

Activism in action: Screening *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence* in the West

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Abstract:

The Act of Killing (2012, Joshua Oppenheimer) and *The Look of Silence* (2014, Oppenheimer) are widely treated as a diptych. While both films have opened global discussion of Indonesia's 1965 genocide, the affect and aesthetics at play, combined with the geographic and temporal distance of these events, give eurowestern viewers permission to avoid confronting eurowestern implication in these events. I argue that for these films to serve as activist programming in a eurowestern context, they should be considered as part of a triptych with *The Globalisation Tapes*, a 2002 union-activist video facilitated by Oppenheimer that explicitly connects eurowestern imperialism and Indonesian oppression. When seen after having viewed the first two films, these connections concretize the affect and outrage they generate, creating conditions for mobilizing viewers to take action as consumers and citizens to address the root causes of global injustice.

Drawing on responses gathered during a study in which people watched all three films, this paper develops and builds on an argument for showing the films as a triptych, and for considering the activist potential inherent in a curatorial practice.

Keywords: Activism, impact, Oppenheimer, programming, screening, curatorial practices, audience, subjectivity, archive, mobilization, affect.

Introduction

The Act of Killing (2012, Joshua Oppenheimer), in which perpetrators of Indonesia's 1965 genocide lavishly re-enact their crimes as though they were scenes from American and Indonesian genre films, and *The Look of Silence* (2014, Oppenheimer), in which the brother of a man killed in the genocide confronts those responsible, are widely treated as a diptych. While both films have opened global discussion of Indonesia's 1965 genocide, the affect and aesthetics at play, combined with the geographic and temporal distance of these events, give eurowestern viewers permission to avoid confronting eurowestern implication in these

events. I argue that for these films to serve as activist programming in a eurowestern context, they should be considered as part of a trilogy with *The Globalisation Tapes*, a 2002 union-activist video facilitated by Oppenheimer that explicitly connects eurowestern imperialism and Indonesian oppression. Drawing on responses gathered from a study in which people watched all three films, I focused on two primary hypotheses. First, my study sought to determine if seeing all three films changes the way in which the events portrayed in *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence* are understood; and second, I wanted to determine if the order in which the films were viewed affected this understanding. This essay concludes that screening the films as a trilogy in a certain order – *The Act of Killing* first, *The Look of Silence* second, and *The Globalisation Tapes* third – points to conditions in which eurowestern viewers can more readily absorb the effects of eurowestern imperialism on the events portrayed and thus be mobilized to take action as consumers and citizens.

Context

This project arose after a year and a half of working on and thinking about both *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*. Initially, the project examined the ethical questions raised by Oppenheimer's approach in both films, as well as the way in which fear operates in *The Look of Silence* specifically. As the work progressed, and as I attempted to keep on top of the ever-growing mountain of academic work being produced on these two films, the more I began to question whether lay audiences were consciously recognizing the same political implications as academic researchers. In turn, I then started to question whether viewers, of any stripe, recognized and undertook the complex ethical and spiritual operations Oppenheimer asks of viewers with *The Act of Killing* – namely, how the film considers not only Western implication in the genocide but also what Oppenheimer calls a “Star Wars morality”¹ in which a binary conception of good and evil displaces a nuanced, humanistic understanding of how such acts come to pass – or whether the affect, outrage, and academic questions about performativity generated by the film would present too much of an obstacle. Additionally, contemporary debates about the nature of documentary impact had led me to believe that questions of human experience and tangible change were being lost behind debates about metrics and funding models (perhaps best exemplified by the discussions sparked by reports produced for both the Hot Docs festival² and The Fledgling Fund³). These two strands of thought also led me to reconsider Nick Fraser's critique of *The Act of Killing*, in which he decried the film as a ‘snuff movie’ that glorified the 1965 killings and effectively gave the killers a platform to spread propaganda.⁴ While I maintain that Fraser is wrong in his evaluation and interpretation of the film,⁵ that he has arrived at this conclusion points to an argument that the re-enactments within the film are so disturbing as to outweigh anything else the film tries to accomplish, particularly among non-Indonesian viewers whose first exposure to this genocide (and to the graphic propaganda films retroactively used to justify it within Indonesia) is through viewing *The Act of Killing*.

Reconsidering Fraser's critique and the larger issues it points to raised several questions, including whether *The Act of Killing* would have elicited the same criticisms if it

had been released along with, or even after, *The Look of Silence*. More importantly, it also raised the question of whether non-specialized, eurowestern viewers actually retain and reflect on the parts of both films that connect colonialism and consumer capitalism to the atrocities, or if these points are drowned out by the violence in and affect generated by the films. A brief survey of mainstream press reviews of *The Act of Killing* indicates that the majority of critics were, one way or another, in awe of the visceral reactions provoked by the film's re-enacted violence, and certain of its place in documentary history, if for no other reason than its unusual approach. These responses to the film are in and of themselves valid; however, the fact remains that they are the thoughts of a specialized set of viewers who have made careers of educated film criticism and evaluation.

By contrast, reader comments posted below these reviews should allow for a bit of extra insight into popular discourse around the film. However, such comments are left by people interested enough to seek out the review, log in to their commenter account, post a response, and in some cases come back later to engage in further dialogue with other commenters, and so do not necessarily reflect the full range of lay reactions to a film. The comments on the many reviews published by *The Guardian* are an excellent example of this: Readers, some of whom had yet to see the film and others who were clearly Indonesian human rights activists involved with screening the film in Indonesia, returned time and again to debate the ethics of Oppenheimer's approach, the Indonesian geopolitical context, and the degree to which British, Australian, and US government branches were responsible for the killings.⁶ With that said, however, *The New Yorker*,⁷ *The New York Times*,⁸ and *The LA Times*⁹ seem to not allow reader comments on their film reviews, the *Sydney Morning Herald*¹⁰ appears to do so only sporadically, and it appears that no readers have commented on *The Washington Post's* review.¹¹ The comments on *The A.V. Club's* review, meanwhile, are a predictable mélange of thoughtful notes between fellow film enthusiasts and disturbing 'jokes' from living stereotypes of internet commentators.¹² (By contrast, *The Guardian*, equally well known for its active commentariat, closes comments postings after a certain period of time, and takes an active hand in deleting comments that seem to violate community standards.)

These comments sections, as few and as limited as they may be, can still provide future researchers with a slightly more nuanced ability to conduct historic reception studies than we have had to date. Yet, because archival practices are necessarily selective and include items that tend to have the editorial weight of a formal publication or other established endorsement to 'legitimate' them, there is no guarantee that these comments will be preserved alongside the reviews themselves¹³ – this means that ultimately the only extant trace of lay reactions to a film would not be readily available to researchers, thus perpetuating the notion that the critical or specialized responses are the 'official' narrative of how a film was received at the time of its release. As such, a secondary aim of my project is to move beyond the accepted narrative of how *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence* were received by critics and academics at the time of their release, and record the reactions of a group of non-specialized viewers. This seems all the more important given how

contentious *The Act of Killing* in particular is, the rupture it represents with mainstream documentary forms, and the multiple ethical projects the film undertakes.

Taking responses from nonspecialized viewers into consideration raised the question of whether these two films would be understood in the same ways if, instead being considered a diptych – which Oppenheimer has stated was his intention¹⁴ – they were also screened alongside *The Globalisation Tapes*, which Oppenheimer cites as the starting point for *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*.¹⁵ *The Globalisation Tapes* focuses on working conditions in Indonesian palm oil plantations, and deals explicitly with the role that the World Bank and international conglomerates play in perpetuating these conditions, while directly connecting them with consumer and colonial capitalism. The video also explicitly connects present-day working conditions on Indonesian plantations with the 1965 genocide via a sequence in which plantation workers discuss their reluctance to be seen engaging in any kind of union activity, followed by an interview with an older man who, egged on by his wife and in front of their young grandchild, describes in detail how he routinely killed union organizers in 1965.

Given that *The Globalisation Tapes* explicitly demonstrates a connection between past and present, and between Indonesian palm oil plantations and globally available consumer goods, I argue that it should be screened alongside the other two films for eurowestern, and particularly North American audiences. Presenting the films as a trilogy rather than a diptych in this way would help resolve the geographic and temporal distance that gives viewers permission to ignore eurowestern complicity in the events of 1965, and the sense of moral superiority that comes from such distancing. *The Look of Silence* does attempt to address this by including archival footage from an NBC report about killings on a Goodyear rubber plantation. However, this footage dates from 1967, foregrounding a chronological distance between the viewer and the genocide, which, along with the geographic distance pointed to by the film's lush B-roll of the Indonesian landscape, ultimately gives eurowestern viewers permission to deny any complicity in the events described while consuming the fraught confrontations between the protagonist and his brother's killers as a dramatic narrative which reinforces a sense of Western moral superiority. Moreover, while both *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence* begin with on-screen text directly referring to complicity of Western governments, this text is quickly and easily forgotten in the affective wake of what follows in the films (to wit, despite having seen both films multiple times, I was only reminded of this in reviewing my own notes while preparing this article).

I also argue that the order in which the three films are screened has an effect on how they are understood by eurowestern viewers, for two reasons. First, *The Globalisation Tapes* was shot on video at the turn of the millennium. As a result, the visuals are quite fuzzy by today's standards, and the sound is uneven and at times shrill. In addition, since *The Globalisation Tapes* was primarily intended as a training video for Indonesian labour activists, its tone is overtly didactic. Compared to the lush aesthetics and gripping narratives of *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*, the possibility arises that an audience seeing

The Globalisation Tapes first would have forgotten all about it by the time they got to the end of the other two, assuming they even came back to view them at all. Second, that *The Globalisation Tapes*'s politics are so explicit is, I argue, why it should be screened last in the trilogy: To use the political explicitness of *The Globalization Tapes* as a means of consolidating and converting the affect generated by the visual and narrative explicitness of the other two films into outrage, creating the conditions for mobilizing viewers into taking action as consumers and voters to address the root causes of global injustice.

Method

Investigating these arguments through a critical reception study would have been very difficult since criticism or academic writing about *The Globalisation Tapes*, which predates the release of the other two films, is somewhat scarce. Items written around the time of its release consist primarily of summaries published on activist or funder sites, while a very few reviews of *The Globalisation Tapes* written at the time of *The Act of Killing*'s release are situated on sites specializing in documentary and/or activist films. Consequently, not wishing to rely solely on my own textual analysis and related speculations, I conducted a small-scale study in which people from outside the realm of film studies and with little to no prior knowledge of twentieth-century Indonesian history were recruited to watch all three films and provide feedback. I recruited participants primarily via an online ad, which stated that those interested would watch all three films, on three different days (thus requiring their commitment for three separate occasions), answer a set of questions before starting the study and after each screening, and complete a follow-up questionnaire a few weeks later once they had time to digest both the films and the ideas they introduce. Overall, no matter the order in which the films were screened, slightly more than half of the people participating reported changing their own behaviour as consumers as a result of seeing these films. In fact, a vast majority stated that as a result of the connections made by the three films, they would also participate in boycotting a product if they knew that the product was made under conditions like those outlined in *The Globalisation Tapes*.

Using Google forms for the sake of simplicity, the first survey people were asked to complete was meant to establish a kind of baseline about their political leanings as well as demographic information; it also asked about their general availability so I could then create an accommodating screening schedule. Following each screening, people participating in the study responded to another survey, which asked questions that left room for open-ended responses to the films (and thus ideally gauge several different sorts of reactions), and it also asked questions that prompted them to revisit their political inclinations. Finally, four to six weeks after their last screening, people participating in the study were asked to complete a follow-up survey, which asked for their synthesized reactions to the films and explicitly asked about any changes in political beliefs based on having seen these films.

The questions were, in general, fairly basic: On a scale of 1 to 5, how much did you enjoy the film? What did you like? What did you not like? Have you seen it before? What did you think then? Do you have any other thoughts or any specific questions? People were also

asked how they would vote and what issues would be most important to them if a Canadian federal election were held on that day, as a way to both broadly classify general political leanings and to get them to tune into their political beliefs, before asking if they felt that any of that had changed as a result of watching whatever film they were responding to. On the follow-up survey, people were also asked which film stood out most in their minds, or if they would have preferred to see them in a different order.

A big concern in recruiting was that people willing to give up so much time to someone else's research would be natural helper types and skew a little bit more compassionate than what is probably the broader average. A small honorarium (C\$30, payable on completion of the final follow-up survey) was thus attached to participation, not only as an acknowledgment of the time required to complete the study, but also to increase the likelihood of getting a slightly wider range of degrees of helpfulness (and, implicitly, political leanings and degrees of empathy) by monetizing participation. This also allowed for recruiting notices to be posted as short-term gigs on Craigslist and Kijiji, rather than being in the lower-traffic volunteer category. Screenings took place on Concordia's downtown Montreal campus, in dedicated screening rooms, to maintain some kind of minimal control over viewing conditions. People participating in this study were divided into two groups, according to their availabilities and the initial time slot they chose to attend screenings. One group of 11 people watched the films in the order of their production and release (*The Globalisation Tapes*, *The Act of Killing*, and *The Look of Silence*) while the other (18 people) watched in the order I propose they should be screened in (*The Act of Killing*, *The Look of Silence*, and then *The Globalisation Tapes* last).

Results and Discussion

While 68 people initially signed on and 38 attended at least one screening, only 29 people ultimately completed the study. The drop-off between registration and screening attendance can be ascribed primarily to difficulties in scheduling, as well as an initially clunky consent process. The people who completed this study were overwhelmingly Canadian, a little more than half under 30, and a little less than half identified as being a member of a historically or structurally oppressed group. People who completed the study were also about evenly split between men and women, between those making more or less than C\$35,000, and between those with at least an undergraduate degree and those who stopped after high school or CEGEP.¹⁶

Perhaps predictably, the majority of people limited their responses to a few direct statements, while several outliers went to opposite extremes and gave either one-word answers at times or wrote short essays in response to each question. By and large, however, the tactic of asking several open-ended questions about each film proved fairly productive in that most people were able to expand on their initial thoughts as they progressed through the survey. While asking about people's political beliefs and willingness to participate in boycotts or other political actions after each screening did seem somewhat on the nose at first, this kind of ongoing self-reporting was made necessary by the constraints

of the study, and it provided people with the opportunity to jog their memories about things they may have overlooked in responding to the initial survey. Regardless, the responses ultimately provided an indication that there is something to the arguments I make about the screening of these three films, particularly when it comes to the order in which they are shown: Parsing the difference in responses between cohorts reveals that for the people participating in this study, seeing *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence* last did tend to lead to a focus on violence and emotional drama in their responses, while seeing *The Globalisation Tapes* last led to greater connections being made across the three films and the most reflection on the roles of colonial capitalism in the Indonesian genocide.

Those who saw *The Globalisation Tapes* first tended to be so overwhelmed by the shock of *The Act of Killing* and the tension in *The Look of Silence* that, while one person in that cohort did make a connection between the three in their final comments, none of them listed *The Globalisation Tapes* as the film that stood out most for them, and none drew a connection between that film and *The Act of Killing*, despite seeing them in that order. Moreover, two-thirds of those who dropped out of the study after one screening had seen *The Globalisation Tapes* first, and the vast majority of responses to it (including from those who dropped out after seeing it) indicated that the technical quality of the film was highly off-putting. In addition, several responses indicated that the video seemed old, and wondered about the current state of affairs in Indonesia, while others asked more actuarial or anthropological questions about present-day life in Indonesia. This points to the validity of the idea that the video's aesthetic, technical, and material qualities would position the discussion contained therein as taking place a long time ago in a place far away from the viewer. At the same time, however, the majority of responses to *The Globalisation Tapes* in both cohorts still made a connection between the film's arguments and their own position as consumers in a globalized economy, pointing to the film's overall usefulness in this regard.

Finally, of those who saw *The Globalisation Tapes* first, only one said they would rather screen the three films in a different order, with the reason given coming very close to the argument driving the study itself:

I believe *The Globalisation Tapes* should be watched after watching the documentaries on the genocide because it would allow the viewer to see what was the guiding hand in all these wars. I.e., the desire for the palm oil by corporations and etc. (Danny)¹⁷

In the cohort which saw the films in the order pointed to by this comment, and which I argue is more effective – *The Act of Killing* first, then *The Look of Silence* and *The Globalisation Tapes* last – a third of the responses listed *The Globalisation Tapes* as the one that stood out most, because of the ways in which the people in that cohort felt the film exposed Western complicity in the events portrayed in the first two films. (To be clear, the people making these statements also all made a point of acknowledging the violence of *The*

Act of Killing and/or the raw emotion of *The Look of Silence* at some point in their comments.) Just over half of this group chose *The Act of Killing* as the film that stood out most to them. While the majority of people who made this choice cited the violence and graphic re-enactments as the reason for the film's continued vividness, several also mentioned the unusual approach taken by the filmmaker, with one person writing:

They are all powerful and important, but *The Act of Killing* has a conceptual brilliance and surreal intensity unparalleled in the realm of documentary film that I'm aware of. It's one of the most inventively conceived, courageously filmed, and politically important documentaries I've ever seen. I know of nothing that compares to it in terms the importance of its subject and the intensity of its viewing. (Lionel)

Finally, only two of the 18 people in this cohort would have preferred to see the films in a different order, with one suggesting that screening *The Globalisation Tapes* between the other two films may provide a more complete background for *The Look of Silence*, and the other objecting mainly to the violence in *The Act of Killing* being the first thing they were exposed to. This points to an argument that the order films are screened in does, indeed, make a difference in how they are understood individually and as a whole, and that the violence in *The Act of Killing* may be so overwhelming for some that it does need to be taken into consideration in programming these films with the intention of using them as activism.

Overall, roughly two-thirds of people participating in this study reported at the outset that their behaviour, beliefs, or purchasing choices have in the past been influenced by a film or TV show. Most people indicated that this was something in the environmental arena, or associated with food choices and animal rights, with the odd mention of shows like *The Colbert Report* having an influence on people's perceptions of America (and one outlier citing *Mad Men* as the reason they began smoking and drinking). Interestingly, the number of people who later reported a change in their habits based on seeing the three films was closer to one half than two-thirds, and almost all of those responses indicated that the specific changes being made were seeking out fair trade palm oil and never visiting Indonesia as tourists. Of those who said that their habits had not changed, this was for the most part because they claim to have already been seeking out fair trade products from socially responsible companies, although one person actually said they were now less likely to participate in boycotts as *The Globalisation Tapes* made them see boycotts as directly harmful to workers – an interesting proposition that is perhaps worthy of study as part of a different project.

Most importantly for the sake of this project, of those who saw *The Act of Killing* first and *The Globalisation Tapes* last, two-thirds indicated that this had influenced their political views and buying habits, with nearly all of them specifically citing some combination of palm oil plantation conditions, slavery, mass killings, and *The Globalisation Tapes* specifically. In the cohort who saw *The Globalisation Tapes* first and *The Act of Killing* last, only half

indicated that they had changed their thinking since seeing the films, but for the most part they also indicated that these changes were primarily related to the working conditions associated with palm oil production.

Conclusion

Despite the small sample size in this study, the responses collected overall reinforce the validity of arguments about the potential of documentary film programming as a form of activism in and of itself, as well as my arguments with regards to these films in particular: As powerful and unusual as these films are, screening only *The Act of Killing* leaves people thinking about the violence and distancing themselves from it in any way they can. Adding *The Look of Silence* to the mix ultimately reinforces this by raising the emotional stakes. Following them up with *The Globalisation Tapes*, however, amplifies the messages of eurowestern complicity contained in the other two, and, by explicitly showing the ways in which ongoing colonialism enacted through the World Bank and private enterprise contributed to these killings and continues to have an immediate impact on individuals today, directly challenges the viewer to reconsider their own choices as consumers, voters, and participants in this structure of oppression.

These results obviously raise further questions for consideration. The most immediate of these is whether screening *The Globalisation Tapes* on its own is enough to spark this reconsideration of values and actions on the part of eurowestern viewers or if, by some combination of time – as shown through the materiality of the video quality – and distance, as well as the overtly and sometimes earnestly activist nature of the video, it would be dismissed as, at best, the cinematic equivalent of being made to eat your broccoli, with the chilling early encounter with a killer entirely overlooked by a bored eurowestern audience whose expectations of films remain predominately to be entertained or moved to strong emotional reactions. The initial responses to *The Globalisation Tapes* from those who saw it first in this study, as well as the sharp decline in participation from people assigned to that cohort, hint that this may well be the case. Nevertheless, members of this cohort who completed the entire study did still make connections across all three films and with their own choices as consumers and voters by the end of the study, but this was by and large expressed using weaker language than those in the opposite cohort (with one participant citing deforestation caused by palm oil production as the biggest issue they now think about in the wake of seeing these films).

With that said, the results from this study would seem to indicate that, for Western audiences, *The Act of Killing*, *The Look of Silence*, and *The Globalisation Tapes* do need to be seen as a trilogy rather than a diptych in order for audiences to move beyond the affect of the two features and make the connections with how capitalism and colonialism work, and that the order in which they are screened does make a difference. This raises the larger question of whether film programmers should be responsible for leveraging the activist potential inherent in programming, over and above just selecting the films. This also raises the question of whether the experience of watching films in a communal setting, as was

done here, changes how we are predisposed to understand them – in other words, does the physical proximity of other humans when viewing this type of material increase an empathetic affective response, and if so, how can viewing conditions or programming order then be manipulated to generate and leverage such reactions? Moreover, can such a question be reliably investigated, given the inherent paradoxes in such an undertaking (and what would the ethics of such a project be)?

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Notes:

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- ¹ Melis Behlil, 'The Act of Killing: An Interview with Joshua Oppenheimer,' *Cineaste* 38.3: 2013, 30-1.
- ² Patricia Finneran, 'Documentary Impact: Social Change Through Storytelling,' Hot Docs (Toronto, 2014).
- ³ Diana Barrett and Sheila Leddy, 'Assessing Creative Media's Social Impact,' The Fledgling Fund (2008).
- ⁴ Nick Fraser, 'The Act of Killing: don't give an Oscar to this snuff movie,' *The Guardian*, February 23 2014; and Nick Fraser, 'We Love Impunity: The Case of *The Act of Killing*,' *Film Quarterly* 67:2 (Winter 2013), 22.
- ⁵ Kristi Kouchakji, 'The Act of Killing: Liberal Porn or Daring Activism?,' *Art Threat*, <http://artthreat.net/2014/02/the-act-of-killing-review/>.
- ⁶ See, among others: Catherine Shoard, 'The Act of Killing – review;,' Peter Bradshaw, 'The Act of Killing – review;,' Henry Barnes, 'Joshua Oppenheimer: 'You celebrate mass killing so you don't have to look yourself in the mirror;,' and Mette Bjerregaard, 'What Indonesians really think about *The Act of Killing*.'
- ⁷ Anthony Lane, 'Grim Tidings: *Pacific Rim*, *Only God Forgives*, and *The Act of Killing*,' *The New Yorker*, July 22 2013.
- ⁸ A.O. Scott, 'Mass Murder? Gee, That Was Fun,' *The New York Times*, July 18 2013.
- ⁹ Kenneth Turan, 'Review: *The Act of Killing* re-creates Indonesian slaughters,' *Los Angeles Times*, July 25 2013.
- ¹⁰ Jake Wilson, 'The Act of Killing review: An uneasy journey steeped in blood,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 5 2013, vs. Craig Mathieson, 'The Act of Killing review: inside the minds of mass murderers,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 29 2013.

¹¹ Ann Hornaday, 'The Act of Killing relives a murderous era in Indonesia,' *The Washington Post*, July 25 2013.

¹² Ignatiy Vishnevetsky, 'The Act of Killing,' *The A.V. Club*, July 18 2013, <http://www.avclub.com/review/the-act-of-killing-100235>.

¹³ An example of this is the vanishing of the massive, vibrant comments section on gawker.com after Gawker Media Group was sold to Univision, and the Gawker site proper made available only as an archive of original, editorial content.

¹⁴ Melis Behlil, 'The Look of Silence: An Interview with Joshua Oppenheimer and Adi Rukun', *Cineaste* 40.3 (Summer 2015), 30.

¹⁵ Michael Uwemedimo and Joshau Oppenheimer, 'History and Histrionics: Vision Machine's Digital Poetics,' in *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*, ed. Janine Marchessault and Susan Lord (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 181-5; Behlil, 'The Act,' 26-7.

¹⁶ In Quebec, where this study was conducted, high school ends at Grade 11, and students then go on to CEGEP (loosely translated as a general and professional education centre) to undertake either a two-year, pre-university program (in which case the time to complete an undergraduate degree at a university drops from four years to three), or a three-year professional diploma.

¹⁷ All participants' names have been changed.