare state" (Hall, 2005, p.21). This system is explained as "heavily" relying on nonprofit entities to deliver services that are "state-funded" (Hall, 2005, p.21). The formalization process also had its roots in the Catholic Church - an institution that became instrumental in the coordination of a number of colonial systematic practices.

To effectively analyze the dynamics of institutions and the roles they play in delivering services to communities today, it is important to discern the different types of organizations as well as the structures that determine how they function. These differences are rooted primarily in legal contexts and also reflect a tax-exemption mechanism. The colonial "common law system at the federal level" that concerns "charitable status", and legislation at the provincial level determines what organizations do and how they carry out their work (Hall, 2005, p.4). Charitable status concerns the eligibility to give "tax incentives" to people who donate to the organization, as well as to get access to funding that is distributed by foundations (Hall, 2005,

p.4). At the federal level, a registered charity is considered distinct from a non-profit organization (NPO), though both function on a "non-profit basis" (Canada Revenue Agency, 2016, para. 1). Registered charities are considered to be "charitable organizations, public foundations, or private foundations" (Canada Revenue Agency, 2016, para. 2), whereas nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are defined as "associations, clubs, or societies that are not charities" (Canada Revenue Agency, 2016, para. 5). In addition, the activities of registered charities and their purposes must fit the definition of "charitable" by falling into one (or more) of these categories (Canada Revenue Agency, 2016, para. 2):

- the relief of poverty

- the advancement of education

- the advancement of religion

- other purposes that benefit the community

On the other hand, that of nonprofit organizations are required to fit into the following categories (Canada Revenue Agency, 2016, Table 1):

- social welfare

- civic improvement

- pleasure or recreation

- any other purpose except profit

The institution known as the "Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)" carries the authority to determine whether an organization "qualifies for tax-exempt status", and formulates this decision based on criteria set out in what is called the 'Income Tax Act' (Canada Revenue Agency, 2016, para. 8). When it comes to the governance of nonprofit organizations in British Columbia - when incorporated are called 'societies' - the Societies Act is the primary legislation that impacts how they can conduct their work. This piece of (colonial) legislation is made up of 17 'parts' and approximately 55 subdivisions for a total of 366 sections.

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   The intricate relationship between registered nonprofit organizations, systems of

governance, and the assertion of particular political values impacts the experiences of the

recipients of the services provided by nonprofits (who are often historically marginalized

communities). Using a lens that focuses on the consequences of shifting political entities

reveals parallel impacts on the "funding regimes" that nonprofits are directly informed by (Elson,

2016, p.22). As an example, the early 2000's era of the Campbell government in what is called

British Columbia saw many forms of "downsizing" and "restructuring" (Elson, 2016, p.28). In the

context of the "community sector", this resulted in significant impacts to the existing models and

practices of granting and governance (Elson, 2016, p.28). A specific consequence of this shift

was a decrease in ministry budgets that "directly affected both project and grant funding" (Elson,

2016, p.29). This in turn cultivated a culture of competition among nonprofits, who were required

to develop proposals that were "results-based", and improve their "reporting and cost-analysis

capacity" in order to survive the "new funding regime" (Elson, 2016, p.29). This was further

inhibited by the lack of streamlined communications, given shifts that had also been made in

"ministries, programs, and the provincial workforce" (Elson, 2016, p.30). At the same time, it is

critical to note that the objective timelining of the evolution of nonprofits fails to illustrate how it

was legitimized as a result of - and in tandem with - the oppression of Indigenous Peoples and

many other marginalized communities across what is now called Canada. The forced

establishment of Euro-colonial systems and values to occupy the ancestral homelands of

Indigenous Peoples also necessitated the establishment of institutions that maintained those

systems. These processes contributed to the erasure of Indigenous societies and systems that

have been in place since time immemorial. Consequently, this has resulted in the normalized

glorification of the workings of the "voluntary" sector today, that in actuality is supplementary to

inherently oppressive systems. Many Indigenous Peoples have been made into recipients of

that sector as a result of the intergenerational impacts of the Euro-colonial agenda. This

analysis is critical in order to discern how the values and mechanisms of nonprofits and other

institutions perpetuate inequities while maintaining an image of morally-driven purposes. These connections between historical narratives, systemic oppression, and Euro-colonial ideas of 'community service' and 'charity' will be drawn from to contextualize the impact these relationships have upon multiply-marginalized youth and young people navigating the nonprofit sector.

SECTION 2 – Unpacking the Nonprofit-Industrial Complex (NPIC)

As discussed in the previous section, relationships exist between institutions and systems that serve to perpetuate beliefs that have historically - and continue to - legitimize the exploitation of marginalized communities. Several studies and literary sources have sought to examine such a set of relationships that is argued to be characteristic of many social justice movements today - the nonprofit-industrial complex. This concept is defined by Dylan Rodriguez as "...a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements" (INCITE, 2007, p.8). This complex has been critically presented within the larger context of nonprofits to address a number of its components. One of these is the "professionalization" of the work that is characteristic of nonprofits today (INCITE, 2007, p.138; West, 2018, para.8). This formalization has been argued to have created a "stratification" amongst employees, as a result of the importance afforded to "certain advanced degrees" (West, 2018, para.9). These are suggested to be sought after as this may qualify a nonprofit to "bill for services" as well as "receive funding from [certain] programs" (West, 2018, para.9). Funding from particularly "large private foundations" have the ability to "professionalize" the movement as a whole, as it is primarily those with (what is deemed) "advanced degrees" that have the capacity to do this work" (INCITE, 2007, p.7). This in turn has the impact of diminishing the "importance of...grassroots organizing" (INCITE, 2007, p.7). The nonprofit-industrial complex contributes to the normalization of turning "social justice

organizing" into "careers", thus also serving to normalize the idea that "you do the work if you can get paid for it" (INCITE, 2007, p.10). The term 'nonprofitization' has also been used to refer to the 'culture of scarcity' (Zeeninginlaos, 2010, p.2) that is normalized by the non-profit industrial complex. This is a result of nonprofit structures and mechanisms requiring constant "maintenance of the organization itself" as opposed to directing labor and time to dismantle the same systems of oppression they claim to be working to address. This "maintenance" itself requires a skill set that is specialized in a way that further "exclude[s] semi-literate people from positions of power" within nonprofits and other institutions (Kuyek, 2011, p.130).

Another element of the nonprofit-industrial complex involves "framing...solutions" of social justice issues in ways that legitimize the existence of nonprofits. This also requires framing the issues themselves in ways that reinforce "individualiz[ation]" (i.e. the individual's own decisions are the cause of the problem while dismissing systemic factors) (West, 2018, para. 25). Multiply-marginalized communities disproportionately experience a range of systemic oppressions. As a result, stereotypes and prejudice regarding members of marginalized groups are also perpetuated. In addition, the emphasis on individualization has arguably served as a core aspect of the conversion of these communities into mere "recipients of philanthropy" and the work of nonprofits (Dubose, 2014, para. 7). This dichotomy of 'recipients' and 'providers' is reflective of a similar - and related - concept known as the 'white-savior industrial complex'. This 'complex' centers the notion of "making a difference" as opposed to dismantling the systems that enable 'social justice' issues to continue to exist (Cole, 2012, para. 11). Examples of such practices include 'tokenistic' approaches to service delivery and engagement of marginalized communities. These practices involve a select number - and type - of people from the targeted 'recipient' community to be 'engaged' primarily for the purpose of being able to 'demonstrate' that some form of initiative was made (and is now completed - hence the synonymous term

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'checklist')[2] , and/or to validate the effectiveness of the system itself (INCITE, 2017, p.135). The binary of 'provider' and 'recipient' mentioned earlier also fosters paternalistic attitudes, in which often marginalized peoples are treated as lacking the capacity to make 'correct' decisions, lacking knowledge/skills, and in need of 'guidance' to exhibit a demeanor that is reflective of a 'successful' citizen[3].

A key aspect of the nonprofit-industrial complex is its strong alignment with economic systems that rely on practices that are inherently extractive and exploitative. The specific system in question within this context is capitalism. The mechanics of this economic ideology and the values it is rooted within can be found reflected in the philanthropic system, which allows "rich people to...maintain" authority and "control…[over] their wealth" (Spade & Dector, 2016, Part 2). One method by which this is done is the intentional funding of "research and dissemination of information" that "ameliorates social issues" in a way that does not "challenge capitalism" (INCITE, 2007, p.4). Consequently, activities that are considered to be of an 'advocacy nature' rarely occur, as the outcomes of such types of work entail the kind of changes that would "challenge" existing systems (such as capitalism). There are several established legislations and legal frameworks that further prevent meaningful shifts from occurring at the systemic level. Even within the specific context of the Canadian state, "law[s] and regulation[s]" are designed to "make it impossible" for community groups and nonprofits to receive funding for advocacy-based work (Kuyek, 2011, p.129). These legal structures and systems of capitalism also foster a nonprofit culture that can be characterized as scarcity-based (fueling competition) (INCITE, 2017, p.10), quantity/resulted-based rationales, and inequitable distribution of resources that is tied to hierarchies of power (as opposed to more lateral and collaborative models)[4].

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[2] Also referenced in interviews part of curriculum development
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

This normalcy of scarcity and competitiveness is arguably also fueled by the role that philanthropists play in wealth distribution - or lack thereof. Kuyek (2011) explicates that the same approach to acquire funds from state governments is necessary to receive financial resources from foundations - the "adapt[ion] of our agenda[s] to *their* funding requirements" (p.129). As discussed in section one of this dissertation, funds from foundations can also only be received depending on whether an entity is a registered charity, which in itself entails criteria such as the restriction of 'advocacy' activities to only 10% of an organization's work (Kuyek, 2011, p.129). This is argued by some to be demonstrative of the fact that the philanthropic sector has "in and of itself" become an economy that needs such regulations in order to "sustain [itself]" (Spade & Dector, 2016, Part 3). Therefore, any activities that endorse the goal of "put[ting] themselves out of business" (Spade & Dector, 2016, Part 4) is heavily resisted. Foundations and philanthropists directly inform not only the regular activities of nonprofit organizations, but also larger movements of social justice organizing as well. The Ford Foundation is a prominent example in the United States context of how "philanthropic giving" translated into the direct "engineer[ing] of social change" and the "development of social justice movements" (INCITE, 2007, p.5). During peak eras of ideological shifts, "radical movements" of "liberation" that challenged the agenda of "Western imperialism" prompted foundations to take on a role of "shaping [social] organizing" so that it would not disrupt the "capitalist status quo" (INCITE, 2007, p.7). The idea of 'individuals' - specifically from racialized communities - receiving 'individualized relief' bodes well for demonstrating that foundations have an 'impact' (that in actuality is not transformative). However, attempts made by marginalized communities to dismantle systems of oppression and organize to expose 'supremacies' are then deemed a "menace to society" (INCITE, 2007, p.8). It is this embedded incompatibility between the transformative justice that marginalized communities require, and the 'self-defense' mechanisms of oppressive systems within the nonprofit sector, that has warranted the development of the term nonprofit-industrial complex to holistically capture this dynamic.

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Within the context of British Columbia, events have transpired in the political sphere that perpetuate practices reflective of the nonprofit-industrial complex as well. The following table is intended to timeline these shifts and visually demonstrate in (relatively) chronological order how each event produces a multifaceted effect:

Table 1:

DATE	EVENT	ADDITIONAL CONTEXT
1960's	● British Columbia establishes programs that allocate funds to a "broader range of organizations". – (Clément, 2019, p.305)	★ Argued to have occurred in response to the "emerging welfare state" which resulted in pressure on governments "to provide new services" (Clément, 2019, p.305)
Late 1970's	● The Social Credit Party ("Socreds") enact[s] a ban on funding for "advocacy organizations". – (Clément, 2019, p.320)	● Many nonprofit organizations in the sector experience a decrease in funds

1971	● No grants for the "human rights sector" were provided until this year - (Clément, 2019, p.309)	
1972	● The New Democratic Party replace[s] the Social Credit Party (Socreds) - (Clément, 2019, p.306)	● New programs were implemented that directed "additional public funding to the nonprofit sector" - (Clément, 2019, p.306)
1980s	● Organizations in the BC nonprofit sector begin to receive "addition[al]" funding from both federal and municipal levels of government" (Clément, 2019, p.307) while the "provincial government" starts to "reduc[e] funding" - (Clément, 2019, p.308)	● The relationship between "the state and nonprofit sector had fundamentally changed" – (Clément, 2019, p.307) ● Cuts to funding were justified using the rationale that funding should be "obtain[ed]...from the

		private sector" - (Clément, 2019, p.308)
1980s	● Socreds "introduce[] drastic cuts to social services". – (Clément, 2019, p.308)	● Socreds were "predisposed" to "oppose" funding for community- based organizations - (Clément, 2019, p.308)
Mid-1980s - late 1990s	● "Funding fluctuate[s] throughout these years... with sharp drops in the mid-1980s and the late 1990s". – (Clément, 2019, p.312)	● Constant shifts in available funding leave nonprofit organizations vulnerable and unable to adapt without negatively impacting service 'recipients'
1990s	● A number of federally-based programs shift[s] to project-specific funding for	● More competition and less sustainable

	"service providers" rather than "operational" grants - (Clément, 2019, p.302)	practices as energy is directed towards trying to ensure day-to-day maintenance of organization ('staying afloat')
1990s	● Laforest (2011) explains that there was "a very low tolerance for advocacy and mobilization tactics in policy circles" (p. 65). – (Clément, 2019, p. 319)	● Normalized greater surveillance and manipulation of social organizing to be in compliance with state interests and agendas
2001	● Funding decline[s] for some organizations following the election of the Liberal Party in BC provincial election - (Clément, 2019, p.312)	● Continued pattern of inconsistency in service delivery among nonprofits and perpetuation of vulnerability

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2010s	● No new "significant" programs intended to fund nonprofits [are] introduced during the provincial Liberal government – (Clément, 2019, p. 309)	● Lack of "coherent philosophy" by Liberal as well as Socred and NDP governments cumulatively resulted in "extreme variations in funding" - (Clément, 2019, p.309)

The timeline format of these primarily politically-based events allows for a cross-examination of the relationships between each event as well as the resulting socioeconomic impacts. However, is it also critical to examine these within a context of larger ideological shifts. DeSantis & Mulé (2017) argues that "neoliberalism" is perceived as complementary to the "market economy" by normalizing certain policies such as "reduced state intervention, deregulation, privatization, free trade, cuts in government spending, and austerity measures" that contribute to the legitimizing of "the role of the private sector…" (p. 20). As a result, the integration of the values (that these policies stem from) into every facet of society serves to reinforce a priority of "strengthening the economy" as opposed to directing efforts to address "marginalized societal issues" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 20). Consequently, this allows "governments and corporations" to shift the onus of addressing such issues onto "individuals", in turn diminishing the necessity of taking accountability for "structural and systemic causes" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 20). This then directly impacts 'advocacy' of those issues by

"discouraging collective action" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 20). Furthermore, this "discouraging" is accompanied by explicit "problematiz[ation] [of] organizations" that do engage in advocacy of this kind (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 20). The framing of these organizations and their work as "'political'" is also reflected in the resistance to "policies that redistribute resources equitably" and/or goals of "fair and equitable outcomes" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 20). As a result, nonprofits and other organizations are prevented from being able to engage in work that would bring about the transformative justice necessary to address the root of social justice issues.

This normalization and intentional maintenance of neoliberal values can be found to be reflected also within Euro-colonial legal frameworks. As discussed in Section 1 of this dissertation, the term "'registered charity'" is part of the legal language used by the Canada Revenue Agency to refer to organizations that "fit certain criteria" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 10). However, this "criteria" directly produces limitations on advocacy work, whereas organizations registered as "nonprofits" do not experience such impositions (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 10). The Income Tax Act - the legislation used to govern and enforce these regulations - continues to be used by the Canada Revenue Agency (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 14). However, the act is based on "a 400-year-old Elizabethan English model of charity", and as a result has contributed to the maintenance of a colonial "status quo" that does not allow for "advocating change" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p. 14). The CRA has not made significant changes to this act; rather they have enabled the continued "government surveillance" of nonprofits to ensure that they are complacent with restrictions pertaining to activities that may be "political" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.4). A specific example of this occurred in June of 2012, when the Canadian federal government disclosed that some organizations had been "selected for Canada Revenue Agency audits" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.4). The CRA received a "multimillion-dollar budget" to "carry out" this audit over the course of several years (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.36). In addition, the framework for "charity law" specifically prevents "charities"

from being able to "function as agents of reform" through rules such as the "doctrine of political purposes" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.34). This doctrine has been described as a "twentieth century phenomenon" that "paralleled" the emergence and "development" of the current "income tax regime" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.48). The implications of such frameworks extends beyond direct blockading of action, to even influence the core understanding of "legal" charity - which in this case is asserted by such doctrines as characterized by "neutrality" and "objectivity" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.42). DeSantis & Mulé also argue that this sense of "neutrality" is superficial, as the enforcement of such a perspective inevitably "marginaliz[es] some perspectives while privileging others" (2017, p.42). With the twentieth century also came even more "regulatory restrictions" that gradually "muzzled charities" in cases of "political advocacy" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.35). Funding contracts made with governments have been found to contain both informal implications as well as formal clauses that "require...nonprofits[s] not to speak out against [the government]" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.17).

The combination of colonial 'regulation'-based legal frameworks, and the permeation of the neoliberal agenda within the Canadian state context, have significantly impacted - and continue to impact - the engagement of nonprofit organizations in 'advocacy'. According to the colonial government of Canada, 'advocacy' can be defined as "'the act of speaking or of disseminating information intended to influence individual behaviour or opinion, corporate conduct, or public policy and law'" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.6). Other terms used to refer to the advocacy work of nonprofits include: "policy dialogue, engage in public policy, collaboration on policy, 'policy co-construction', or the framing 'our intention is to educate'...(DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.13) Often such terms are employed by nonprofits to navigate the restrictions imposed by charity law. This navigation is driven by an "'advocacy chill'" that results from the "target[ing]" conducted by governmental institutions (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.4) as discussed previously. In 2006, the federal government started to "systematically eliminate" and significantly reduce

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funding for organizations that "have advocated for progressive public policies…" (DeSantis &

Mulé, 2017, p.3). These strategies are likely also in response to the evident yet not explicitly

named reality that 'advocacy' by nonprofits and other organizations is intended to "change

existing or proposed government policies and programs…" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.6). This

inherent contradiction is also reflected in the Euro-colonial philosophy that informs the 'law'. In

the context of charity law, as an example, an implicit reasoning that underlies such cases is that

they should be "decided from the premise that the law is perfect as it is", since the law "should

not recognize its own imperfection" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.44). Given this perspective,

'advocacy' that seeks to "reform" a legal concept (in this context) is then deemed "non-

charitable" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.44). Advocacy work is also directly impacted by shifts in

the political sphere, as can be noted in the shift in political parties that take office. In 2006,

several funding cuts were made to "advocacy-focused nonprofits" as well as to nonprofits who

engaged in advocacy work more generally; this came following the establishment of the

Conservative Party of Canada in office. (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.15).

Such shifts in the political sphere can directly impact the extent to which nonprofits can

engage in work that results in transformative social justice. Funding received from government

institutions contain numerous stipulations that compel recipients to ensure their work "reflects

government priorities" (Clément, 2019, p.322). In the case of advocacy, or other activities

deemed 'contentious', this is particularly evident as "conservative governments" have been

argued to be "more likely to resist" funding organizations that engage in such work (Clément,

2019, p.322). Generally speaking, however, a notable pattern in the nature of funding provided

by the state, is an interest in steering those funds to facilitate the provision of "public services"

as opposed to "encouraging community engagement" (Clément, 2019, p.322). Therefore, many

have argued that this "increasingly economic-driven paradigm" has shifted the value of

nonprofits and other organizations to be one that is rooted in their potential to supply "goods and

services" in place of government, instead of the meaningful action that needs to take place to

address systemic issues (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.49). A related consequence of this is the culture that is created within the nonprofit/charity sector. This 'culture' is defined by challenges that stem from the interrelated dynamics of the factors discussed in this section - in particular, the priorities and actions of colonial governments. These include (but are not limited to) "cutbacks in government funding; greater emphasis on project funding instead of core funding; [and] mandated collaborations with other organizations" (DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.85). In addition, processes to provide funding - such as on an "ad hoc basis" as opposed to "dedicated funding for…. nonprofits" makes these organizations "vulnerable to changes in government" (Clément, 2019, p.319). Reductions in funding impact not just "day-to-day operations" of a nonprofit but also the infrastructure, and "project-based" funding diminishes capacity to work on "long-term solutions" (Clément, 2019, p.387). Furthermore, less availability of grants for nonprofits translates into the normalization of a culture of scarcity that perpetuates competition as opposed to meaningful collaboration (Clément, 2019, p.321; DeSantis & Mulé, 2017, p.18). Through this analysis of a multifaceted complex and how it materializes in the context of British Columbia and the Canadian state, the need for the recognition of these dynamics becomes necessary in order to also effectively strategize how to dismantle the systems that enable them.

SECTION 3 – Oppression of Youth in the NPIC

Institutional structures and systems of oppression impact marginalized peoples in similar but also differing ways. The mechanisms of the nonprofit sector and its industrial complex have an impact on multiply-marginalized youth and young people that is distinct and needs to be examined within the context of oppression that is specific to their experiences. This section seeks to conduct this analysis with respect to ways that youth and young people are part of nonprofits: as staff and as 'participants' in structured opportunities.

3.1 - Role as 'staff':

Positions for youth and young people are increasingly becoming available within nonprofits and other institutions. The factors that have contributed to this emergence are complex but may also arguably serve as the source of the challenges experienced by youth and young people. One such challenge is the structuring of paid positions as "flexible" - while identified as a benefit to "young workers" - can also perpetuate negative experiences if the necessary "supports" are not available, or if that flexibility is used "in place of…[stable] employment" (Cordeaux, 2017, p.8). In instances where young people are afforded greater "job responsibilities", there is also the "reluctan[ce] to...acknowledge" that the position has shifted and therefore provide the necessary shift in compensation for that increased labor (Cordeaux, 2017, p.12). This normalizes the devaluing of the labor of young people and has been attributed by some to the internalized assumption that young people are expendable given that they are in need of all the experience they can acquire[5]. When it comes to providing feedback on the challenges and other aspects of their experience within the role, some "young workers" have expressed that processes for feedback are "highly unidirectional" and do not allow them to "provide input" regarding "supervision" and the "support" they have identified as a need for the role (Cordeaux, 2017, p.12). One of the many consequences of these kinds of dynamics is the legitimization of the lesser value of young people as well as the upholding of power dynamics normalized by ageism[6]. An example of "nonprofitzation" or "professionalization" within the context of youth experiences in paid positions is the dismissal of previous "volunteer experiences" in comparison to "prior paid experience" (Cordeaux, 2017, p.9) when qualifying for new positions. These examples are demonstrative of the specific ways in which elements of the nonprofit-industrial complex directly impact youth and young people as they navigate the nonprofit sector. The rationales that are often provided to justify the inclusion of this

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[5] Also referenced in interviews part of curriculum development
[6] For a definition and further information see: https://theantioppressionnetwork.com/resources/ terminologies-of-oppression/

demographic, however, arguably serve as prominent examples of how values of the nonprofit industrial complex are normalized. A common demonstration of this is through the use of language that frames young people as being crucial to "sustain[ing]" (Cordeaux, 2017, p.3) the nonprofit sector; in need of engagement to be able to practice "future adult agency" (Ilkiw, 2010, p.41); and imperative for the "development of a talent pipeline for the sector" (Cordeaux, 2017, p.15). Not only do these framings normalize the perception of young people as 'resources' to draw and extract from, but they also reinforce the idea that young people, in and of themselves, are not enough of a reason to meaningfully support and include. Rather, it is because they support some kind of function, that is necessary for the operation of current systems as well as future societal roles, that they are 'now' considered important to engage early on.

3.2 - Role as 'participants':

Arguably, the most common way that youth and young people are part of the nonprofit sector is as 'participants' of structured 'youth engagement' opportunities designed by nonprofit organizations. In one 2009 review of youth engagement in Vancouver, the definition of youth engagement used was:

"The meaningful participation and sustainable involvement of young people in shared decisions in matters which affect their lives and those of their community, including planning, decision making and program delivery" (Smith, A., Peled, M., Hoogeveen, C., Cotman, S. and the McCreary Centre Society, p.8).

Other definitions that have been constructed based on lived experiences of young people tend to pertain specifically to the formalized structuring of opportunities that originate within a nonprofit context (as opposed to initiatives coming from young people themselves).

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Examples of these include youth-drop-ins, focus groups looking for youth feedback,

"expression-based programming", skill-building projects, "action-oriented" programs, etc.[7].

Within the specific niche of youth philanthropy, advisory committees and councils are a common

form of 'engagement' in which young people are asked to provide input, distribute a certain

amount of financial resources to community programs, etc. (Tice, 2002, p.6). Age is a criterion

that is a primary factor in construction of the opportunity; many organizations define "youth" as

ages 12-24, while others increase this to up to the age of 29 (Smith et al., 2009, p.18). This lack

of a definite and shared criteria amongst nonprofit results in a range of types of opportunities as

well as the experiences that emerge from them[8].

The dynamics that exist within these opportunities need to be analyzed using systemic

and multifaceted lenses in order to understand the role that these institutions play in the shaping

of oppressive practices against youth/young people within the nonprofit sector. As demonstrated

in Section 2 of this dissertation, mechanisms that nonprofits use to operate perpetuate the

dynamics of a nonprofit industrial complex. These are also applicable to the context of youth

engagement, as can be noted in the evaluations for these opportunities. These assessments

have been noted to be concerned with "end results and products" - perpetuating a normalcy that

"human development and social change" can be "quantified" (Ilkiw, 2010, p.42). Opportunities

that operate on "strict timelines" tend to "restrict[]" the time needed for meaningful "youth

consultations" (as an example), and as a result heighten the "risk of breaching...confidentiality of

youth" who were part of these opportunities (Smith et al., 2010, p.20). These practices are

themselves normalized through nonprofit culture of scarcity, competition, and the reluctance to

engage in systemic work that takes away from capacity to maintain day-to-day operations (Ilkiw,

2010, p.40). Other "[f]ormal policies and practices" that are core to "funding processes" have

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[7] Also referenced in interviews part of curriculum development
[8] Ibid.

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been argued to "inherently exclude young people" (Smith et al., 2009, p.29). In addition,

"legislative polic[ies]" - discussed earlier as complementary to the nonprofit-industrial complex -

also impede meaningful engagement of youth as they impose restrictions on the manner in

which "resources" are distributed "to and within youth-serving [organizations]" (Smith et al.,

2009, p.31).

Similar to the tendency for youth to be treated as 'resources' (Tice, 2002, p.11) in the

role of staff, this applies in the context of participation in youth engagement as well. When the

inclusion of young people is persistently framed as a source of energy (Apathy is Boring, 2013,

p.3)[9]; as an "investment" that will yield returns and contribute to productivity (Apathy is Boring,

2013, p.11; Women Deliver, 2019, p.5;) or as a means by which to fulfill an institution's own

interests and benefits (Tice, 2002, p.13), the nonprofit-industrial complex becomes evident in

the perpetuation of oppression of young people. The following are examples of some of the

ways this oppression manifests:

- "denied access to influence policy decisions" as well as the disregard for the extent to
  which "policy decisions" have an impact on young people (Smith et al., 2009, p.17)
- Youth lacking "necessary income" and other financial supports to be able to "fully
  engage in their communities" (Smith et al., 2009, p.17)
- "Funding requirements" that "limit creativity" and prevent the application of perspectives
  and values that are unique to the experiences of young people to cultivate new models
  and practices (Ilkiw, 2010, p.39)
- Young people not "taken seriously", seen as naive (Ilkiw, 2010, p.36), and not perceived
  as "experts" (even in contexts that are pertinent to their own specific lived experiences)
  (Ilkiw, 2010, p.38)[10]

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[9] Also referenced in interviews part of curriculum development
[10] Ibid.

- Replication of hierarchical power dynamics and unidirectional learning where young people are "told what to do" (which is already normalized in home and school settings) (Tice, 2002, p.15)[11]

- Devaluing of young people's labor and time by being paid less (Ilkiw, 2010, p.40) than an "adult" doing the same work and/or being paid an amount that does not reflect the different kinds of labor that go into a task as well as the day-to-day concurrent navigation of systemic barriers faced by youth[12]

- Being "parachuted" into roles without support to build capacity for the work and then using 'mistakes' to reinforce "ageist stereotypes" (Apathy is Boring, 2012, p.31)[13]

- Lack of trust in youth capacities rooted in (colonial) medically-based justifications relating to 'cognitive development' and the inability to engage in complex work and discussions[14]

- Tokenization of young people by nonprofits to meet funding criteria and demonstrate the 'initiative' made to engage them (Ilkiw, 2010, p.38)[15]
  - This in turn becomes even more problematic when the tokenization is guised as the desire to have 'representation' from 'every' marginalized demographic

- Idolization of "ideal" youth engagement participants using language such as 'mature' for their age, well-articulated, etc. (Smith et al., 2009, p.28)[16]
  - Legitimizes idea of "work hard enough and you will succeed" while dismissing systemic oppression
  - Normalizes distinction between 'adults' and 'youth' by praising youth who demonstrate traits associated with 'adults'

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[11] Also referenced in interviews part of curriculum development
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

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    ○   Idealizes the internalization and perpetuation of 'whiteness'[17]

While these are only a few examples of the way that oppression against youth/young people manifests in the nonprofit context, it is imperative to also remember that this is not inherent to young people themselves. Young people have been active in their communities and have organized in collaborative, transformative ways long before the shifts occurred in institutional settings to "engage" them (Formsma, 2014, p.10; Ilkiw, 2010, p.41)[18]. These grassroots movements often emerged as a "reaction to or critique of" what they experienced and witnessed in their communities[19], as well as due to "distrust of existing institutions…." (Ilkiw, 2010, p.38). The reasons to enter and access the nonprofit setting differ among young people as they reflect the varying privileges and barriers young people hold and navigate. However, the reasons do not reinforce the validity of current nonprofit practices, nor should they serve to dilute the need for shifts at institutional levels. The disruption and dismantling of current systems is inevitable when young people are meaningfully part of those spaces[20]. The effects of this are necessary to understand as beneficial to everyone and not just to the experiences of young people[21]. In addition, it is imperative to normalize the reality that young people are already equipped with the experiences and solutions to inform these changes as well as how they take place. This knowledge is holistic and rooted in tan astute understanding of the impact that systems, values, and practices (that are almost all Euro-colonial in nature) have in normalizing the oppression of marginalized peoples across contexts.

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[17] For a definition and further information see: http://www.aclrc.com/whiteness
[18] Also referenced in interviews part of curriculum development
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

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CONCLUSION:

'Youth engagement' has been discussed and dissected in a number of different capacities, and in just as many contexts that range from grassroots critiques, to research studies, to reports published by foundations. However, the holistic analysis of this practice - one that accounts for the permeation of Euro-colonialism values and 'normalities' into social justice-oriented discourse - has emerged from the lived experiences of multiply-marginalized peoples - especially youth/young people. As the ones affected by the nature and implementation of this practice, communities of youth/ young people are the ones most capable and apt in not only identifying the issues at their core but also the actions necessary to address them. While concepts such as the 'nonprofit-industrial complex' may not have been coined or referenced by all youth/young people, this does not take away from the depth and validity of their experiences navigating nonprofits and other institutions. The evolution of nonprofit mechanisms, the sector, and the systems they legitimize is a colonial narrative, and yet are necessary to account for in order to dismantle and disrupt normalities that perpetuate oppression against youth/young people. This dissertation only begins to scratch the surface of this multifaceted dynamic that is the reality of so many youth/young people - and it is these same leaders that consistently remind us that the solution to dismantle this is already known among youth/young people themselves:

"If you give me a fish, you have fed me for a day. If you teach me to fish, then you have fed me until the river is contaminated or the shoreline seized for development. But if you teach me to ORGANIZE, then whatever the challenge, I can join together with my peers….and we will fashion OUR OWN SOLUTION!"

(Quote by anonymous youth in "Creative Tools - Civic Engagement of Young People") - (Blanchet-Cohen & Cook, 2005, p.11)

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