THE WAY WE SEE IT: AN ANALYSIS OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH IN THEIR SEMI-RURAL COMMUNITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how socially and economically disadvantaged young people, living in a semi-rural, post-industrial Atlantic Canadian community, experience and perceive social and economic health -- defined as participants' sense of comfort and security that their social and economic needs are, and will continue to be, met in their community. I argue that social and educational policies and practices must reflect the realities of local citizens if they aim to interrupt regional health disparities.

A key objective of this research is to expose and challenge gender, class, and regional inequalities through an analysis of young adults' social and economic health experiences and perceptions. Drawing primarily upon Pierre Bourdieu's (1990b; 2001) concepts -- habitus, field, and symbolic domination -- relations between gender, class, and historical circumstances theoretically inform this research.

Employing a critical ethnographic methodological framework (Madison, 2005), experiences and perceptions of ten economically disadvantaged youth -- five women and five men, ages 19-30 -- were gathered through focus groups, individual interviews, participant observation, critical dialogue (using media to stimulate dialogue among participants), and an adaptation of photovoice (a technique combining photography and narrative).

Results suggest that the social and economic health needs of economically disadvantaged young adults are not being met. They confirm Bourdieu's (1999a) assertion of an interrelationship between physical place and the positioning of agents in social fields. Participants navigate economic, cultural, and social fields, aware of their social positioning as they 'work' the fields in order to secure enough capital to 'get by'.
Their struggles are examples of symbolic domination and suggest a significant psycho-social cost to young adults seeking social and economic health through various fields. Analyses of their experiences suggest a disjuncture between gendered identities ascribed to participants through historically-rooted habitus and contemporary social fields.

Recommendations call for gender, class, and regional inequalities to be addressed through structural interventions and investment in long term community-based education that is integrated with local economic development initiatives. Furthermore, this research calls attention to how research agendas and procedures can actually reinforce marginalization, making it difficult for the voices of disadvantaged communities to enter into dominant public discourse.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

ESTRAGON:
What do we do now?

VLADIMIR:
I don’t know.

ESTRAGON:
Let’s go.

VLADIMIR:
We can’t.

ESTRAGON:
Why not?

VLADIMIR:
We’re waiting for Godot

(Beckett, 1954, p. 10)

A large box store chain opened shop in Sydney, Nova Scotia in 2005. “It’s a sign”, my father-in-law assured me. “Someone knows something. The store wouldn’t be here unless there was something else bigger coming”. Just after Christmas in early 2006, the department store started ‘laying off’ employees. In his eighty-six years living on Cape Breton Island, my partner’s step dad has lived through the boom and the bust of this former industrial region and although he faired quite well, he worries about what is here for ‘the young people’. From his perspective, something ‘big’ has to come to sustain the area or young people will continue to leave. Like so many of us, he is waiting.

Economically disadvantaged young adults in small post-industrial communities across Canada seek social and economic health. Their efforts take place amid
globalized patterns of thinking marked for them by regionalization, limited employment prospects, and reduced social and economic support. Moreover, they deal with the perception of being misunderstood and left behind by more prosperous regions of the country.

In a neoliberal era of the supposed classless society (Walkerdine, 2003), young adults are told opportunities abound to create their own success. Often, training and upgrading in economically disadvantaged communities teach people to recreate themselves, making them employable even if there is no work where they live. Social policy focused on investment in human capital through education and training has not been supported by increased social welfare support for young Canadians (Banting, 2005). In a social climate in which dependency is perceived to be a character flaw (Fraser and Gordon, 1994), communities of citizens that desperately need social and economical networks to assist them in their reformation are often perceived from the outside as inept -- the Vladamirs and Estragons waiting for a Godot that will never arrive.

From this perspective, how can Canadian communities affected by the impact of global retrenchment survive? Citizens of Cape Breton Island -- a region of Atlantic Canada -- struggle with this question. As a mother, a university and community educator, and a local volunteer from Cape Breton who works with young people, I argue that social and educational policies and practices integrated with structural changes and local economic development initiatives, that acknowledge and challenge regional, class, and gender inequalities and which embraces local historic and social realities may contribute to the survival of economically disadvantaged communities vulnerable to
globalized social change. Such a contribution is even more likely, if citizens are provided the resources needed to critically discuss, document, and act upon their accounts and visions of a sustainable future. Centrally involved in these discussions must be community members, such as economically disadvantaged young adults, who are most often excluded from such dialogue.

By exposing and challenging gender, class, and regional inequalities as central pillars to be analyzed through young adults' social and economic health experiences and perceptions, this dissertation serves as a first step in imagining educational and policy spaces that foreground typically silenced voices and issues in community debates -- young citizens' gendered perspectives of their quest for a better future.

In this chapter, I introduce my research that examines socially and economically disadvantaged young adults' experiences and perceptions of social and economic health in their Atlantic Canadian former mining community. First, I provide an overview of the study. Second, I put forth conceptions of health and community that are adopted in this research. Next, I address the significance of this work. Finally, I briefly outline this dissertation describing subsequent chapters.

Research Overview

Research Premise

The overarching aim of this study is to analyze how disadvantaged young men and women from a semi-rural, economically disadvantaged, post-industrial community,  

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1 How the terms 'social' and 'economic' are used throughout this study is described later in this chapter. Throughout this dissertation, the terms 'socially and economically disadvantaged', 'economically disadvantaged', and 'disadvantaged' are used interchangeably in reference to the young adult population that is the focus of this research.
experience and perceive social and economic health, defined here as their sense of comfort, security, and certainty that their social and economic needs are and will continue to be met. This research is premised upon four key arguments. First, many contemporary notions of health and community health depoliticize issues of health and community (Ziguras, 2004). Such perspectives place responsibility almost entirely on individuals thus shifting focus away from the state’s accountability to its citizens and masking very particular social and economic health inequalities that exist in economically disadvantaged regions. 2 Second, Pierre Bourdieu’s (see 1990b, 1992, 2001) key concepts — habitus, field, and symbolic domination — are effective theoretical tools that can be used to expose how embodied social structures, cultural identities, and human agency, within particular physical spaces, inter-relate in experiences and perceptions of social and economic health. Third, in step with Bourdieu’s assertion that theory must be informed by research grounded in the social realities of those it serves (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), social and educational policies and practices must be reflective of the social and historical realities of local citizens if they aim to interrupt the reproduction of gendered and regional social and economic health inequalities. Fourth, given that social stratification and gender are key determinants of young people’s health (Boyce, 2002; 2005) and that young people’s participation has been deemed as valuable to the success of community development (Bridgman, 2004), an analysis of their experiences and perceptions of social and economic health in their community can contribute positively to community-based interventions that aim to facilitate access to social and economic health for citizens and communities.

2 Throughout this work, I refer to the state as the complex apparatus of political and civil institutions that play multiple and often conflicting roles in the governance and welfare of society.
Given the above assumptions and parameters, I sought answers to the following questions:

- What are the day to day social and economic health experiences and perceptions of participants? What do they tell us about their positioning in the relational physical place and social spaces (fields) (Bourdieu, 1999a) they occupy?
- How do they speak about family and economic security? How do these accounts reflect interplay between their habitus and the social fields they inhabit?
- What are some of the psycho-social and emotional dimensions of their struggles for social and economic health?
- How do these young adults articulate their gendered identities? How do these gendered identities ascribed through historically-rooted habitus and contemporary social fields, play out in their experiences and perceptions of social and economic health? How do forms of masculinities, femininities, and inequalities interplay in struggles to secure social and economic health?
- From the perspective of participants, what role do social structures play in achieving a socially and economically healthy community?

Research Rationale

There is some research that explores issues such as class, gender, race, education, and work in rural areas (such as Valadez, 2000; Atkin, 2003). Shoveller et al. (2007) also note an emerging body of literature that considers issues pertaining to social capital and rural youth. Still, most critical scholarship focuses on larger urban
centres. However, the 2006 census found that 80 percent of the Canadian population resides in urban areas and over six million or just under 20 percent of Canadians live in regions designated as rural (Statistics Canada, 2007). The percentage of people living in rural communities in Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, and the northern territories is significantly higher.\(^3\) Nova Scotia, for example has a rural population of 44 percent, New Brunswick’s number of rural citizens stands at 50 percent, Prince Edward Island at 55 percent, and Newfoundland and Labrador’s rural population is 42 percent (Statistics Canada, 2005b). These numbers do not include people living in communities not officially designated as rural yet not entirely urban in nature, such as the community highlighted in this research. This study took place in a small locale within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM). The municipal amalgamation in 1995 married a number of former towns, villages, and rural communities that had experienced economic hardship and consistent population decreases as mining, steel, fishing, and farming industries declined. The municipality covers 2433.33 square kilometers and according to the 2006 census (Statistic Canada, 2007b), has a population of 102,250 people. Further, the community is approximately 500 kilometers from Halifax, the closest large urban area. Hence, while the small towns of the CBRM may not be rural they can hardly be classified as urban. A more accurate description would be semi-rural -- communities with rural and some urban characteristics.

Clearly, rural and semi-rural citizens make up a considerable segment of Canada’s population. Further: “People living in rural Canada experience numerous health and social disparities in comparison to their urban counterparts; although, the nature and extent of such disparities remains open to interpretation (Pampalon et al.,

\(^3\) Rural areas include those who live outside areas with a population of 1000 (Statistics Canada, 2005a).
2006; The Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2006)” (Shoveller et al., 2007, p. 826). If we are to foster a more accurate sociological account of the social and economic health of Canadian society in an era of post-industrialism, globalization, and regionalization, understanding the experiences of rural and semi-rural populations is of critical importance. Hence, this research contributes to a lesser-developed body of literature that focuses on young people’s social and economic health in economically disadvantaged rural and semi-rural communities well outside urban and metropolitan centres.

Throughout this study, education is identified as a factor that shapes and is shaped by young people's experiences and perceptions of social and economic health. It is not uncommon for researchers to link the social and cultural circumstances of young people with education. For example, Paul Willis’ (1981b) classic ethnographic study of working class youth in England explored their transition from school to working class-bound employment. His research contests education reproduction theories illustrating how dominated groups are, to a degree, aware of their circumstances and do engage in forms of agency and educational resistance -- even if, as in the case of the 'lads' in his study, that resistance helped to ensure they ended up with working class jobs. Dei, Mazzuca, McLsaac, and Zine (1997) investigated black students' disengagement from school with a focus on the structures of the education system that play a role in black students' decisions to leave school. Lehman (2005) explored how socio-economic background and gender influence school-work transitions. These studies begin to make explicit the complex relationships between young people's social
and cultural realities and their educative experiences-- a premise central to this research.

Also related to this study is a body of literature that explores how class, gender, and post-industrialism have an impact on young people’s experiences of education and work. In her research with white working class high school students, Lois Weis (1990; 2004) considered issues of race, class, and gender in a de-industrializing society as she aimed to understand how these issues come together with work, school, and family to inform how young people produce themselves differently than generations before them. Karslen (2001) investigated young people’s career preferences. In light of paradigm shifts such as post-industrialization, post-Fordism, and post modernism, and in an era of increased individualization, she found that parental education level and gender still had the most significant impact on career choice. For example, females from lower educational backgrounds tend to be attracted to caring positions that offer low wages.

While these works provide key insights, the research presented here differs from other studies in that young people were asked to consider their experiences in an economically disadvantaged community through a lens of social and economic health. Given current attention to the health of citizens and communities in Canada (Weiss Reid, 1999; Wismer, 1999), I suggest that this is an appropriate perspective. Researchers recognize that issues of rural youth and health are worthy of inquiry. Shoveller et al. (2007) examined the influence of community culture in a rural setting on youth’s development as sexual beings and found that impact went beyond sexual health into social spheres of young people’s lives. Still, young people’s perceptions of social and economic health are not adequately addressed in rural health studies. Further, as
will be elaborated upon in the next section, the conception of health taken up in this research troubles some contemporary notions of health thus making space for an in-depth critical look at how structural conditions, culture, and agency interplay in the construction of social and economic health at the physical and social sites of individuals and communities. Moreover, participants' experiences and descriptions of their community are analyzed in relation to their understandings and perceptions of social and economic health as rooted in their individual and collective embodied histories.

**Key Concepts**

**Conceptualizing Health**

Health is an enormous, complicated concept that evokes widely varying meanings for social actors across historical, cultural, geographic, not to mention disciplinary boundaries. The World Health Organization defines health as: "... a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2004, Constitution of the World Health Organization, para.1). While the flexibility of the concept can serve as one of its strengths, attempting to navigate the maze of how health is understood on physical, mental, and social plains, while unearthing the assumptions embedded beneath not just those interpretations but within health policy, is an almost insurmountable task. As Ziguras (2004) contends: “Because health is such an all-inclusive concept, the range of practices that are considered health related in our society is huge and still growing” (p.5). The work becomes no less daunting when tackling the concept of a ‘healthy community’. As Wolff (2003) notes, when health is conceptualized as broadly as outlined in the Ottawa Charter for Health
Promotion almost every community action becomes a health concern. Therefore, researchers must articulate with precision the conception of healthy communities that frames their work and the finite boundaries that mark their approach to study.

Within the scope of this research, the boundaries of health are narrowed to focus specifically on people's sense of comfort, security, and certainty that their social and economic needs are and will continue to be met within their community. While the terms social and economic overlap, by referring to 'social', I mean availability of and accessibility to formal and informal social support systems and community infrastructure. In particular, I am interested in how these systems and networks have an impact on economic needs or more explicitly, employment and income opportunities, satisfaction, and security.

The approach to perceiving healthy communities taken up in this research aims to trouble notions of 'healthy communities' that fail to give significant attention to the role of social systems and the state in relation to citizens' and communities' health. This research pushes the experiences and perceptions of one typically marginalized group in a socio-economically disadvantaged community -- socially and economically disadvantaged young adults -- to the forefront of discussions about healthy communities in order to address factors that contribute to the development of a social and economically healthy community. Further, an important part of my intention with this project is that their insights be used to inform community-based education designed to collaborate with young people to make public their social and economic health needs

4 The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion was introduced at the first International Conference on Health Promotion held in Ottawa, Canada in November, 1986. The charter was designed as a strategy to achieve health for all world citizens by the year 2000 -- a key objective of the World Health Organization.
and concerns, to advocate for more resources and support for youth in economically disadvantaged communities, and to rethink the issue of life chances for youth in post-industrial, rural, and semi-rural communities.

Upon first glance it might be assumed that health promotion and healthy communities’ initiatives in Canada provide an appropriate way to conceive of health and healthy communities. However, certain notions of health promotion and healthy communities that surface from such health frameworks run counter to the specific intentions of this research and the conception of health guiding this work. Three concerns with the literature associated with health promotion and healthy communities are addressed here: 1) an assumption that all citizens and communities have the same capacity to access and secure health as a resource, 2) an assumption that health is a state that can be predicted and controlled, and 3) the expansive nature of the conception of health.

The first major concern with the discourses associated with healthy communities and health promotion is the underlying assumption that all citizens and communities have the same capacity to access and secure health as a resource; a conceptualization that fits well with human capital approaches wherein health is not a goal in and of itself but only a means to an end such as economic security. In 1986, then Canadian Minister of Health and Welfare, Jake Epp, presented a new approach to health in Canada described as health promotion in which he makes reference to community health. Drawing from the areas of public health, health education, and public education this new approach was intended to enhance the health system of the day. Responding to an expanded conception of health beyond the absence of illness he explained: “Health is
thus envisaged as a resource which gives people the ability to manage and even change their surroundings. This view of health recognizes freedom of choice and emphasizes the role of individuals and communities in defining what health means to them” (Epp, 1986, section 2, para. 2).

In his definition, Epp describes health as a resource that enables people and communities to change their surroundings, presumably in ways deemed ‘better’, at least by the governmental standards -- further indication that health is conceived of as a form of capital used to attain other goals. He refers to the freedom of choice for individuals and communities to define health. He suggests individuals and individual communities on their own can define what health means to them. These may be valid assertions if people have the appropriate resources needed to engage in such work. However, there is no mention in the definition of governments providing the resources that individuals and communities need to manage and change their environment and define what health means to them. Elsewhere in his paper, Epp does suggest the purpose of a health promotion approach was to begin to better address inequalities in health that are influenced by outside determinants. Yet, his description of health places significant responsibility on individuals and communities. And while he acknowledges inequities in health there is little evidence in his paper to suggest how he envisions addressing such inequities in terms of legislation and policy. Despite the glaring omission of the state’s responsibilities to citizens in this regard, health promotion trends are still in place today. For example, the Public Health Agency of Canada’s population health approach is built upon the health promotion model discussed above and describes health as a resource to be used to attain skills, education, and life goals (Public Health Agency of Canada,

The intention here is not to dismiss the value of self-care and community responsibility for health or the ‘health as a resource’ approach to health. Instead, I argue that when health promotion and community health rhetoric becomes heavily laden with terms such as people’s and communities’ choice, control, and power to change, there is the danger of masking the disparities in access to the resource known as health and the limitations on the degrees to which people can change and control their environment and choose how to define and experience health.

Similar concerns arise when looking more closely at healthy community initiatives. Wolff (2003) writes that in 1986: “The Ottawa Charter’s broad definition of health opened up the possibility that communities could tackle the creation of a healthy community from avenues other than the health care system, or even public health” (p.96). He goes on to outline the central elements of the healthy communities process:

Creating a compelling vision from shared vision; Embrace a broad definition of health and well-being; Address quality of life for everyone; Engage diverse citizen participation and be citizen-driven; Multisectoral membership and widespread community ownership; Acknowledge the social determinants of health, and the interrelationship of health with other issues (housing, education, peace, equity, social justice); Address issues through collaborative problem solving; Focus on systems change; Build capacity using local assets and resources; Measure and benchmark progress and outcomes (Wolff, 2003, p.96).
The healthy communities initiatives had an expansive agenda and one that seemed to reflect social justice concerns that many involved in health, as well as community development, found appealing. The concept of the movement was taken up in cities and communities world wide. According to Wismer (1999) by 1996, Canada had over three hundred officially designated 'healthy communities'. She writes:

The idea of healthy communities is based on three key assumptions about the nature of community sustainability and individual well-being: local government has a critically important role to play in determining the quality of life of communities; capacity for individual health is largely dependent on community quality of life; the more equitably the benefits of social and economic development are distributed among people, the better the health of the general population will be and the higher will be the quality of life of the community (Wismer, 1999, p. 110).

While the healthy communities movement has an empowering undertone, some of the same concerns raised regarding Epp’s vision of health apply to this phenomenon. Up front, the assumptions presented by Wismer suggest a rather fluid understanding of health, shaped by the influence of structural determinants’ on quality of life. Yet responsibility for those determinants is placed, in a large part, on local governments. Moreover, there is little acknowledgement of the huge disparities in resources possessed by local governments across Canada. Wismer (1999) notes that limited resources reduce the capacity of rural regions to determine quality of life indicators for their communities. She highlights the efforts of volunteers to undertake this work in the support of healthy community development.
These concerns resonate throughout Nova Scotia community development circles. Weiss Reid (2004) conducted a preliminary study that investigated healthy and sustainable community development in Nova Scotia. A goal of the study was to initiate a process for further input by community development associations in policy creation. She gathered input from community development associations across the province in regards to their perceptions of sustainable communities, the challenges they face, and their recommendations for community development policy in Nova Scotia. She found that: “Respondents defined Community Development Associations as not-for-profit, community led groups-typically comprised of volunteers” (p.8). Further she noted a key challenge faced by development associations was volunteer burn-out.

Volunteer commitment to the building of healthy communities is important but so is provincial and federal state support. Wolff (2003) has suggested that support for healthy communities must exist across all levels of government. While communities need the power to set their own healthy community agendas they need to be able to draw on outside resources to implement their strategies. Again, Weiss Reid (2004) heard similar recommendations by the respondents in her study who argued that community development leadership must come from within communities as they can make the best decisions regarding their future. As such, communities should set the policy agenda. But her respondents emphasize: “...community leadership should not equate to the downloading of more responsibilities to communities by government without providing the required resources” (Weiss Reid, 2004, pp. 11-12).

The government-driven health promotion and healthy communities’ initiatives that emerged in Canada in the mid-1980’s do have value. Still, these models focus
heavily on individual's and local communities' responsibility for their health and its use as a resource for economic ends rather than a goal in and of itself and less on the responsibility of governments and social systems to ensure people and communities have adequate resources to create and respond to their health agendas. Hence, these approaches have particular consequences for the demographic of people and communities highlighted in this research -- socially and economically disadvantaged young adults in an economically depressed semi-rural community.

Approaches to health promotion and healthy community discussed above can contribute to health disparities along socio-economic lines as disadvantaged communities and citizens are unable to sustain themselves without adequate material and social support from social and governmental institutions. Yet when citizens and communities 'fail' to improve the health of their community they are often blamed. One needs to look no further than the current Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, who in 2002 said of Atlantic Canada: "There is a dependence in the region that breeds a culture of defeatism" (CBC on-line news staff, 2002). Harper's comment lends credence to Fraser and Gordon's (1994) critique of dominant notions of 'dependency'. They argue that in post-industrial societies, dependency is perceived as a character and moral flaw and there is no example of a 'deserving' dependent adult.

I argue that the dominant notion of dependency as depicted by Fraser and Gordon is an underlying current within the healthy communities' movement in Canada. I suggest that health promotion and healthy communities discourses premised upon the assertion that people and communities must transform themselves to evoke positive change, at the same time reflect a neoliberal approach to health. Neoliberalism can be
described as an economic ideology that, in part, argues for limiting government’s role in the economy and a more independent and privatized economic framework for society. I suggest that such increased focus on individualization creates the illusion that everyone has equal opportunity while ignoring the very unique social, cultural, economic, and historical circumstances that have significant impact upon individuals' ability to secure wealth and ultimately, power. Davies and Saltmarsh (2007) write:

The new contract between the state and people under neo-liberalism is that the state takes over the maintenance of ‘the infrastructure of law and order’, while the people ‘promote individual and national well-being by their responsibility and enterprise’ (Rose, 1999, p. 139). Neo-liberal philosophy espouses ‘survival of the fittest’ and unleashes competition among individuals, among institutions and among nations, freeing them from what are construed as the burdensome chains of social justice and social responsibility. Populations are administered and managed through the production of a belief in each individual in his or her own freedom and autonomy (p.3).

From a neoliberal perspective, people and communities must take care of themselves and ‘cultures of dependency’ are unacceptable. Instead of attention paid to ways the federal and provincial governments have failed to provide appropriate resources, attention turns almost entirely to how people can be motivated and ‘empowered’ to look after themselves and their communities.

Another major concern with some contemporary notions of healthy communities is a perception of health as a state of being that can be predicted and controlled (see Hancock, 1997). This may emerge from a link to a certain conception of public health. A
brief history of the movement presented by Trevor Hancock (1997), a central figure in the development of the healthy communities’ movement, demonstrates quite convincingly that healthy communities/healthy cities, from his perspective at least, grew out of (and are still very much steeped in) a particular notion of public health as a state that can be predicted and controlled. His reflections on a vision of a healthy city called, *Hygeia*, as imagined by a physician and sanitarian, Benjamin Ward Richardson in 1875, suggest the long lasting impact of the historical roots of healthy community thinking. The ‘ideal healthy city’ was described as one in which scientific knowledge was used to create a sanitized environment. In the city, all buildings are a particular size, made of brick, and smoke free. All homes have running hot and cold water and proper sewer systems. Parks and green space fill the city. Nobody smokes or drinks alcohol and orphans, people with mental illness, and the elderly live in small homes similar to group homes. Hancock (1997) notes the vision of Hygeia is one that has served as an inspiration and influential factor that informs his own work that focuses upon the design of healthy cities.

Richardson’s description of an ‘ideal city’ is in essence a series of controlled variables that exist within a city that, in concert, induce a ‘healthy’ space, or more accurately, a sanitized space. There lies within his image a conception of health as equivalent to sanitation, cleanliness, and order. There is little disputing that sanitation and cleanliness are important elements of health and that there is significant value in learning how to predict and control some elements of health that protect citizens. A concern for the purposes of this research is the scant attention given in the healthy communities’ ‘equation’ for agency, resistance, culture, and awareness of the habitus of
the community and individuals -- all factors that make a healthy community very difficult
to predict. In other words, there appears to be little consideration for citizens’
perceptions of how they imagine health and how those perceptions are inextricably
linked to the social, economical, cultural, and historical circumstances that inform and
are informed by those perceptions. Consequently, it is disconcerting that the ways that
health is predicted and controlled may be reflective of notions of health that reflect the
values and beliefs of dominant members of society and not necessarily those of other
citizens and communities.

The third troubling aspect associated with the discourse of healthy communities
and health promotion has to do with the expansive nature of the conception of health.
From a healthy communities’ perspective a large and varied number of initiatives
constitute healthy community development. As noted earlier in this chapter, the wide-
ranging conception of health is important to make space for other, equally critical
elements of well-being that constitute the focus of this study -- social and economic
health. Still, it becomes a challenge to secure material resources and support when the
possible nature of the community health agenda is almost limitless. Wolff (2003) writes:

The definition of health from the Ottawa Charter allows great flexibility to the
community to address whatever issue the community identifies as critical, and a
fundamental principal of all community organizing is “to start where the
community is at”(27). However, this great breadth and flexibility of scope may
have also been the downfall of healthy communities....If a state or federal agency
or foundation has a specific goals, how can it fund a generic healthy communities
initiative when that initiative could end up addressing transportation, housing,
violence prevention, child abuse, child care, toxic environments, or income and racial disparities (p.105)?

Responsibility for healthy community development can be passed from agency to agency eventually falling into the laps of the community and its citizens. According to Weiss Reid’s (2004) findings, the potential problems are suggested in the broad spectrum of challenges community development organizations in Nova Scotia face.

Some of the biggest challenges that faced community development groups were:

1) Relationships with Regional Development Authorities; 2) Volunteer burnout; 3) Limited access to resources; 4) Infrastructure issues (such as road and transportation); 5) High cost of insurance; 6) Limited employment opportunities; 7) Competing interests for funding; 8) Resistance to change; 9) Low community participation; and 10) Retention of rural youth (p. 10).

The potential problems associated with an overly broad understanding of a ‘healthy community’ suggests the benefits of reigning in the notions of health in order that particular sectors of the community can tackle specific issues. However, the necessity to recognize the inter-relationship of those issues with other factors would be central to the success of such initiatives.

The conception of health proposed through this research challenges notions of health that appear embedded in the health promotion and healthy communities’ movement. First, it aims to expose underlying assumptions and discourses. Second, it creates room and recognizes the value in asking members of a particularly disadvantaged group to articulate, in ways meaningful to them, their experiences and visions of social and economical health in their community. Finally, it zeros in on a very
specific aspect of health, and one of importance to the participants in this research, namely social and economic comfort and security.

**Conceptualizing Community**

Social and economic health is understood throughout this research as something that is experienced by individuals in relation to the communities in which they live. Personal and community health are seen as part of a dynamic relationship. Yet, as with notions of health, defining community is not clear cut. In its community development policy, the Nova Scotia government has defined community as: "...a group of people who live and interact in a specific geographic area or people with shared cultures or common interests" (Government of Nova Scotia, n.d., p. 3). This notion of community offers little room for a critical social analysis of the dynamic of the community. First, there appears to be a sense that a community is defined in a large part by its sameness. While people and places that define themselves as a community most often have points of commonality, there are usually diverse ideas, ranges of cultural perspectives, and areas of disagreement and debate in relation to the best interests of the community. By not making explicit that a community is more complex than can be suggested in the terms, 'shared culture' and 'common interests' it is possible that those whose interests and cultural identities diverge from the 'community norm' are marginalized and excluded from the decision-making process. Young (1990) has troubled the notion of community based on the assumption of shared subjectivity and sameness. She contends such a framework lacks space for human differences.
Consequently, those who stand outside the dominant perception of ‘normal’ or ‘acceptable’ are often oppressed and excluded.

For this study, I adopt a conception of community that makes explicit that members may have commonalities and related histories, along with different lived experiences and perceptions. In the case of this research, such a definition supports an analysis of socially and economically disadvantaged young people’s experiences and perceptions of social and economic health in their community and whether or not their perspectives are solicited, listened to, and incorporated into development strategies.

Second, while including geographic region in a conception of community is important, particularly in the case of this research, it is rather limiting when offered as the only descriptor of a community, as in the definition offered in the Community Development Policy (note the word ‘or’ in the definition suggesting geographic place on its own can define community). When community researchers focus primarily on geographic location, Minkler and Wallerstein (1997) suggest they tend to adopt an ecological system perspective. They explain:

…the ecological system perspective is particularly useful in the study of autonomous geographical communities, focusing as it does on population characteristics such as size, density, and heterogeneity; the physical environment; the social organization or structure of the community; and the technological forces affecting it (p. 244).

Given that this study is grounded in a place, namely, Eastern Cape Breton Island, the ecological system perspectives is useful. Yet, a conception of community will
require additional development if it is intended to be used to understand how structural systems and conditions have an impact on social and economic health in a community.

Hence, Minkler and Wallerstein (1997) describe what they call the *social systems perspective*. From this vantage point, the focus is: “…primarily on the formal organizations that operate within a given community, exploring the interactions of community subsystems (economic, political, and the like) both horizontally within the community and vertically as they relate to other, extracommunity systems (Fellin, 1995)” (p. 245).

Still, Minkler’s definition does not make explicit the cultural elements that inform experiences of health. Therefore, in the context of this research, community is understood as the inter-relations among social and cultural structures and people within a geographic space and their relationship with society outside that space. ‘Inter-relation’ highlights the interconnectedness of the people and social systems within a community but does not assume homogeneity, thus allowing an entry point to examine those relationships and how they are experienced and perceived through lenses such as class, age, culture, and gender.

**Significance**

This research builds on work in both academic and community contexts and in the space where the two come together. First, it responds to calls by health theorists and researchers -- particularly those focused upon social determinants of health and socio-ecological approaches to health and community health -- for research that is
grounded in social theory (Thorogood, 2002; Williams, G.H., 2003; Williams, S.J., 1995). Informed by social theories, this work supports efforts to problematize popular notions of health; first, by examining and troubling the conceptions of health that underlie health research and educational practices, second, by pushing beyond the call for research that seeks to understand health determinants and digging further to expose the roots of those disparities from a sociological theoretical perspective, and third, by zeroing in and providing an in-depth look at very particular dimensions of health -- social and economic-- that have an impact on other aspects of health.

This work draws extensively on an expansive volume of literature regarding culturally relevant research methodologies and techniques (see for example, Finley, 2005; Madison, 2005; Denzin, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) and adds to discussions regarding socially-situated research. Informed by existing research and theory, I offer for future use, adaptation, and critique, one theoretically informed way to consider critical research spaces that are grounded in the historical, cultural, and political contexts of the people and places involved. Moreover, the methodology adopted can serve as an appropriate approach for researchers who wish to engage in community-based research.

At the local community level, this research contributes to a growing body of research investigating the health and development of communities and aimed at informing local social policy, practices, and education initiatives. However, the scope of this work will move beyond the research site. While this research foregrounds the needs and interests of young adults in one Atlantic Canadian community, it is useful as a

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5 A social determinant approach to health recognizes that social and economic factors have significant bearing on people’s health. A socio-ecological approach goes somewhat further and conceives of health as the dynamic relationship between social structures and human behavior within contextual locations.
springboard to connect with others at university and community grassroots levels, providing sound research to positively inform community-based education policies and practices. Finally, this work serves as a resource for those committed to scholarly projects, community-driven initiatives, as well as university and community collaborations that assist healthy community development for all citizens in socially responsible ways.

Writing Approach

Laurel Richardson calls for researchers to contemplate the process of ‘writing’ qualitative research (Richardson and Adams St. Pierre, 2005). Given the intention to ground this research in the historical and cultural community to which it belongs⁶ and in an effort to honor the creative traditions through which my own writing has moved, a mode of writing that illuminates the blurred space where more traditional modes of social scientific writing and creative literature converge was adopted. At times throughout the dissertation, particularly when presenting a historical context for the research, I include pieces of creative literature that include my own work and that of others. Given that meaning is negotiated, it is my contention that by slightly shifting the boundaries of ethnographic writing, room is made for readers to engage with and interrogate the ideas put forth in ways that have meaning for them.

⁶ Cape Breton has an international reputation for the artistic talent that has emerged from the region. Music, song, drama, and literature are some of the commonly used creative modes of expression of the island’s historical and contemporary social, economical, political, and cultural landscape.
Outline of Dissertation

The rest of this dissertation is presented in the following chapters. Chapter two outlines the social theoretical lens that frames this study, drawing on the social theories of Pierre Bourdieu, coupled with the work of other social theorists such as Diane Reay, Andrew Sayer, Beverly Skeggs, and Valerie Walkerdine. Chapter three describes the methodological approach adopted for this work – critical ethnography. Within this chapter, I speak to the particulars of the project including an introduction to the participants and the research site, the methods that were employed, and processes of analysis. The complexities of social and economic health as experienced and perceived by participants cannot be fully appreciated without considering some of the deep historical processes that continue to play themselves out. Hence, chapter four consists of a social and economical historical sketch of the Eastern Cape Breton communities where this study took place with attention upon twentieth century industrial labour history, including some of the gendered discourses of that time period. In chapters five, six, and seven, I turn more explicitly to the data collected for this study. In chapter five, participants’ perceptions of and experiences in their physical space along with an introduction to their struggles in economic, cultural, and social fields are used to demonstrate where they are situated in the symbolic order of power in the social fields they occupy. Chapter six analyzes the impact of the interplay between participants’ habitus and the social fields they inhabit in relation to how they understand and experience two key dimensions of social and economic health; family and economic security. Often under-researched and under-theorized in the scholarship of healthy communities, the emotional implications of symbolic domination as experienced through
struggles for social and economic health are given critical attention in this chapter. In chapter seven, the gendered meanings that participants attach to their social and economic health experiences are analyzed in relation to their historically-rooted habitus and the contemporary social fields. Finally in chapter eight, I offer a summary of the key findings and consider the relevance of this work in the larger contexts of research, practice and policy in the local community and beyond.
CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is informed by a theoretical framework that argues for the acknowledgement of the relationships between and among gender, class, culture, and social and economic inequalities experienced by young people in economically disadvantaged communities outside urban centres. First, I employ Pierre Bourdieu's social account of society (such as 1990a, 1990b, 2000, 2001), and particularly his key concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic domination to begin to map out the tangled connections between young people, social stratification, and health as defined in this study. Further, I look to Bourdieu to better understand the historical roots of the young women's and men's experiences and perceptions of social and economic health in their community. Second, I address some concerns with Bourdieu's social project in relation to the role consciousness and awareness play in the reproduction of social inequalities. Willis' (1981a; 1981b), Sayer's (2004; 2005a; 2005b), and Reay's (2004) work inform this examination of consciousness. Third, to widen the space for a gendered analysis of the research findings, I draw upon theorists who contemplate relationships amongst inequality, masculinities and femininities in specific socio-economic contexts (Walkerdine, 2003; Reay, 2005).

This work is founded on the research premise that experiences of social and economic health reflect a dynamic between human dispositions and actions, cultural place, and social structures. Moreover, health has been defined as a 'sense' or feeling of social and economical comfort, security and certainty. Therefore, I make room for a critical exploration of forms of individual and collective action and how they are shaped
by cultural and structural conditions. I also examine the psychic impact of navigating such a maze. Again, in regards to this emotional dimension, I refer to Reay (2002), Walkerdine (2003), as well as Skeggs (1997).

**Bourdieu's Social Account of Society**

A key argument that underlies this research is that structures and agency within particular settings inform experiences of health. Here, *structures* refer to the social apparatuses of governance, institutions, and systems that shape the dispositions and actions of individuals. *Agency* is understood in relation to structures as attempts at change that reflect the tension between constraints and freedom that agents embody. In this work, individual practices such as "[t]he ability to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new and unanticipated modes of behaviour" (McNay, 2000, p.22), are recognized as potential elements of forms of agency, and yet they are not interpreted as having the capacity on their own to institute social change. McNay (2000) emphasizes: "[T]he social theoretical concern with power relations serves as a reminder that any theory of agency must be placed in the context of structural, institutional or intersubjective constraints" (p. 22-23). Hence, this study requires a theoretical framework that enables the exploration of the dynamic relationship between structures and agency. Pierre Bourdieu's work can provide an appropriate basis for such a theoretical scaffold. His theories begin to expose the interconnectedness between human action and the social world. As his notion of habitus figures prominently in the theoretical premise of this study and helps to explain how and why social inequality is deeply rooted in people and their communities, I offer an overview of the concept next.
Habitus

Bourdieu (2000) contends that inherent in all people are patterns of behavior that manifest in daily actions and ways of living. These actions reproduce the social structures that exist in society. Bourdieu (2000) calls these patterns, habitus. He writes: ...it has been posited that social agents are endowed with habitus, inscribed in their bodies by past experiences. These systems of schemes of perception, appreciation and action enable them to perform acts of practical knowledge, based on the identification and recognition of conditional, conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react; and, without any explicit definition of ends or rational calculation of means, to generate appropriate and endlessly renewed strategies, but within the limits of the structural constraints of which they are the product and which define them (p.138).

In other words, individuals embody inherited patterns of dispositions -- the habitus -- that have been socially constructed. While behavior cannot be predicted with exactness, people’s actions, practices, and choices are generated from within the boundaries of their habitus. Three central characteristics of habitus make it particularly significant for this research; 1) habitus is historical, 2) habitus is generative, and 3) habitus is relational.

Habitus is historical

Habitus is historical and is inherited over time and evolves somewhat through generations. “The habitus -- embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history- is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 56). Bourdieu notes that unawareness of the historical nature of
our dispositions explains in part why some people misrecognize systems, rituals, and practices as natural and legitimate. By adopting dominant beliefs and practices, humans help to reproduce the systems that enable social inequality. As is addressed later in this chapter, there are theorists who take issue with what is often perceived as Bourdieu's dismissal of individuals' awareness of their social conditions; a criticism Bourdieu and others address. Further, he does acknowledge a degree of individuals' consciousness of domination in his later work. Still, this notion of misrecognition clarifies to some degree why particular lifestyle behaviors and beliefs are difficult to change. Moreover, it offers some explanation as to why it is often easy to blame people for their situation and for people to blame themselves. This in turn shifts focus away from social conditions that contribute to inequality, in essence enabling such conditions to stay intact and further entrenching neoliberal discourses such as those embedded in the contemporary notion of the healthy communities initiatives mentioned in chapter one. Insights offered by this element of habitus shed further light on the inadequacy of such contemporary notions of health to address some of the roots of social health disparities -- an important task in achieving the aims of this research. The success of healthy communities' initiatives depends a great deal on citizens engaging in on-going self and community improvement and there is little space to attend to how historical conditions may affect people's ability to engage in the required behaviours.

Throughout this research, I also make use of Bourdieu's (1990b) reference to the collective history that shapes the habitus of individuals from within similar social environments. He writes:
Though it is impossible for all (or even two) members of the same class to have had the same experiences, in the same order, it is certain that each member of the same class is more likely than any other member of another class to have been confronted with the situations most frequent for members of that class (p. 59-60).

Reay (2004) writes:

It appears that Bourdieu is conceiving of habitus as a multi-layered concept, with more general notions of habitus at the level of society and more complex, differentiated notions at the level of the individual. A person's individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of (p. 434).

This notion of a collective history that shapes a collective habitus throws light on how practices and beliefs become accepted as ‘common sense’. People from particular places who share similar social condition also share a historical context. As a result, arbitrary practices, values, and beliefs constructed through time can be perceived as ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ and are used to account for social differences (Bourdieu, 2002).

**Habitus is generative**

Habitus is generative and is not entirely predictable. Social agents do not simply follow societal rules and norms. Instead, they act from within a set of generative dispositions that are acquired through experience and as such vary through time and place. Reay (2004) describes habitus as “a complex interplay between past and present” (p. 434). Habitus is constantly re-constructed as agents interact with their social world. Reay (2004) goes on:
The range of possibilities inscribed in habitus can be envisaged as a continuum. At the one end, habitus can be replicated through encountering a field that reproduces its dispositions. At the other end of the continuum, habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations (p. 435).

The flexible character of habitus is not reflective of free will. Human beings' choices are limited and enabled by their habitus. Reay (2004) writes:

Choices are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints that the person finds himself/herself in, her external circumstances. However, within Bourdieu's theoretical framework he/she is also circumscribed by an internalized framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable (p.435).

McNay (2000) contends:

[H]abitus is defined, not as a determining principle but as a generative structure. The temporalization of the idea of habitus introduces a praxeological element into the idea of embodiment such that the dialectic of freedom and constraint in subjectification permits the emergence of a concept of agency understood through the idea of 'regulated liberties'. In conjunction with the concept of field, this idea of agency provides a perspective from which to think the links between symbolic and material dimensions of power (p. 26).

The complex generative nature of habitus has implications for an analysis of young people, social stratification, gender, and emotional-psychic responses to health as understood in this research. For example, it cannot be assumed that social and
economic health experiences and perceptions can be predicted with exactness for young women and men of different social classes. Subsequently, I tried to remain mindful of the possible temptation to formulate the research and analyses based on such a misconception. Also, the flexibility of habitus reminds us that it can be a site for modes of individual agency and social change. As Bourdieu (2000) notes events occur that cause shifts in habitus and such events may lead to changes. A shift from an industrial to a post-industrial community may constitute such changes for young women and men in ways they experience and perceive social and economic health through their every day practices, attitudes, and behaviours.

**Habitus is a relational concept**

Bourdieu's (with Wacquant, 1992) social theories are premised upon a relational understanding of social reality. He seeks to move beyond dualistic perspectives such as structure versus agency arguing that structure and agency, in fact, work in relation with one another. As Wacquant (1992) suggests, for Bourdieu: “Social science need not choose between these poles, for the stuff of social reality -- of action no less than structure, and their intersection as history -- lies in relations” (p. 15). This position is useful when considering young people and health in an economically disadvantaged community as it may help to explain to some extent their sense of agency while simultaneously depicting the limitations and opportunities informing their choices.

From Bourdieu’s perspective: “[H]abitus consists of a set of historical relations ‘deposited’ within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action” (Wacquant, 1992, p.16). Hence, consideration of individuals’ habitus may expose how structures and agency help to shape, for example,
young people's experiences and perceptions of social and economic health. It is not enough to say that individual behaviors determine how health is experienced or to suggest that social structures predetermine health experiences. Individuals are not simply influenced by socially constructed determinants, they embody those structures. Therefore, what appears as 'free will' or 'choice' is actually limited and enabled by the social realities that human beings have come to understand as their own realities.

Habitus begins to make explicit this inter-relational dynamic and thus is an appropriate theoretical tool of understanding and analysis for this research given that the relationship between structures and agency in experiences of health is a central argument upon which this study is based.

While Wacquant (1992) admits that the relational element of Bourdieu’s work is not unique to him, the consistency with which he employs it is noteworthy: “What is special about Bourdieu is the zeal and relentlessness with which he deploys such a concept” (p. 16). Further example of Bourdieu’s attention to a relational perspective is apparent when habitus is considered in relation to the concept of field.

**Field**

Closely linked to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is the notion of field. Bourdieu (2000) writes: “[The principle of action] lies in the complicity between two states of the social history in bodies and history in things, or, more precisely, between the history objectified in the forms of structures and mechanisms (those of the social spaces or fields) and the history incarnated in bodies in the form of habitus...” (p. 150-151). Topper (2001) clarifies that field refers to: “a structured space of social positions which
is also a structure of power relations” (p.39). With this, field can be understood as not simply the structural contexts that influence behaviours and dispositions of individuals and institutions but as arenas that are shaped and reinforced by the actions and struggles of individuals and institutions. The field imposes parameters, rules and so-called norms that people come to embody and through their actions they perpetuate those parameters, rules, and norms -- thus shaping the field. Bourdieu notes that the values of the dominant tend to serve as the norms within field, thus supporting the status quo that reinforces inherent inequalities. When considered together, habitus and field offer a position from which to contemplate the connections between material and symbolic dimensions of power (McNay, 2000).

The concept of field may offer a more explicit explanation of how contexts, in which structures and people’s behaviors are at play, not only shape, but are simultaneously shaped, by those structures and behaviors. Borrowing from Wacquant’s (1992) explanation of Bourdieu’s theories, two key elements of field are deemed helpful in relation to this study; 1) fields are shaped by and are shaping agents and objects, and 2) fields are spaces of struggle for capital.

**Fields are continuously shaping and are shaped by the agents and objects within their scope**

In his contributions regarding fields, the relational as well as the dynamic element of Bourdieu’s theories are further exposed. Wacquant (1992) writes:

...a field is a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity which it
imposes on all the objects and agents which enter it. In the manner of a prism, it refracts external forces according to its internal structure (p. 17).

As with habitus, recognizing that fields are simultaneously shaping and being shaped by agents and objects can offer ways to consider how all 'players' within a field are involved in forming that field. Yet their 'play' is not 'free choice', but shaped by the norms and values inherent in that field. This is an important recognition when attempting to move beyond understanding young people and their experiences and perceptions of social and economic health from a strictly behavioural (lifestyle) perspective or a social determinants perspective. It becomes more apparent that neither vantage point can adequately show how social and economic health is understood, experienced, and articulated by young adults from within different fields. Further, the idea that a field is constantly being shaped and reshaped is further indication that this is not a deterministic concept. A field is not static and thus, while there are limitations on the changing nature of the field and how it is deposited and reproduced within agents and objects, exact predictions are not possible. This serves a reminder that the assumption that people's actions can be predicted based on the field in which they exist is ill-founded.

The field is a space of struggle where participants compete to achieve control over the capital specific to that field

Within every field struggles exist in which people seek to gain control and power. Once in power, the dominant are in a position to attach value to various forms of capital within the field. Hence, what is considered capital also reflects the best interests of those in power while creating unequal opportunity for other members of a society.
Through classification struggles the shapes of fields can be changed. In the course of these struggles, the very shape and divisions of the field become a central stake, because to alter the distribution and relative weight of forms of capital is tantamount to modifying the structure of the field. This gives any field a historical dynamism and malleability that avoids the inflexible determinism of classical structuralism (Wacquant, 1992, p.18).

Yet Wacquant reiterates that while the shapes of fields change and actions cannot be predicted, people do not have complete ‘free’ choice. He suggests a return to the concept of habitus and offers a reminder that actions are still tied to people’s embodied patterns of disposition. However infinite the possible actions, they emerge from the historical and generative habitus. Hence, how individuals engage in classification struggles is connected to their habitus. As Wacquant (1992) notes, this serves as another example of the relational dimensions of Bourdieu’s concepts:

Thus both the concepts of habitus and field are relational in the additional sense that they function fully only in relation to one another. A field is not simply a dead structure, a set of ‘empty spaces’ as in Althusserian Marxism, but a space of play which exists as such only to the extent that players enter it who believe in and actively pursue the prizes it offers (p. 19).

The interplay between habitus and field as they shape and reshape one another is important when considering young adults and their perceptions and experiences of social and economic health in post-industrial economically disadvantaged communities. First, drawing on this theory, change is possible. And the nature of that change, how it may happen, and if it may happen cannot be predicted. Second, attention must once
again be paid to the historical aspect of habitus and how history has an impact upon young people's contemporary accounts of social and economic health. Accepting that habitus is inherited over time, it makes sense that past struggles that have shaped the current field will still affect a younger generation of women and men. Bourdieu (1990a) writes:

It is necessary to write a structural history which finds in each state of the structure both the product of previous struggles to transform or conserve the structure, and through the contradictions, the tensions and power relations that constitute that structure, the source of its subsequent transformations (p. 42).

While the relationship between field and habitus suggests the possibility of change, it serves also as a reminder of the degree to which agents' practices, perceptions, and ideas are limited and facilitated; further elucidating why social inequality is so difficult to overcome.

**Symbolic Domination**

I have always been astonished by what may be called the *paradox of doxa* [italics in original text]—the fact that the order of the world as we find it, with its one-way streets and its no-entry signs whether literal or figurative, its obligations and its penalties, is broadly respected....or still more surprisingly, that the established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices, ultimately perpetuates itself so easily, apart from a few historical accidents and that the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 1).
Bourdieu (2001) contends that while in many societies overt forms of domination are difficult to sustain, another form of domination which he calls *symbolic* domination exists. In the case of symbolic domination, arbitrary values become recognized and accepted as dominant norms within a particular field. Over time, such values become embedded in the habitus of the agents within that field. Both the dominant and the dominated members of a society embody symbolic domination as they struggle to obtain capital within the field.

The value of capital is itself symbolic. As mentioned in the previous section, status and power is attached to particular forms of capital within a field while, in fact, they hold no actual value. For example, the value assigned to educational accreditation is perceived as a form of capital while there is no inherent value in it. When agents within a field struggle to attain symbolic capital they in effect reproduce the symbolic domination by reinforcing its symbolic value through their attempts to attain it or by accepting that particular forms of capital are within their ‘reach’ or not. When educational, cultural, economic, and political capital is deemed valuable it takes on the form of symbolic capital (Mottier, 2002).

Wolfreys (2000) writes:

According to Bourdieu, each field within society is structured according to what is at stake within it (educational, cultural, economic, political, etc) and is comprised of antagonistic elements that struggle to acquire and preserve capital -- economic, cultural, scientific or otherwise. So in the economic field individuals compete to accumulate capital in the form, for example, of money, while in the
educational field cultural capital is accumulated in the form of academic qualifications (Reproduction section, para. 3).

Bourdieu (1990b) holds that symbolic domination is inherited over time and is so deeply embedded in individuals that it cannot always be taken as a deliberate act of choice. Hence, Bourdieu stresses that an analysis of the mechanism of symbolic power must include a structural analysis. He writes:

Objectification in institutions guarantees the permanence and cumulativity of material and symbolic acquisitions which can then subsist without the agents having to recreate them continuously and in their entirety by deliberate action. But, because profits provided by these institutions are subject to differential appropriation, objectification also and inseparably tends to ensure the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of capital which, in its various kinds, is the precondition for such appropriation, and in doing so, it tends to reproduce the structure of relations of domination and dependence (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 130).

To clarify, domination is not presented here as an exerted and influential force imposed upon agents -- as it might appear from within in a freedom versus constraint framework of thought:

‘Any symbolic domination presupposes on the part of those who are subjected to it a form of complicity which is neither a passive submission to an external constraint nor a free adherence to values...The specificity of symbolic domination resides precisely in the fact that it requires of the person who undergoes it an
attitude which defies the ordinary alternative between freedom and restraint’

To explain further:

Legitimation of the social order is not ... the product of a deliberate and purposive
action of propaganda or symbolic imposition; it results, rather, from the fact that
agents apply to the objective structures of the social world structures of
perception and appreciation which are issued out of these very structures and
which tend to picture the world as evident (Bourdieu, 1989e:21, cited in Bourdieu

Two aspects of symbolic domination are significant when attempting to understand
social inequality experienced by young people in this study, particularly as it relates to
their social and economic health experiences and perceptions in a post-industrial
setting. They are: 1) symbolic domination relies on misrecognition of arbitrary values,
and 2) symbolic domination helps to reproduce existing habitus and fields. Each
element is discussed next.

**Symbolic domination relies on the misrecognition of arbitrary values as norms**

Symbolic domination ‘works’ because historically constructed arbitrary practices
are deposited in the habitus of agents and they are often misrecognized as indicators of
social reality. For example, in many educational and cultural fields informal education is
not as valued as accredited formal education. Hence, people with more formal
education are perceived as ‘entitled’ to certain jobs, particular titles, and economic
success more so than people who do not possess such cultural capital. It is this
misrecognition of the arbitrary as reality that ensures that the dominated in a field contribute to the reproduction of the field.

As long as symbolic domination is not fully recognized as such it can continue. Bourdieu refers to this process as a form of symbolic violence. He states: “Symbolic violence, to put it as tersely and simply as possible, is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity [italics in original text]” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.167). Bourdieu writes: “I call misrecognition the fact of recognizing a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 168).

An analysis of young people’s health in post-industrial communities may be strengthened by an awareness of how misrecognition is, in part, shaping their experiences of health. For example, their experiences and perceptions of, and expectations for ‘social and economical health’, their ideas of what is needed and who should provide the conditions for good social and economic health, and their everyday practices of and psychological and emotional responses to their social and economic health may be partially colored by what they recognize or misrecognize as acceptable norms such as those, as discussed in later chapters, embedded in dominant social policy discourse. At the same time, in a post-industrial community, young women and men may have inherited roles that are now being challenged as the economy shifts. I suggest these changes may cast doubt on longstanding norms and ‘misrecognitions’. As such, their perceptions of social and economic health may reflect this conflict and deserve attention.
Symbolic domination reproduces the existing fields and habitus

Symbolic domination may be imagined as the fuel that is generating the potential reproductive nature of the relationship between the habitus and the field. The reproductive power of symbolic domination helps to explain how people within a society are contributing to the reproduction of the fields and habitus inherent in that society.

As way of example, it may be useful at this point to pause and consider how symbolic domination reproduces existing fields and habitus though education. Education is still perceived as the most likely pathway to social and economic upward mobility yet this is not the experience of many economically and socially disadvantaged people (Atkin, 2003). Pajak and Green (2003) write:

...both research and experience indicate that education does not provide a reliable ladder of opportunity for most poor and ethnic minority groups. Somehow, despite the seemingly good intentions of educators and the sincere efforts of students, inequalities and power relations among groups are continuously reproduced from one generation to the next (Skrla et. al. 2001)” (p. 393).

Drawing from Bourdieu's theories, Baert (1998) further explains:

In the battlefield over cultural and educational matters, members of the lower classes are bound to lose, entering an unfair game in which they are often forced to deny their own habitus. Every encounter implies that they can be ‘found out’, either because they inadvertently display a lack of knowledge, or because they display too much anxiety and lack of grace. More importantly, by attempting to
emulate the higher strata and so uplift their status, the petit bourgeois implicitly acknowledge the legitimacy or superiority of the dominant culture (p. 32-33). Hence, education is very often tangled up with social and economic health experiences of young people, particularly those from economically disadvantaged communities, as is most often a characteristic of post-industrial communities. However, research suggests education does not always have the positive impact people expect. Consequently, when attempting to better understand social inequality among young people, critiquing the role education plays in producing and reproducing inequality is sufficiently warranted.

Bourdieu (with Passeron, 1977) proposes a theory to explain how power relations are reproduced through formal and informal modes of education. With Jean-Claude Passeron he argues that every act of pedagogic action is a form of symbolic violence in that the power relations that currently exist in society are accepted as normal or legitimate. In other words, inequalities that prevent some people from acquiring the skills needed to gain privilege and capital in society while those already endowed with privilege can acquire more, is, to a degree, accepted as 'the way it is'. Ultimately, according to Bourdieu these inequalities underlie all pedagogic activity. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) write: “All pedagogic activity (PA) is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power" (p.5). Jenkins (2002) explains that: “Pedagogic action reflects the interests of dominant groups or classes, tending to reproduce the uneven distribution of cultural

7 It is important to read this theory in the context of Bourdieu’s thinking at the time. Savage and Bennett (2005) emphasize the need to situate Bourdieu’s theory as presented in his work with Passeron within the scope of his larger theoretical scaffold as is the intent in presenting it in this chapter within a discussion of habitus, field, and symbolic domination.
capital among the groups or classes that inhabit the social spaces in question, hence reproducing social structure” (p. 105).

Baert (1998) writes: “Whether formal (for example, school) or informal (for example, the family or the peer group), pedagogic action may lead to cultural reproduction and eventually to the reproduction of underlying power relationships” (p. 32). Attention to informal pedagogic action strengthens Bourdieu’s theory as it acknowledges the role early forms of learning that take place in the family and community plays in the reproduction of power relations (Arnot, 2002).

**Consciousness of Practice**

Bourdieu (1988, 1998, 2003) argues that academics must reflexively interrogate the theories they employ and use those insights to challenge the reproduction of systems and values that enable inequality and disparity. Thus, while Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic domination can effectively inform an analysis of young people in post-industrial settings and their experiences of health, they have limitations that must be consciously considered and addressed. One area of particular concern that is worthy of deeper reflexive consideration relates to consciousness of practice in Bourdieu's account of society.

Bourdieu has been critiqued for his view on the consciousness of practice. As has been noted throughout the previous sections, Bourdieu contends that habitus is embodied and lies beneath consciousness thereby offering some sense of how people contribute to their own dominance without awareness. The issue of consciousness holds great significance for an analysis of the relationship between young people, social
stratification, and their social and economic health. For example, health researchers have raised concerns with Bourdieu's stance on consciousness (S.J. Williams, 1995) noting that it could be interpreted as a suggestion that people may be unaware of their health (and this may include social and economic health) practices except in the absence of good health, making it difficult for them to actively contribute to discussions of economic, social, and personal health.

Others also take issue with Bourdieu's position. For example, Paul Willis (1981b) draws a different conclusion than Bourdieu in reference to working class students' awareness of their domination. Reed-Danahay (2005) writes:

Willis provided an ethnographic sociological study of working class boys in an industrial urban setting in order to challenge Marxist theories of reproduction that he felt relied too heavily on dominant ideology and ignored social agency and struggle. Willis tried to demonstrate that the 'lads' had some partial understanding of their class position and also that they undertook some forms of resistance to the dominant cultural forces operating on them. Ultimately the 'lads' got working class jobs and the social class reproduction continued (p. 54).

Willis argues that dominated groups are aware of their condition. He writes that it is "the ordinary milieu of social life through which, among other things, social agents come to collective, mediated, lived awareness of their condition of existence and relationship to other classes [italics added]" (Willis, 1981a, p.58). He contends, as noted later, this awareness propels acts of resistance towards cultural forms of domination.

Bourdieu's own work is helpful in dealing with these concerns over the consciousness of practice. Reay (2004) notes that in his later work Bourdieu (1996)
acknowledges cognitive aspects of habitus. Yet, Reed-Danahay (2005) points out that while Bourdieu does not entirely dismiss awareness in response to Willis' work, he does seem to question whether the actions of the working class 'lads' can accurately be interpreted as conscious resistance. Of Bourdieu, she writes:

He noted that many adolescent males will express resistance, as Willis had shown in his study. Bourdieu also, however, pointed to the rigidity of both the lads' world and the language they used to describe it, suggesting that the cult of masculinity and social hierarchy of the lads' world was actually very conformist and rooted in a collectively guaranteed and stable world (of urban working class one would assume Bourdieu meant). He seems to have been suggesting, therefore that the resistance of the lads was (just?) part of their commonsense culture and not a true challenge to the structures that dominate them - of which they could not be aware (p.55).

Further, Bourdieu also contends that domination cannot be overcome just by an awakening of consciousness. In *Masculine Domination* he writes:

The passions of the dominated habitus (whether dominated in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture or language) - a somatized social relationship, a social law converted into an embodied law - are not of the kind that can be suspended by a simple effort of will, founded on a liberatory awakening of consciousness. If it is quite illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with the weapons of consciousness and will alone, this is because the effect and condition of its efficacy are durably and deeply embedded in the body in the form of dispositions (Bourdieu, 2001, p.39).
Bourdieu goes on to argue that beyond awareness of domination only through true transformation of the social conditions through which the habitus is constructed and reproduced can symbolic domination be disrupted. I suggest the power in this claim for this research is great. First, it can be used to challenge and critique lifestyle and behavioural approaches to understanding social and economic health that suggest individuals have more control over these aspects of their health than is actually the case. Second, instead of dismissing individuals’ accounts of their social and economic health because they are not entirely consciously aware of their practices as was suggested earlier, those accounts can still be heard along side an analysis of the conditions that help form how people experience health. Finally, Bourdieu’s perspective can be used as an argument that holds the state in part accountable for its citizens’ social and economic health and wellbeing by calling for the transformation of social conditions that enable social and economical health disparities.

Criticisms of the lack of consciousness in Bourdieu’s theories still deserve attention, particularly if suggestions can strengthen the concept. One way to reintroduce spaces for consciousness into some of the theoretical concepts presented, such as habitus, is through the role of emotional responses to morality. Sayer (2004) defines morality or ethic as good behaviour, how we treat others, and how we should be treated. Sayer (2004; 2005a; 2005b) contends that emotions are closely linked to morality and morality is not simply a response to external norms. If habitus is to be used to understand morality then the emotional dimension of habitus needs to be acknowledged. He writes:
We do not just treat others in a certain way simply because there are norms dictating that we should and because we fear sanctions if we don't. Nor do we object to things simply because they upset us. We often behave in a certain way regardless of whether there are any penalties for not doing so, because we feel that it is right, because it is conducive to well being, and because to do otherwise would cause some sort of harm to people (Sayer, 2004, p.5).

Hence, individuals may indeed embody domination and without consistent awareness and rigorous reflexivity participate in the reproduction of modes of inequality. However, humans have the capacity to question inequalities and so-called norms. Sayer (2004) contends:

Actors can only assess well being and suffering via available cultural discourses, and such judgments are fallible, though as we noted, to assume they were always mistaken would make survival and flourishing incomprehensible. One of the reasons for their fallibility lies in the fact that cultural discourses tend to provide ways of legitimizing or disguising domination. Such discourses may be deeply ideological, encouraging the oppressed to embrace their position as worthy, for example, encouraging women to value domesticity and subservience to men. At the same time, discourses, belief systems or cultures are usually rich enough to provide ways of questioning their own beliefs. Thus, one doesn't have to be a non-westerner to see that many western beliefs about what constitutes flourishing are mistaken. The complexity, unevenness and (increasing) openness of real societies tends to invite actors to compare situations of relative flourishing with other situations of oppression and to question why what is possible in one
sphere is not in another; for example why values of equality have not been extended to gender relations (p.14).

Coupling Sayer's attention to morality and emotion with Bourdieu's notion of habitus allows a pathway to investigate the conscious action that plays out in our day to day practices. Raey (2004) concurs:

Sayer's (2004) important work recuperating ethical dispositions or 'moral sentiments' for habitus enhances the possibilities for and of habitus and allows us not only a richer understanding of the strivings, struggles, and disenchantments of those burdened by the Weight of the World (Bourdieu, 1999b). It also provides the potential for a broader conceptualization of habitus that makes space for 'cares, concerns, and commitments', and weaves together conscious deliberation with unconscious dispositions so that we can attempt to grapple analytically with aspects of identity such as our personal and political commitments that current conceptualizations of habitus marginalize (p.438).

Thus, Sayer's thinking sits well with Bourdieu's ideas as a plank in the theoretical scaffold that enables a critical examination of young adults' experiences and perception of social and economic health. His perspective may allow for deeper consideration of how economically disadvantaged young adults articulate their social and economic circumstances and the implications upon their life chances in their community.

Theories to Support a Gendered Analysis

One aim of this research is to examine how gender and inequalities have bearing on young women's and men's experiences of social and economic health in their
community. Accordingly, theoretical insights regarding masculinities and femininities in socio-cultural contexts must be included in a theoretical framework for such research. McNay (2000) notes, that in recent feminist theory, gender is envisioned as a “durable but not immutable phenomenon” (p.2). To better understand its dynamic nature, gender is conceptualized in this work as a “lived social relation” (McNay, 2004, p.175). McNay (2004) argues that material and cultural analytical approaches to gender both position it as an abstract structure; the former as a structure within capitalist class relations and the latter as a location within symbolic structures. “By defining gender as a position within an abstract structure, albeit very differently conceived, both materialist and cultural feminists fail to recognize that such abstract forces only reveal themselves in the lived realities of social relations” (McNay, 2004, p.175). In keeping with McNay’s thinking, gender is conceived here as the socio-cultural embodied, *interrelational* patterns of behaviors, thoughts, and practices inherited through time that are used to negotiate and characterize being women and being men, including notions of masculinities and femininities.

Masculinities and femininities are difficult to define. Hence, the following assertions guide how they are conceptualized in this work. First, ways of ‘being and doing’ *man* or *woman* are multiple and how we understand ourselves as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ shifts through time, place, and circumstance (Paechter, 2006). Second, “…in the course of the socialization process every agent inevitably acquires a gendered habitus, an identity which has incorporated the existing divisions of labor between the genders” (Krais, 1993, p. 170). Thus, I contend that how agents enact their constructions of masculinities and femininities -- or how they understand, experience,
perceive, and practice their gendered identities -- is rooted in their gendered habitus and as such are durable and still generative. Further, masculinities and femininities can only be understood in relation to each other and to the social fields agents occupy.

Some feminist theorists have employed, critiqued and expanded upon Bourdieu's theories. Reay (2004) comments that some have criticized Bourdieu for his lack of attention to issues of race and gender. However, Arnot (2002) notes that Bourdieu considers how pedagogic action reproduces sexual structures (see Bourdieu, 1977) and Reay (2004) points out that he does takes up gender, particularly in his book *Masculine Domination* (2001). Of particular interest here is that Bourdieu contends that masculine domination is deeply embedded in historical consciousness. He argues females and males are inhabited by an unconscious ancient construction of society. To truly understand the depth of the masculine domination inherent in this historical construction, the task must be to:

\[C\]onstruct the history of the historical labour of dehistoricization, or, to put it another way, the history of the continuous (re) creation of the objective and subjective structures of masculine domination, which has gone on permanently so long as there have been men and women, and through which the masculine order has continuously reproduced from age to age (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 82-83).

Bourdieu's theory of masculine domination is useful when considering young people and social stratification. Weis (1990) found that despite de-industrialization and changing gender relations many of the young men from working class families in her study still wanted their wives to adopt traditional female positions in the home. However, as gender relations shift as a result of post-industrialization (Massey, 1994; Garland,
2001) many working class males and females are likely to experience a disjuncture between gendered discourses embedded in their historical collective habitus and their present-day lives. Awareness of how masculine domination is historically entrenched in people can be a valuable insight when trying to understand how young adults negotiate their gender relations in post-industrial societies.

While a goal of this research is to engage in a gendered analysis, the intent is to do so within the frame of a social-economic context. In other words, there is no intent to entirely disentangle gender from the social and class contexts in which this study will be conducted as class and gender are inextricably tied up in one another (Skeggs, 1997). Consequently, Bourdieu’s theories are a suitable starting point for this leg of the analysis. Reay (1995; 1991) demonstrates an effective way in which Bourdieu’s theories, particularly habitus, can be adopted to more closely investigate issues of gender and social inequality. She writes: “Female habitus can be surmised as a complex interlacing of the dispositions, which are the consequences of gender oppression, with those that are the product of varying levels of social privilege” (Reay, 1995, p. 360). Her research with working and middle class primary school male and female students in Britain in which she uses habitus as a method to investigate differences of class, gender, and race, offers preliminary insights into how children’s disposition and social circumstance interplay and reinvent and reproduce themselves in everyday classroom activities (Reay, 1995; 1991). Drawing further on that research, Reay (2002) also considers working class masculinities and educational success. Thus, I borrow from her work and her ways of thinking about and implementing Bourdieu’s concepts.
While Bourdieu’s thinking can serve as a point of entry for a gendered analysis, other theorists and researchers take up the complex issues of gender and class and their work can help to enrich this study. For example, Walkerdine (2003), who has investigated the ways class plays a part in the shaping of subjectivities, explores how neoliberal discourses embedded in the concept of upward mobility play out in the lives of some young women. She contends the discourse of upward mobility calls upon men and women to continually reinvent themselves as better, brighter, more successful individuals. She suggests the characteristics of upward mobility including, self-reflexiveness, self-betterment, and emotionality are also most often described as ‘feminine’ characteristics. However, this has not dissolved gender inequalities. Instead, Walkerdine (2003) asserts: “...this inequality is differently lived because low-paid manual and service workers are constantly enjoined to improve and remake themselves as the freed consumer, the ’entrepreneur of themselves’” (p.243). McRobbie’s (2004) work provides a useful way to consider such feminized social divisions that are reflective of an era of individualism, particularly through an examination of the role media play in reproducing classification divides between women. Lovell (2004) questions whether or not increased focus on individualization taken up by some elements of feminism may in fact simultaneously advance the emancipation of some women and deepen the class inequalities experienced by other women. Skeggs (1997) also takes up issues of women and social stratification in her ethnographic research in which she investigates how women’s class and the classifications ascribed to them weave into how they negotiate and define themselves.
A Theoretical Space for Agency

A common criticism of Bourdieu's work lies in what is perceived as a lack of agency in his theories. Given that agency in relation with social condition is a key component of how health is understood in this research, this concern deserves address. For example, while he admits to being positively influenced by his work, Paul Willis is critical of Bourdieu. Reed-Danahay (2005) cites Willis who wrote in 1981: “‘For all the richness of the Bourdieun system, once again, agency, struggle, and variety have been banished from history’ (55)” (p.55). She goes on: “For Willis, at that moment, Bourdieu’s theory offered ‘no theoretical basis for a politics of change, for the production of alternative, radical, consciousness’ (1981:56)” (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p.55). Willis (1981a), on the other hand, emphasizes “‘lived collective awareness’ as concrete forms of resistance” (p. 58), “relatively collective responses to current dilemmas and possibilities” (p.58), and “collective penetrations of regulating ideologies and enclosing technologies of control and domination” (p.58). And while the current cultural and social condition may in the end be reproduced, Willis' work focuses on the moment of what he calls cultural production. Of Learning to Labour (1981b) he writes:

It takes as starting points what are either absent or gestural in the previous theories: resistance; lived cultural production of the working class; and culture as work in and on, formed by, and helping to form contradictions in the mode of production (social relations of production as formed by the multi-faceted struggle of constituted classes (Willis, 1981a, p.58).

Willis suggests this approach allows for an analysis of the dynamic between cultural production and cultural and social reproduction.
Some feminist theorists, while noting strengths in Bourdieu’s theories, also claim there are limitations in his ideas, particularly in terms of the limited role of agency. While McNay (2000) claims that Bourdieu’s theory can offer a framework through which to look at how gender is considered, she nevertheless contends: “His work concentrates on the implications of power and position for a theory of agency, but it tends to disregard the internally complex nature of subjectivity, and how it is worked through at the level of motivation and self-understanding” (p. 72). Mottier (2002) also notes that Bourdieu helps to clarify how gender differences are reinforced yet she argues: “While Bourdieu offers a subtle account of the relations between practice and power, he fails to provide us with a conceptualization of subjectivity that, ultimately, would allow for critical agency” (p. 354). And Lovell (2000) writes: “…while Bourdieu’s ‘reflexive sociology’ allows for political agency and social change, it is so successful in identifying the embeddedness of agency in institutional practices that there is no denying that it induces at times a strong sense of political paralysis” (p.16-17).

In some cases, Bourdieu’s insistence that human subjectivity is limited by social condition is misinterpreted as a claim that it is instead determined by such conditions. Conducting an analysis of young people’s health in an economically disadvantaged setting from a deterministic perspective, one that ignores their agency, may lead to pathologizing their circumstance and their lives in a way that unwittingly reproduces some current social inequalities they experience. Thus, I would be wary of employing Bourdieu’s theories if I believed they were deterministic; however, I do not.
When Dillabough (2004) contemplates Bourdieu's intention she suggests that his theoretical framework can in fact contribute to identity theories by offering insight into why some people appear as 'free agents' more than others. She writes:

Bourdieu's point, I believe, is that no one is ultimately free. Individuals are certainly bound by the conditions of their political, economic and cultural circumstances. But if they have greater privilege in the state (based on their social location; race, gender and class), they will appear in the liberal democratic framework as penultimately 'freer' than other more historically marginalized groups (Dillabough, 2004, p.498).

Dillabough (2004) points to the importance of this insight as it relates to discussions of the gendered self. And I suggest the impact can be expanded to note its relevance to this research. In this study, a critical examination of the social and historical conditions that have influenced young people was a part of understanding how they experience, perceive, and construct their own sense of a social and economically healthy self and community. This contextual work helped me to remain mindful of the danger of judging and misinterpreting (perhaps at an unconscious level) actions or inactions of the research participants, particularly given that I, by virtue of my social and historical condition, may be 'freer' to act than those who took part in this research.

As Dillabough (2004) notes:

[Bourdieu] does not, for example, reject the importance of viewing the self as both actor and subject in the shaping of culture and embodiment of those social practices that lead to both inequality and subversion. Rather, he endows subjects
with the capacity to act in the social world without claiming a totalizing agency or an illusory, essentialist notion of freedom (p.498).

Still, this theoretical framework can be strengthened by remaining attentive to the concerns raised here and by drawing in other works to allow for deeper consideration of how human actions, practices and emotional responses to social reality interplay in how young people perceive and envision healthy communities. I again look to the work of Reay (2005) who contends that social class is experienced on both conscious and unconscious levels. Further, she speaks to the need to look beyond class consciousness as a form of political awareness to the emotional and psychic element of class. She argues: “...emotions and psychic responses to class and class inequalities contribute powerfully to the making of class” (Reay, 2005, p.912). She also writes: “...class is deeply embedded in everyday actions, in institutional processes, in struggles over identity, validity, self-worth and integrity even when it is not acknowledged. Class is a powerful psychic force, the stuff of conflict, both internal and external” (p.924). Reay (2002) considers such conflict more closely when she presents a case study of an economically disadvantaged working class boy’s attempt to negotiate his desire for academic success and his male working class culture as they crash against an education system that is not designed to allow him to succeed. She argues the emotional cost of this reality is great -- a position supported by the results of this study.

I suggest attention to the emotional expense of social and economic stratification is particularly important today in a climate that tends to downplay and even dismiss the relevance of class and therefore class inequality. As Walkerdine (2003; 2001) argues, neoliberal discourses purport that all citizens are individuals, untied from class
boundaries as well as place and gender. Accordingly, everyone must take responsibility for their own lives and create their own success. They must work hard, attain suitable academic training, acquire the appropriate skills, and develop the traits required to become self-actualized human beings. But as she writes:

While self-realization is what is expected of the life project and on in which success is judged by the psychological capacities to succeed, the ability to handle uncertainty, the never knowing where work will come from etc., in fact produces an almost inevitable failure that will be lived as a personal failing, hence the necessity for forms of counseling and therapy intended to prop up the fragile subject, to keep the illusion of a unitary subject intact. Containing this kind of subject and the containment of fracturing and fragmentation is a key task for neo-liberal and globalized economies which are no longer willing to provide long-term forms of support (Walkerdine, 2003, p. 241).

Walkerdine’s and Reay’s work speaks directly to the circumstantial realities of the participants in this study. For example, as is discussed later, a social welfare system unwilling to commit to any long term support for economically disadvantaged young people who are disengaged from formal education and employment networks sets them up to fail. Hence, Walkerdine’s and Reay’s thinking speaks to the importance of understanding and documenting nuanced ways to consider social and economical health that are capable of problematizing approaches that de-emphasize public and private sectors’ accountability to citizens and communities and the still relevant psychic and political cost of class and gender inequality.
**Conclusion**

The nature of this study calls for a conceptual lens that strengthens my critical analysis of the socio-psychic, cultural and historical contexts of young adults’ experiences of social and economic health. The work of Bourdieu, Sayer, Reay, Walkerdine, and Skeggs together support this lens. Connections between and among the theorists and theories presented here reflect a new interdisciplinary approach to the study of youth and health that stands outside the medicalization of youth and health in rural communities as well as outside theories of health, youth, and accountability.

Bourdieu’s social project provides key concepts such as habitus, field, and symbolic domination that help to articulate how structures and practices interplay in the experiences and perceptions of economically disadvantaged young adults in a post-industrial community. Bourdieu’s theories provide the analytical tools that critique and potentially disrupt social inequalities that infiltrate the lives of the participants in this study.

Sayer’s work adds a worthy dimension to Bourdieu’s thinking by reintroducing an ethical sense to how practices are understood. Sayer’s perspective creates a space within this theoretical apparatus to contemplate the awareness and mindfulness expressed by participants as they articulate their own experiences and reflect upon the social and economical conditions bearing down on their lives, their families’ lives, and the life of their community.

Serious attention is paid to historical and contemporary gender identities in this research. Accordingly, the work of Reay and Skeggs along with other social scientists who contemplate Bourdieu and feminism becomes an integral thread in this theoretical
framework. Their ideas help to fill what may be perceived as gaps in Bourdieu's thinking in the relation to gender by rethinking concepts such as habitus with more intentional attention to gender. Further, their work addresses issues of individualization that are prevalent in neoliberal discourses and create greater social and economic gaps not just across, but within gender lines; a key concern for economically disadvantaged young women and men in a post-industrial regions.

Reay, Walkerdine, and others further enrich Bourdieu's ideas by offering ways for agency to be more intently considered throughout this research. Acknowledging the psycho-social dimensions of classed experiences, they address the emotional costs incurred, particularly as people wrestle with class issues such as social and economic disadvantage and upward mobility.

Finally, much of the work of the theorists drawn upon here is grounded in empirical research that serves as a tangible witness to the theorists' thinking. Bourdieu (1992) contends that theory and research interpenetrate one another. Of Bourdieu's position, Wacquant (1992) writes: "Like method, theory properly conceived should not be severed from the research work that nourishes it and which it continually guides and structures" (p. 30). The theoretical frame of this research study keeps in full view the people and the place at the centre of this study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To see, to record, to photograph: I have never accepted the separation between the theoretical construction of the object of research and the set of practical procedures without which there can be no real knowledge (Bourdieu in Honneth, Kocyba, and Schwibs 1986:39, cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.33).

Bourdieu advocates an interpenetration of theoretical and empirical work (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.25). “Bourdieu maintains that every act of research is simultaneously empirical (it confronts the world of observable phenomena) and theoretical (it necessarily engages hypotheses about the underlying structure of relations that observations are designed to capture)” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 35). Bourdieu often engaged in ethnographic methodological work characterized by in-depth, long term field work including detailed exploration of the historical and contemporary social, economical, and cultural landscape of the research field in relation to participants’ lives (see for example Bourdieu et. al., 1999; 1990b). Such an approach allows for the employment of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic domination as analytical tools in the research field. Given the potential for theoretical and methodological fusion (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) I adopted a critical ethnographic approach to explore economically disadvantaged young adults’ experiences and perceptions of social and economic health.8

Ethnography has also been successfully used by others to explore issues of education, work, class, and gender among youth (see Willis, 1981b, 2000; Dolby et. al., 2004; Weis, 1990). Further, Cook (2005) calls for critical ethnographic health research

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8 Social and economic disadvantage was characterized by various conditions that had a bearing on participants’ social and economic health. Examples of these conditions are presented in the section of this chapter entitled, ‘Recruitment’.
stating it is most likely to expose and address inequalities in health status. I suggest this should include social and economic health. In this chapter, I outline the critical ethnographic methodological framework that was employed and argue that in light of the aims of this research a critical approach was warranted. Second, I introduce the site of my research and the participants in this study. Next, I describe particular methods of data collection and the processes of analysis. Finally, I address issues of confidentiality, interpretive validity, and credibility. Ethical concerns and limitations are noted with greater detail provided in chapter eight.

**Critical Ethnography**

Critical ethnography may be described as a politically-oriented research methodology that aims to expose mechanisms of power that support injustices. According to Wainwright (1997) critical ethnographers consider subjective lived experiences within their historical and social reality. A social and historical critique can shed light on power dynamics and conditions of inequality that shape people's experiences, perceptions, and interpretations. Critical ethnography of the 1960's was often informed by classic Marxist or neo-Marxist critical theory (Foley and Valenzuala, 2005), and this approach expanded to include race, gender, sexual identity, and post-colonial critiques. Madison (2005) writes: "Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain" (p.5). He continues: "The critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-
Critical ethnographers can approach each phase of their research with the intent to question and trouble underlying assumptions about knowing and understanding society. Thomas (1993) asserts that critical ethnography begins from the premise that what is to be studied, learned, and known through a process of inquiry is forms of social oppression. This research was conducted from such a perspective. As indicated in the aims of this project, I do not accept at face-value, dominant discourses of community and health. I wonder what ideologies and hegemonic thoughts underlie the discourse, rhetoric, and policies of such movements, whose interests are served, and what social and economic disparities are reproduced. Further, what do those typically excluded from the discussions on health and community think and feel? How do they ‘know’ social and economic health in their communities or as Bourdieu (1990) might say, what are their ‘logics of practice’? A critically ethnographic approach allowed me to begin to explore these questions.

**Research Site and Research Participants**

My research was conducted with economically disadvantaged young adults from the area of Eastern Cape Breton Island referred to as the Northside -- primarily Sydney Mines, North Sydney and surrounding smaller communities. It is part of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality and the region formally referred to as industrial Cape Breton. As indicated earlier, this community has been severely affected by the closure of the mining and steel industries and the collapse of the east coast fisheries. A local non-profit community youth outreach centre provided me with space that served as a
home-base, so to speak, for the duration of my study. According to an employee, the centre offers educational programs through which young people between the ages of 19 and 30 develop skills and knowledge in the areas of employment, citizenship, health, learning, and capacity-building. Many social and economically disadvantaged young people from the community have forged connections with the centre where they have enrolled in programs and, in some cases, where they have remained involved as volunteers or as visitors over time.

**Entry into the Ethnographic Research Field**

I made initial contact with community and youth workers on the Northside in January, 2006. For five months prior to the commencement of this research, I spent a great deal of time in the community and at the centre in order to get to know some of the people and places that were part of the lives of many economically disadvantaged young adults from the area. I met with staff of the outreach centre to discuss things such as community education program creation, and to develop a better sense of the social and economic realities of many young adults on the Northside. I also met others in the community not directly related to the centre but who worked with young adults, particularly those who experience social and economic disadvantage. During this time I was introduced to a number of youth -- some who had connections with the centre and others who did not. I also conducted a volunteer interpersonal communication workshop for a group of young adults enrolled in an employability skill building program. This six-month government sponsored program was intended to provide young adults disengaged from the labour market with the opportunity to develop work placed skills
through workshop training and practical work experience through a temporary job placement.

I accepted a seat on the board of directors at the outreach centre and attended weekly board meetings. The board actually operated more like an advisory committee to the executive director who worked directly with the youth who utilized the centre. The board was newly formed and the specific goal at the time of my involvement was to explore ways to implement a new educational training program for youth. I helped with communication strategizing. For example, I helped to organize presentations with government officials and potential stakeholders from the community. My position did not require that I adhere to a particular vision as the board had not yet engaged in such strategic planning work. My work with the board provided insights into the social systems economically disadvantaged young adults must navigate and the local, provincial, and federal layers of bureaucracy that have a hand in determining the supports these young adults will and will not receive.

As discussed in greater detail in chapter eight, my involvement in the community emerged in part out of my intention to respect the notion of reciprocity (Harrison et. al. 2001) in this research process. I wanted to help foster a climate of respect and trust between myself and the community. I wanted them to know I did not intend to simply take what I needed but I was committed to sharing my own skill set with the community and potential study participants.
Recruitment

Upon receiving ethics approval to conduct my study I set to the task of recruiting participants. As described in detail in chapter eight, this proved to be a great challenge. I traveled throughout the district and conducted information sessions about the study with youth and community workers and educators connected to outreach centres and other community-based organizations that service young adults. I provided those who attended the sessions with information regarding the study that they could share with young adults they thought may be interested. I also received permission from directors of different organizations to hang recruitment flyers (see appendix 1) in various centres where young adults gather. Workers also agreed to distribute an initial contact letter to potential participants who expressed interest (see appendix 2). From there, I set up a number of group and one-on-one information sessions for potential participants and I responded to expressions of interests from young adults who had heard about the research (most often through community educators and youth workers). When requested, I supplied the young adults with an informed consent form (see appendix 3) which I reviewed orally with each potential participant. I then asked them to return the form within a week if they were interested in taking part in the study. Using a snowball technique, I sought additional referrals from the youth and youth workers that I had met in community.

Ten young people -- five women and five men -- participated in this study. This number of participants proved ideal for the garnering of in-depth, descriptive data. Because it was a small number I was able to meet with participants individually and in groups, formally and informally, two or three days a week and sometimes more over a three-month period. After that time, I continued to be in contact with most of the participants on a weekly
basis for approximately six months. I also formally and informally interviewed six ‘expert’ interviewees; four youth workers, one local historian, and the chief of police for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (who did not ask for confidentiality).

To honor the confidential nature of our research relationship, I am aware that too detailed and individualized a description may make each participant identifiable in the small community in which they reside. Consequently, I present information about the group of participants without attaching specific circumstances and characteristics to individuals. All participants lived in the Northside district and they ranged in age from nineteen to thirty. All participants identified as Canadian and appeared Caucasian although they did not self-identify using that signifier. The Cape Breton Regional Municipality is a predominantly White community (see table 1) and given the recruitment challenges outlined in chapter eight it was difficult to recruit a cross-section of participants racialized other than White. All but one participant has family ties to the community. The other participant has lived here for a number of years with a partner who grew up in the community. Most of the participants disengaged from public school between grades eight and eleven. Some are a few credits short of a grade twelve diploma. One has a grade twelve diploma. One participant has completed a university degree. At the time of the data collection, all but one participant were enrolled in some type of government funded employability or skills up-grading program designed for youth who face barriers to employment. The other participant had previously been enrolled in a program. Program participants earn a minimum wage.
Total Population: 104,515

Aboriginal Identity Population 675

Visible Minority Groups: 1440
- Chinese: 175
- South Asian: 95
- Black: 830
- Filipino: 20
- Latin American: 20
- Southeast Asian: 55
- Arab: 125
- West Asian: 15
- Korean: 10
- Japanese: 10
- Visible Minority n.i.e. 65
- Multiple Visible Minorities 35

Table 1: Cape Breton Regional Municipality's racial demographics

The young adults who agreed to take part in the research had all experienced and in most cases, were still experiencing significant barriers that had an impact on their social and economic health. The variety of issues faced by different participants include: 1) lack of employment and paid and volunteer work experience, 2) lack of adequate income, 3) homelessness and lack of adequate housing, 4) inadequate formal and informal social support networks, 5) lack of formal education and training, 6) learning disabilities, 7) drug and alcohol addiction, and 8) victimization as a result of crime and violence. Two of the

9 Aboriginal population does not include the two First Nations' communities; Eskasoni and Membertou. The Aboriginal population for Cape Breton County is closer to 4000 (Statistics Canada, 2005).

10 Refers to respondents who wrote in a response that is classified as a visible minority such as "Polynesian", "Mauritian", etc. (Statistics Canada, 2005).

11 Data obtained from the 2001 census retrieved December 18, 2006 from http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/CP01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=1217030&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Cape%20Breton&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=Population&Custom=
women and two of them were parents and one woman was pregnant. Participants knew each other before the research study began. Some were friends and others were acquaintances as a result of having been involved in community education programs together. Others knew each other because they lived in the same community. All participants took part in at least three of the five methods of data collection (see table 2).

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Table 2: Young adult participation in data collection methods

**Methods of Data Collection**

In an effort to remain mindful of the uniqueness all participants bring to the communicative research space, I adopted five methods of inquiry: 1) focus group interviews, 2) focus group with critical dialogue, 3) focus groups with photovoice, 4) individual interviews with participants and experts, and 5) participant observation and fieldnotes. Along with enhancing the validity of this research by gathering data though different methods, the variety was intended to offer an array of ways for young people to
share their stories through modes that were culturally relevant to them. Next, I offer a brief description of the methods.

**Focus Groups**

The focus group interview format was adopted throughout this study. Focus groups have been used successfully in research with young adults (Abrahamson, 2003; Smithson, 2003). I chose the focus group approach for a number of reasons. First, apart from a brief preliminary individual interview, focus group sessions took place early in the research process. I believed young people may appreciate the group setting as opposed to starting with a lengthy one-on-one interview in which they may feel pressured to speak. Further, I hoped that the group format would allow participants to listen to each other and help each other articulate their ideas. Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, and Zukin (2002) write: “As guided conversations, focus groups allow the participants to discuss ideas in their own language, rather than forcing them to adjust to the framework of the researcher” (p.190).

I chose focus groups mindful of their limitation as a method of inquiry, particularly the risk of conformity among participants (Porcellato, Dughill, & Springett, 2002). My experience as a focus group researcher (Brann-Barrett, 2005; Brann-Barrett and Rolls, 2004) and my fifteen years experience as a small group facilitator taught me that it is impossible to entirely eliminate the risk of conformity. Still, vigilant attention to nonverbal visual and vocal cues can help researchers determine when participants might feel pressured to agree with the dominant views of the group -- something that I considered

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12 Along with the critical dialogue and photovoice focus groups, question and answer focus groups were periodically conducted to clarify information previously shared by participants.
when analyzing the data. At the same time, it is possible that participants change their views through a focus group discussion which is a dynamic characteristic of focus groups communication. Researchers can gain valuable insights by noting how participants confirm and challenge their own perspective throughout the focus group process.

The fact that focus group participants knew each other prior to the group interview was recognized as a potential benefit and limitation (Morgan, 1993). Rapport building may be less of a concern when focus group participants know each other, as was the case for this study. At the same time, 'familiarity' may pose challenges for facilitators. For example, participants' relationships outside of the focus group may make them reluctant to speak about particular issue in front of each other. Accordingly, I was observant throughout sessions, noting participants' nonverbal cues and ensuring that all group members had opportunities to speak. Further, during one-on-one interactions with participants, I always asked them if they wanted to respond to any issues raised during the focus groups or if they had any additional thoughts regarding the focus group subject matter that they would like to discuss in private.

**Critical Dialogue**

One method of data collection employed was focus group discussions using a technique known as critical dialogue. Pasco (2000) describes critical dialogue as:

...structured discussions that engage participants in topics related to their own experiences. Critical dialogues aim to reduce the presence of the researcher in

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13 For example, I watched for cues that indicated participants wanted to speak and if they appeared to be reluctant to interject I would wait for a brief break in the conversation and directly ask participants if they had any comments.
discussions by focusing the participants' attention on media that is relevant and meaningful to the participants and focuses on elements in media that have direct application to the conditions and ethical situations the participants may have encountered on the streets, in their homes, and at school (p. 32).

Possible media may include art, film, video, short stories, and photography as well as digital and technological imaging. In this research, music and song lyrics were used to stimulate discussion among participants regarding their experiences of social and economic health in their community.

Two focus groups (one all male and one all female) were formed. Given that one area to be examined through this research was the impact of gender on social and economic health I decided that dividing the focus groups along gender lines may help foster an atmosphere for such dialogue. It also provided a straightforward way to divide the groups. A third session with only two participants, one male and one female was conducted following a request by one of the participants who had not been available for an earlier session. I conducted all of the sessions. In keeping with the critical dialogue technique, three songs that address life in small towns were selected as the discussion stimulants; Billy Joel's (1998) Allentown, John Mellencamp's (1985) Small Town, and Nickelback's (2005) Photograph (see appendix 4). They were also given a reflection handout (see appendix 5) to prompt consideration of how the lyrics in the song related to their lives in their small community. I read the reflection statements out loud at the beginning of the session and participants had the option to write down responses or to orally share their reflections. In all cases participants chose to orally

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14 There was not a strict intention to keep males and females apart. There were subsequent focus groups and group discussions that consisted of both females and males.
discuss their thoughts. Songs were played one at a time followed by discussion. When the discussion began to wane or when participants indicated they were ready, the next song was introduced followed again by discussion. The focus group sessions lasted approximately two hours and were audio taped. The third smaller session ran for approximately one hour and was not recorded at the participants' request. Extensive fieldnotes were recorded following each session that included attention to verbal and nonverbal cues, communication climate, and group dynamic.

It should be noted that discussions that emerged through critical dialogues were not entirely framed by the participants. As the researcher, I chose the media and message used to spark the critical dialogue and, as such, I influenced to a degree what emerged. Further, I adapted the technique slightly by preparing a reflection handout. I recognize this asserts more researcher influence than may be the original intent of the method. However, the technique is intended to reduce the presence of the researchers, not to remove their involvement entirely, which is impossible. I was mindful of the power I had to control the discussion. Accordingly, I consciously limited the questions I asked (in most cases they were simply clarification or probing questions). Further, the comments I made were often limited to paraphrasing what I was hearing. The following pieces of transcript offer an example of how paraphrasing and clarification were used in the focus groups.

**Participant One:** I planted trees in my yard, when we first moved there. We planted a few trees. And that was 11 years ago. When my house burned down we moved there and planted a few trees. And some of the trees that we planted are taller than the house. And that's only 11 years. When you look back, you
don't really see it growing. But if you leave and come back, everything will be completely different, in some sense. Like in that sense-

**Participant Two**: you feel like you missed out.

**Participant One**: I'm kind of making like a - I don't know what you'd call it-

**Tanya**: it's a metaphor or analogy for other things?

**Participant One**: Right! Everything else is growing. The humans are growing, the trees are growing, everything's getting bigger and better -- but everything's going down -- poverty...

Given that the critical dialogue technique was used with a small group of participants, I took on the role of a facilitator of discussion more so than as an interviewer. By taking this approach, it was my hope that traditional researcher-participants roles were shifted, if only slightly, and the ensuing dialogue felt more meaningful for the participants. Appendix 6 outlines the loosely followed format for the critical dialogue session.

**Photovoice**

Participants also engaged in an adaptation of a research technique known as photovoice. As described by Wang and Redwood (2001): “Photovoice is a powerful photographic technique that enables people to assess the strengths and concerns of their community and communicate their views to policy makers” (p.560). Participants are given cameras and asked to use photography and narrative to document their experiences, observations, and perceptions of their community. Photovoice is intended to give groups of people whose experiences are often excluded from 'official' accounts or whose stories are often told by someone else opportunities to determine and document how they want their
experiences and community to be portrayed. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) write: “By providing people in the community with cameras, photovoice makes it possible for them to: (1) record and reflect their community’s assets and returns, (2) discuss issues of importance to the community in large and small groups to promote critical dialogue and produce shared knowledge, and (3) reach policy makers” (p.560). It may be argued that photovoice participants still draw upon images and representations of their community and experiences that reflect dominant discourses that privilege certain groups over others. Accordingly, the potential ‘liberating’ potential of the method should not be over-emphasized. Still, it marks an acknowledgement that a variety of communication forms in addition to more ‘traditional’ approaches, such as one-on-one interviews, may offer research participants the chance to adopt modes of expression that are culturally relevant for them. Current literature on photovoice offer examples of photovoice projects (for example, Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchinson, Bell, and Pestronk, 2004; McIntyre, 2003) and descriptions of the photovoice process (see Strack, Magill, and McDonagh, 2004; Wang, 1999).

Photovoice is often employed as a method in participatory action research (PAR). Through this study I did attempt to create space for collaboration and shared meaning creation, however, this project did not ascribe to all of the tenets of PAR. Still, some similar concerns arose in my project. For example, Amsden and VanWynsberghe (2005) found that participants in their participatory research project questioned whether or not their work constituted ‘real’ research. Given how deeply conventional notions of research are entrenched in society, it is possible that photovoice participants may have similar doubts which could ultimately influence how they participate. For example, there were a
number of instances in this study in which participants claimed they did not know what they were 'supposed' to photograph. I sensed they wanted me to tell them. They had difficulty accepting that I believed they had the capacity to decide on their own what was socially and economically healthy or unhealthy and it was not something they could get 'wrong'. One way I addressed this issue was by going on a 'field trip' with some participants. They took me to some places in the community where they wanted to take photographs. The discussion that emerged during our hike was incredibly insightful and became a new layer of data collection. Participants also watched my reaction when they took pictures and were assured that I was not judging their choices. In a very short time they began to take photos without looking at me.

Caution should be exercised when claiming the emancipatory power of photovoice. Side (2005) notes that while photos can provide a starting point for discussion: “[D]ialogue is only the first step in enacting changes to a history of power imbalances and the material differences resulting from them; the situation also demands changes in policies, practices, and some would argue, requires reconfiguring the nation” (p. 324).

Ethical issues also underlie the photovoice method. Participants were asked to go out in their community to take photos. Accordingly, it was necessary to ensure that they were well informed about the ethical protocol to which they had to adhere, not just to ensure their own safety but to protect others in the community. Thus, as Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) emphasize: “...photovoice training never begins with camera instruction but with a group discussion about the use of cameras, power, and ethics, as well as the responsibility and authority conferred on participants with cameras” (p. 567). Hence,
it was critical that participants in this study understood that their work was part of 'real' research and their participation was conditional upon their willingness to accept the responsibilities associated with their work.\textsuperscript{15} For example, participants were directed not to take photos of people. This did limit the range of potential photos. Still, it was decided the process of obtaining subject consent was complicated and might deter potential participants.

Ten participants were each given a disposable camera over the course of two weeks. When they received the cameras I spent thirty minutes to an hour discussing ethical issues and the proper use of the camera. Participants were told to take photos of things in their community that they perceived as socially and economically healthy, unhealthy or somewhere between those two extremes. They were told not to include photos of people for the reason explained above. They were asked not to take photos that could place them in danger as the photo was being taken or at the hands of a person or people who might not want the photos taken. For example, they were told to consider the potential harm that could come to them or their families if they took photos of the homes of alleged drug dealers. These boundaries did have an impact on the findings of this research since people are an intricate part of participants’ experiences and perceptions of health. However, it was decided their safety and the safety and privacy of other citizens had to take priority. Further, there was ample opportunity, through other methods, for participants to address how and why people had an impact on their experiences and perceptions of health

\textsuperscript{15} For more in-depth consideration of ethical issues associated with photovoice, see Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001.
Once they received the cameras, participants were given a week or two to return them to me for film development. This proved to take approximately five weeks. Cameras were lost and had to be replaced, one camera did not work properly, and participants often forgot to return the cameras at the time requested. In one case, a participant told me he did not have a chance to take the photos of things that were healthy or unhealthy so then when he attended a celebratory function with his family he decided to use the camera for personal use. McIntryer (2003) notes that in her photovoice study, the ‘turn-around’ time with the cameras was much longer than anticipated. In other instances, participants asked for more cameras to take additional pictures -- a request that was always granted. Participants were encouraged to take some personal photos to keep for themselves. This was appreciated and, in fact, some participants asked for cameras for their personal use. I had purchased extras cameras in order to be able to grant these requests.

When cameras were returned, I had the photos developed and arranged two focus groups (one with the male participants and one with the female participants) which I conducted. When we came together, participants were given their photos and then asked to select two or three they would like to share with the group. They were invited to write or orally deliver a brief narrative about their photos. Again, all participants opted to verbally discuss their photos. These focus groups lasted approximately one and a half to two hours and were audio recorded.

“Photographs, Wang and Burris (1997) have suggested are relatively easy to gather, but they are much more difficult to situate and analyze” (Side, 2005, p. 324). Photographs that are referred to through participants’ narrative are exhibited in
subsequent chapters, yet as discussed later in this chapter, they were not documented and analyzed as stand alone data.

One-on-One Interviews

One-on-one interviews are a common way to obtain in-depth data (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Interviews were conducted with participants as well as youth and community professionals. The purposes and strategies of employment for young adult participant and expert interviews are discussed next.

Young adult participant interviews

Participants were invited to take part in two semi-structured interviews. First, all young adults participated in a short preliminary interview when they joined the study (see appendix 7). They provided basic information about themselves and were given a chance to ask any questions they had about the research. These interviews were approximately 30 minutes and they were audio taped when participants agreed. They also completed a data information sheet (see appendix 8).

Young adult participants were invited to participate in a second, one-on-one interview approximately three months into the study. While a semi-structured format was developed (see appendix 9), the issues focused upon depended on the individual being interviewed. I had spent a substantial amount of time with these participants and so many of the questions I intended to ask had already been answered. Thus, after piloting the format that I had developed, I approached each interview prepared to focus on areas I had determined from our previous interactions that deserved attention and on topics the participants wanted to address. For example, adequate housing was a
concern that emerged for a number of participants so I followed up on this issue during the individual interviews. Another participant was particularly focused upon leaving the island in search of work and care for extended family so these concerns were further addressed in the second individual interview. This approach is in line with many current approaches in qualitative interviews. As Fontana and Frey (2005) write: “The latest trends in interviewing have come some distance from structured questions; we have reached the point of the interview as negotiated text” (p. 716).

Most of these interviews were audiotaped, however, to accommodate the needs and requests of the participants, some were not taped or in certain cases only segments of the interviews were recorded. Individual interviews ranged from a half hour to two hours. Some of the shorter interviews were conducted with participants with whom I had engaged in numerous informal discussions.

**Expert interviews**

Expert interviews were conducted to further contextualize the social and economic circumstances and Northside youth culture of the particular demographic represented by the young people who participated in this study. I spoke both formally and informally with four people who worked with the young people who were involved with this study, with other young people from the community, and with disadvantaged youth in different locations across the country. Extensive notes were taken during and following these discussions. Because the discussion were often spontaneous and because I had extensive in-person, contact with these youth workers throughout the study, the interviews were not audio recorded as I was able to clarify, follow-up, and
probe on an on-going basis. As noted later, I do not identify youth workers due to confidentiality issues related to the workers and the youth involved in this study.

I also spoke in depth with the Cape Breton Regional Municipality's Chief of Police, Edgar MacLeod, who is significantly involved in addressing many of the barriers faced by young people involved in this research. I had less on-going contact with Chief MacLeod, hence, I chose to audio record his interview so I could review the conversation at later stages of the research.

Finally, I spoke with local labour historian, Dr. Don MacGillivray, who helped to provide a historical context for this study. He also shared a reading list of historical literature. Again, I was in contact with Dr. MacGillivray on more than one occasion and as I could seek clarification if necessary I chose not to audio record our conversations.

Expert interviews and discussions were often informal to semi-structured. Most meetings lasted an hour and a half to two hours. Some of these discussions were scheduled ahead of time while on many occasions they were impromptu discussions.

**Participant Observation and Fieldnotes**

Angrosino (2005) notes that observation is a cornerstone of social science research explaining that: "Social scientists are observers both of human activities and of the physical settings in which such activities take place" (p. 732). Participant observation was an important mode of data collection throughout this research study. Angrosino (2005) describes participant observation as being: "...grounded in the establishment of considerable rapport between the researchers and the host community and requiring the long-term immersion of the researcher in the everyday life of that
community" (p.732). For approximately three months in 2006, I visited the outreach centre where the participants spent much of their weekdays, for a few hours, three to four days a week. Following this intense period of time together, I continued to interact with participants at the centre for another six months. These visits involved interaction between me and various participants and there were often specific purposes for our being together. For example, I helped a number of participants prepare for presentations they were asked to make to local, provincial, and federal officials involved in youth program development. On another occasion, I helped participants develop a musical slideshow. I provided a day long interpersonal communication session for participants. Along with these kinds of interactions, I would often arrive at the centre to pick up or drop off cameras for the photovoice activity, to attend board meetings or to meet with staff and would have impromptu and in-depth discussions with participants. Sometimes I would drive participants where they needed to go and interesting and insightful conversations would ensue.

In many instances, our conversation constituted what Fontana and Frey (2005) call unstructured interviewing. They suggest the goal of unstructured interviewing is: "...to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry" (p. 706). While our discussions were not intended to be interviews, points of interest often arose and I would use the opportunity to explore with the participants various ideas, insights, and experiences that shed more light on the social and economic circumstances of their lives in their community and their visions for the future. Fontana and Frey (2005) further note that participant observation and interviewing often interlink in the field of research.
Apart from brief phone conversations, usually made to schedule meetings, I did not interact with the participants outside of their time at the centre. Hence, the observations I made reflect their lives in the context of the youth outreach centre.

Fieldnotes play a central role in the nature of ethnographic research (Wolfinger, 2002). After each interaction with participants, I recorded extensive fieldnotes, noting the communication climate during the interaction, verbal and nonverbal messages, points of discussion, and my personal responses to the experience as they related to this research study. Here is an example:

We listened to [the song] Allentown, and it came to the line: “Every child had a pretty good shot, to get at least as far as their old man got”. At that point [one participant] took his eyes away from the lyric sheet, shook his head vigorously and looked as though the singer was standing in front of him, speaking directly to him as he sang. [The participant] shook his head and then started to gesture as though he was playing the instruments in the song. Music is a big part of [the participant’s] life. He has told me that before. That line struck a chord and he seemed to respond to it by becoming part of the song. He was feeling the music. I can understand that. I feel music, too. Later he spoke to that line and the intensity of his emotion as he emphasized its impact on him was not surprising to me. He spoke loudly, at a fast pace -- except when he was pounding out syllables to make a point. He looked directly at me as he spoke. He told me he could never dream to get as far as his working class father had got. The others nodded like they really understood what he was saying. I sensed this was something they all had felt at some time or another. Funny, after [the participant]
said his piece about that line he started drumming on the table. He seemed to go
back into the song (Fieldnotes, July, 2006).

Fieldnotes were recorded after interviews and focus groups, during the transcription
process, and after meetings with staff and the outreach centre board. Fieldnotes also
included preliminary analyses of what was emerging from the data being gathered and,
in some instances, ties to theories that were being used to inform the study.

**Processes of Analyses**

Data collection and analysis often occurs simultaneously in the qualitative
research process. Hence, it is somewhat misleading to suggest a chronological process
of analysis as it is on-going throughout the course of research. Still, transcription,
coding, and interpretation describe the key phases that were employed in an effort to
begin to make sense (Denzin, 1994) of the data gathered.

**Transcription**

More than the construction of a written record, the process of transcription is an
intricate component of data analysis (Bird, 2005). I opted to create a verbatim transcript
of all of the recorded interviews and focus group sessions in which I engaged with the
young adult participants. Informed from my work within the field of speech
communication, the process of transcription moved beyond recording verbal utterances.
Because I had conducted the interviews and focus groups, I was better able to include
visual (such as facial expressions, hand gestures, and eye behaviour) and vocal (vocal
silences, intonations, and emphasis) indicators that accompanied the verbal language.
Such nonverbals (as they are sometimes called) helped to contextualize the verbal dialogue. I made extensive fieldnotes following each session in which I would describe the communication climate and the group dynamic in the case of focus group sessions.

**Coding**

Coding constitutes the stage in which researchers begin to organize the complex and seemingly unruly sets of data that has been gathered (Morgan, 1997). As Charmaz (2005) contends: “Coding gives researchers analytic scaffolding on which to build. Because researchers study their empirical materials closely, they can define both new leads from them and gaps in them” (p. 517). Interview and focus group transcripts and researcher fieldnotes served as the primary documents for coding. Participant photographs provided a non-discursive articulation of social and economic health. They were presented in conjunction with verbal narratives and explanations given by participants as recorded in the photovoice focus group transcripts. Accordingly, while the photos are included in the data they are not analyzed as separate units, rather they are considered in the context of the participants’ narrative.

In keeping with the research questions that focus on young adults’ experiences and perceptions of social and economic health, expert interviews were not included in the data sets for coding. Instead, expert interviews were used to describe the historical and present-day community and contextualize the research and findings that emerged from what young adult participants’ shared.

The computer analysis software program Atlas ti 5.2 was used to assist in coding descriptive data. Computer-assisted qualitative analysis software has become a more
commonly-used tool in ethnographic work (Fielding, 2003) with Atlas ti considered one of the better programs (Lewis, 2004). As primary researcher, interviewer, participant observer, and transcriber I became extremely familiar with the data sets and was able to identify potential themes that I had noted through the data collection and transcription phases. Considering my research questions and starting with these themes, documents were extensively examined, first, using an autocoding feature of Atlas ti 5.2. Documents were searched for each code along with a list of expressions, key words and phrases related to that code. Once a code, or reference to it, was retrieved I was able to read through the quotation and decide whether or not to attach the code to the text.

Throughout this initial coding process, some general codes were narrowed to become more specific and in other cases codes were combined to better reflect participants' experiences and perceptions. For example the general code, social networks, was broken down into three specific codes; formal social networks, family networks, and informal social networks. The codes safe, affordable housing and safe neighborhoods overlapped significantly and were so deeply enmeshed it was decided to combine the two to create the code, safe, affordable housing and neighborhoods. Each time codes changed, the documents were analyzed again to ensure codes were attached to the proper text.

Comments describing each code were also written and two files were created. The first was entitled codes and comments and the second was called codes and quotations. Further, a visual display of all codes (a feature of Atlas ti 5.2) reflecting participants' perceptions of the codes connectedness with each other was created and was referred to regularly throughout the analysis process. The codes and quotation file
was routinely read with the original transcript to ensure all quotations were understood in the context of delivery. This process continued until new codes no longer appeared and it was decided that a level of analytical saturation had been reached.

**Interpretation**

All codes, comments, and quotations were re-read and themes were clustered around two overarching categories; social health and economic health. While significant overlap did exist, the definitions of social and economic health put forth in this study were re-examined and themes were placed within the category in which they were best-suited. Still, overlaps were always noted and the tentativeness of the placement was acknowledged. For example, the theme, *affordable, safe housing* was listed as a social health theme but its interconnectedness with economic health was also addressed. All themes, including but not limited to drugs, formal social networks, education, and economic comfort, were recorded in a *final descriptive themes file*. The descriptive themes were then examined and analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework of this study. Chapters five, six, and seven reflect the analytical interpretations of the themes.

**Withdrawal from the Field**

The completion of nine months of data collection did not mark a complete withdrawal from the research field. Because I held a seat on the board at a youth centre utilized by a number of the young adult participants, I continued to see them periodically. However, I no longer engaged in participant observation. I did continue to
interact with participants informally and was available to provide interpersonal and public communication workshops and professional communication advice upon request.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality was discussed on an on-going basis throughout the research process. I reintroduced the subject each time I met with participants individually and in focus groups. I also informed participants that while I could ask focus group participants not to discuss comments made by fellow group members during the sessions, I could not guarantee confidentiality in those settings. Pseudonyms, except for two expert interviewees, were used in all documents associated with this research. In this dissertation, comments and quotations are simply attributed to ‘a participant’. When the gender of the participant is significant to the discussion, that information is provided. This approach also helped to address an issue of confidentiality on another front. This study took place in a small community where, in many cases, people are identifiable by their stories. In addition to the steps mentioned above, I refrained from including material shared by participants that might make them entirely identifiable and perhaps place in them vulnerable positions in their community. Further, as already noted, I consciously refrained from using the names of expert interviewees who were youth workers in an effort to avoid any potential backlash upon them or the organizations that they represent and to further protect the identity of the young adult participants with whom some of the expert interviewees work. I recognize that this might have a limiting effect on the analysis of the study. Nevertheless, to honor confidentiality, it was a necessary constraint.
Attention to Interpretive Legitimation and Credibility

It is argued that: "...the social world is an interpreted world, not a literal world (Altheide and Johnson, 1998, p. 284). From this perspective: "As long as we strive to base our claims and interpretations of social life on data of any kind, we must have a logic for assessing and communicating the interactive process through which the investigator acquired the research experience and information" (p. 284). Throughout the entire research process, I took steps to ensure this work was a legitimate and credible account of the social and economic health experiences and perceptions of the participants in the study. This chapter has served as an-depth look at those practices. I employed multiple methods of data collection attempting to create numerous avenues for young adults to articulate their experiences and perceptions and for me to cross check and further negotiate with participants my understandings of their stories. I also offered to share transcripts and audio recordings of individual interviews. However, participants expressed little interest in reviewing such materials. One possible reason is that participation in this study was not a high priority for the youth participants. They face challenges and crises on a day to day basis related to their basic needs. Thus, I was grateful and impressed by their enthusiastic participation when they were with me. However, when we were not together, I believe this study was somewhat removed from their minds. I considered bringing transcripts for them to look at with me, however, for many participants literacy was an issue. Even though they may be able to read the transcript they were conscious of how long it would take or that someone would be watching them as they read. In fact, many were very uncomfortable when anything was
presented in paper form. Hence, whenever I was with participants, I took time to orally paraphrase comments, experiences, and ideas they had shared with me in past encounters. I also asked for verbal clarifications of some of their past statements.

Legitimation and credibility were given further attention in my attempt to provide insights regarding my communicative approach to the research, the reflexive approach adopted throughout this study and the process of writing the research. These are discussed next.

**Communicative Approach to the Research**

A critical approach calls for an interrogation of communicative research spaces where researchers and participants come together. Given the political nature of critical ethnography, Hannah Arendt’s views are worthy of consideration. As Bickford (1996) notes:

[Arendt’s] analysis leads her to an understanding of politics in which subjectivity and intersubjectivity-our sense of self and the presence of others-are profoundly yet paradoxically enmeshed. For Arendt, the character of political attention is shaped by the necessity of preserving this tension, thereby maintaining a world with space for the exercise of distinctively human capacities (p.56).

My communicative approach as a researcher in the context of this study was in part informed by some of Arendt’s ideas regarding interaction in political public spaces.

First, Arendt (1998) describes the world as the common space between people. She writes: “To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit
around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men [sic] at the same time” (p.52). Arendt presents a meaningful way for researchers to think about the critical process of ethnography. From this perspective the space between researchers and participants, not only draws them together but allows for distance to exist between them. Hence, one of my goals as a researcher moved beyond seeking commonality to honoring and communicating across distances between the research participants and me.

Second, and in keeping with the first point, Arendt (1998) speaks of the plurality and difference humans bring to the common space between them:

Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men [sic] were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood.

Signs and sounds to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants would be enough (p. 176).

When we engage with others, making room for our differences to be present becomes an important part of how we communicate. By focusing only on notions of shared-equality we ignore one central commonality among humans and a pivotal reason why we communicate – we are all different. Perhaps a reason we tend not to recognize distinctiveness in people is that, as Arendt argues, when we try to articulate ‘who’ people are we usually speak about what they are. In other words, we speak to
their characteristics and qualities which are often commonly shared among others. Perhaps this explains why it is so easy to draw conclusions of sameness, while knowingly or unknowingly ignoring the distinctiveness of people. Bickford (1996) contends: “To imagine that certain interests automatically give rise to certain opinions is to negate human plurality” (p.86). She also states:

...stereotypic perception imposes a mask whose effect is to blur and muffle individuality rather than let it sound through. The ‘who’ these masks keep hidden and inaudible is the self as citizen, as unique and opinionated human. If my membership in a group is the only lens through which I am perceived, then I cannot appear as a person with a unique story and singular opinions. The expression of human plurality is blocked by assumptions that I am simply a representation of others who look and sound like me” (p.101).

When I engaged with the study participants, I remained mindful that I must make room for our differences and similarities to be present as they were an important part of how we communicated and the relationships we formed. I resisted the temptation to assume I understood a view or opinion because I had similar experiences. I realized a response, on my part, such as ‘I understand’ may help to bridge the distance between the participants and myself. Yet, at the same time such a statement may shut down further discussion. Consequently, participants may not have an opportunity to disclose valuable insights that are unfamiliar to me because of our differences.

Third, Arendt (1998) claims that we can only know who a person is through their unique story made up of their action and speech. But this story is not created by the person alone. It is created in a web of relations with others. She writes:
The disclosure of the 'who' through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt. Together, they start a new process which eventually emerges as the unique life story of the newcomer, affecting uniquely the life stories of all those with whom he comes in contact (p.184).

With this in mind, I acknowledged the role my own presence, along with the presence of other participants, played in the experiences and perceptions shared by each participant.

Aware of these ideas, I came to the research space for this study mindful of the connections between people, their stories, and the world between them. From this perspective, critical inquiry becomes less about 'getting the story right'. Instead, I set out to seek out innovative ways to listen with the intent to try to understand in an effort to find meaningful ways to work with participants.

I took comfort in Arendt's thinking as I approached the research space for my doctoral work. I hold a unique insider-outsider position in the community where I conducted my research. I live on Cape Breton Island and my familial connections here go back many generations. I am part of the history, the cultures, and the heritage, and I embody this community. In a region where expressions of skepticism of people 'from away' are not uncommon, my status as a 'local' helped as I began to develop trustworthiness with my participants. In time they saw me as someone who is familiar with the social and economic fabric of the community and therefore as someone who would mindfully and respectfully contextualize their experiences and perceptions.
Yet, as Arendt teaches, our greatest commonality is our difference. While my participants and I may all be from this economically disadvantaged community we have moved through this reality along our own paths. Class and educational levels were two significant differences my participants and I brought to the research space. Further, while I attempted to trouble the traditional notions of power in the research relationship, they continue to exist on some levels as other doctoral researchers have noted (Reid, 2004; Maguire, 1993). My goal was not to dissolve these differences, but to remain mindful throughout the entire research process of their existence and how they were influencing and shaping how I thought, critiqued, understood, responded, and now present what I learned with my participants. In other words, I adopted a reflexive approach to this research.

Reflexive Approach to Research

The reflexive nature of critical ethnography calls for: "examining researcher bias and discovering researcher value orientations" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 328). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) assert that reflexivity "means that serious attention is paid to the way that different kinds of linguistic, social, political, and theoretical elements are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted, and written" (p.5). Elements of the process of critical inquiry that I reflexively considered throughout my work include: 1) language, listening, and the communicative process, 2) social context, and 3) theories. While they are presented here as separate categories, significant overlap exists among them as they relate to the greater context of the research process.
Language, Listening, and the Communicative Process

Reflection on language is a fundamental element of reflexive research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). Even though language was not a strict unit of analysis in this study, this research relied heavily on the sharing of experiences and perceptions in the research space. Hence, a mindfulness of how language was used to gather, describe, and present what was shared was important. By adopting a variety of methods, including photovoice and critical dialogues, I attempted to employ culturally relevant modes of language expression. Throughout the research process, I engaged in a critical examination of the ways participants communicated their stories. I was mindful of limits placed on their narratives by language and literacy level. I acknowledged the challenges faced when participants and I attempted to negotiate and construct meaningful understandings of one another.

The reflexive consideration of language adopted throughout the research process makes explicit and gives attention to the role of listening in the communicative process of inquiry. Including listening in a reflexive look at language is not intended to minimize or exclude the act of speech as a central element in this inquiry or to privilege one aspect over the other. The tendency for lop-sided reflection is reduced by adopting the position that speaking (discursively and non-discursively) and listening are interwoven practices that inform and shape one another and an understanding of language. The employment of a variety of research methods that drew upon numerous media created a space where such a rigorous reflexive attention to listening and speaking could be accommodated. Participants had multiple avenues through which to stimulate and articulate their experiences and perceptions and I was given ample
opportunity to listen to and negotiate with them a deeper understanding of expressions of thought.

Social Contexts

Merleau-Ponty states that the world of perception is to a great extent unknown to us. He referred to it as the world which we tend to forget (Merleau-Ponty, 2004b). Mindfulness of the world of perception is critical to the process of inquiry as who we are, is rooted in and, simultaneously, shapes that world. Thus how we speak, listen, understand, and co-construct meaning with others emerges from our place in the world. Accordingly, reflexive consideration of social, cultural, and historical positions that my participants and I embody were important elements of this inquiry. For this reason, a chapter of this dissertation focuses on elements of the social and economical history of the community in which this research took place and where the participants and I call home. Further, as I discussed earlier, I attempted to deepen my understanding of the social and cultural realities of the research participants by becoming more directly involved in the youth culture on the Northside as a community volunteer and by interviewing and spending time not just with participants but with the people who work with them on a daily basis.

I cannot ignore the social context I bring to the research space, and still, reflexivity does not mean I make my own position the focal point of study. Bickford (1996) notes we cannot bracket out our own positions as listeners in the inquiry process, and still we can be prepared to place them in the background and allow the positions of those to whom we listen to come to the forefront. Of importance, is that the
self in the other-self relationship is not ignored, just shifted (Bickford, 1996). No matter what is done or not done, said or not said, I did, by my presence in the research relationship, influence how participants constructed their stories and I was influenced by what they say and did. This is because, as Merleau-Ponty (2004a) teaches, the self is ever present in how we and others are perceiving and understanding and this holds true in the inquiry process. Hence, researchers are part of a participants’ story at that moment in time. Reflexivity becomes a researchers’ opportunity to think about the empowering and perhaps disempowering ways their presence is shaping and being shaped by the inquiry process.

Theories

The process of reflexivity goes beyond researchers critically examining their own biases and assumptions. They must be willing to consider the underlying assumptions embedded in the theories that inform their work. Foley and Valenzuela (2005) suggest: “For most critical ethnographers, in a class society marked by class, racial, and sexual conflict, no producers of knowledge are innocent or politically neutral” (p. 218). Yet, the assumptions from which theoretical biases emerge may not always be explicit. As such, research may be founded upon theories that privilege dominant values and norms while marginalizing others. Hence, critical ethnographers must tread cautiously and reflexively with the theories that inform their research, acknowledging imbedded ideologies, beliefs, and values.

It is important to determine whose voices create theories and knowledge and whose voices are prevented from doing so (Code, 1995). Bourdieu advocates a form of
reflexivity that emphasizes the influence of theorists' and researchers' academic fields on their interpretation of their research (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Premised on the notion that theory and empirical research are inter-related, his notion of reflexivity goes beyond researchers locating themselves in terms such as race, culture, and gender, suggesting that the theorists' greatest bias is that created by their location within the field of academics. The intent of this reflexiveness on academic fields is not to condemn scholars, but to more accurately frame the theories they develop.

Throughout the process of developing a theoretical framework for this research I attempted to remain critical of potential ethical and epistemological dilemmas that may undermine the purposes of this work. Along with critiquing the theories I used and considering how and why I pulled particular theorists' ideas together, I questioned the underlying assumption embedded in some of the literature that I investigated. Given the inter-disciplinary nature of this study I found myself faced with literature -- for example from within the fields of health and health promotion -- that were laden with some very particular notion of society, its citizens, and their responsibilities. As I noted earlier, many of the current theoretical approaches to health and healthy community that I investigated for my project, upon closer inspection, revealed neoliberal discourses. An uncritical application of such theories could lead to research based on the assumption that individualistic approaches to health and community are appropriate and serve the needs of all citizens equally. The opportunity to expose inequalities and to rethink how healthy communities are understood could potentially be lost. Throughout this research I continued to critically question the theories that informed this work and attempted to make explicit how they shaped the course of this study.
**Approach to Writing the Research**

Language is constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and the Self. Producing 'things' always involves value - what to produce, what to name the productions, and what the relationship between the producers and the named things will be. Writing things is no exception. No textual stage is ever innocent (including this one). Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but rather reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms. Social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a sociohistorical construction and, therefore, all mutable (Richardson and Adam St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960).

Accordingly, researchers' mindfulness and reflexive approach to the research process must be extended to the process of writing the research. The 'writing' of this work was not the 'final stage' in a linear sense. Instead, writing was embraced as Richardson and Adams St. Pierre (2005) refer to it as a *method of inquiry* that began with the conception of the idea and remained an active and intricate part of the thinking, studying, gathering, analyzing, and understandings dimensions of the research process. My early logs captured visions for the study, useful reading and resources, preliminary outlines, streams of consciousness, and critical reflections. Compiled fieldnotes were on-going observations, early analyses, points of contradiction and emerging themes. Chapter by chapter developments, crafted early in the project, evolved as tentative section headings became more concrete and were fleshed out with words, thoughts, citations and structure. These writing exercises served as the basis for discussion and cross-checking insights with participants and others in the ethnographic fields, along
with colleagues and advisors to provide opportunity to consistently attend to the legitimacy and credibility of the study and how it was presented.

It is in the act of reading and writing that insights emerge. The writing of work involves textual material that possesses hermeneutic and interpretive significance. It is precisely in the process of writing that the data of the research are gained as well as interpreted and that the fundamental nature of the research question is perceived. In a phenomenological sense, the research produces knowledge in the form of texts that not only describe and analyze phenomena of the lifeworld but also evoke understandings that otherwise lie beyond their reach. (Van Manen, 2006, p.715).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I outlined the methodological framework adopted for this study. I also describe the research field and the methods of data gathering and analysis. Finally, I discussed issues of legitimacy and credibility with focus on the ideas, theories and thinkers that helped to inform and influence my methodological approach to this study, and the process of writing this research. A recurring theme throughout this chapter has been the significance of contextualizing research. Hence, chapter four is an examination the historical context of the community in which this study took place.
CHAPTER FOUR: A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORICAL SKETCH

'I believe in education for action. I believe in telling children the truth about the history of the world, that it does not consist of the history of kings, or lords, or cabinets. It consists of the history of the mass of workers, a thing that is not taught in the schools. I believe in telling children how to measure value, a thing that is not taught in any school' -James B. McLachlan (Frank, 1999, n.p.).

As pointed out in chapter two, consideration of the historical reality of the community in which research is conducted can enrich understanding of participants' ideas, experiences, and perceptions. An historical account sheds light on participants' situation in the various social fields they occupy. Consideration of past experiences of working class Cape Bretoners can expose some of the social and economic realities that shape and are shaped by the community's inherited collective habitus (Bourdieu, 1990b) as it is lived out today. Finally, it can deepen understanding of the deeply rooted and historical nature of symbolic domination that participants embody.

Not intended to be a comprehensive history of industrial Cape Breton, in this chapter, I provide a social and economic historical sketch of Eastern Cape Breton communities, including the Northside. This is the area formerly referred to as industrial Cape Breton. Following a very brief early history, I focus more specifically on the twentieth century industrial conditions. Given the attention that is paid to gendered perspectives in this study, I also explore some of the gendered discourses that played out in the rhetoric and actions of the working class women and men in Eastern Cape Breton communities.
Cultural Expressions from Industrial Cape Breton

Rich cultural expressions of Cape Breton etched out in words, images, theatrics, and melody tell with great articulation and poignancy this island's tales. Cape Bretoners often choose artistic modes to articulate their experiences, beliefs, and opinions and much of the social and economic history touched upon in this chapter has been recorded through multiple artistic forums that tell these and other stories. A cultural history of Cape Breton Island that explores how artistic means were and are used to document this community is worthy of its own dissertations.

Frank (1985) suggests that popular cultural traditions such as oral storytelling and songs often served as a link between rural and ethnic traditions and industrial life in Cape Breton mining communities in the early twentieth century. Further, stories, songs, and poems created a space for critical responses to social and economic conditions and, coupled with other elements of the cultural traditions such as a unique Cape Breton humour, became defining characteristics of an emerging Cape Breton working class culture.

A discourse of resistance underlies many of the artistic works cited in this and subsequent chapters. And in many cases the messages are not subtle. For example, Dawn Fraser's work is presented in this chapter. Fraser was a popular Cape Breton poet in the 1920's yet he is relatively unknown today (Frank & MacGillivray, 1992). Caplan (1992) contends: "Fraser's stuff is two-fisted, face-to-face, and strong. No graduate school of English Literature will generate papers on what Dawn Fraser might have meant—he meant what he said, and people heard" (Caplan, 1992, p.vii) . To quote Frank & MacGillivray (1992) at length:
The oral tradition was still very much a part of the [local] culture and played an important part in preserving working class traditions and values. Fraser belonged to this tradition of storytelling more than to any literary school. He read his verse on the streets, at local union meetings, at parties and at the massive labour and political meetings at the Savoy and Russell Theatres in Glace Bay. His writings appeared in pamphlets, books, magazines and newspapers... Sometimes his outpourings were simply posted on a bulletin board at the main intersection in Glace Bay. For the workers of industrial Cape Breton, the strong and effective use of language -- a sharp tongue or a pointed pun -- was one of the weapons at hand. Sharing the principles and prejudices of his community, Fraser was able to articulate common feelings and tell a shared story, and he was an effective and popular presence in the industrial community (Frank & MacGillivray, 1992).

This discourse of resistance is also evident through generations of local music, theatre, literary and dramatic fiction, photography, and other visual arts and is in no way limited to those with Celtic roots. Hence, I intersperse this chapter with pieces of poetry, prose, and song in an effort to honor the storytelling traditions and to attempt breathe real life into this complex, passionate, enduring, and often tragic picture of one of the island’s many stories.
When people ask me where I am from, I most often say Cape Breton, not Nova Scotia. Perhaps in my mind I imagine Cape Breton as an entity on its own; in part due to the isolation Cape Bretoners often feel from the rest of the province and country and in part a result of the fierce pride I have in my rugged, weather beaten, majestically beautiful island (Tanya Brann-Barrett, Fieldnotes).
Cape Breton is an island in the North Atlantic Ocean (see illustration 1). It is part of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia attached to the ‘mainland’ by a causeway constructed in 1955. The native land of the Mi’Kmaq people, French European settlers arrived in Cape Breton in the early part of the eighteenth century. “As the original settlers of the [Atlantic region] land, the Mi’Kmaq were a constant presence in the lives of European fishermen, Acadian farmers, and colonial officials” (Wicken, 1994, p. 445). The French and the Mi’Kmaq people fostered healthy relations and were allies throughout early colonial history, as Cape Breton was a part of the territory that was a site of longstanding imperial rivalry between the British and the French. Of the positive relationship between the French and Mi’Kmaq, Wicken (1994) writes:

Those relationships, founded upon trading alliances, kinship ties, and ‘common’ religious beliefs made it possible for the French governor and his officers to meet and interact with Mi’ Kmaq sakamows and elders. In contrast, similar relationships between the English and Mi’Kmaq were few and as a result mistrust and suspicion characterized the relationship between the two people (p. 439).

French colonization continued throughout the eighteenth century. In 1763, under the Treaty of Paris, France yielded Cape Breton to the British who merged the island with the colony of Nova Scotia. Later, Cape Breton was made a separate British colony with Sydney named the capital. However Donovan (1990) notes that internal conflict and disinterest with Cape Breton in London, eventually contributed to the annexation of Cape Breton to Nova Scotia in 1820.
From Highland to Highland

Their great grand-parents, the MacDonalds, MacNeils, MacDonnells, MacPhersons, MacIntoshes, MacIsaacs, MacGillivrays and MacInnis' when they moved, moved in a boat, left one country for another, and moved as a family which in turn moved with a group. They left behind sheep, dogs, shelter and every heavy thing, but they took as much of the music, religion and literature as they could and they hoped, that whatever new they would acquire, they would keep what they landed with: each other and whatever was in their heads and hands (Currie, 1988, p. 5).

An influx of Scottish settlers immigrated to Canada in the early part of the nineteenth century. Many came as a result of the Scottish highland clearances -- a time in Scottish history when many renters were forced off the land where they lived and worked and their homes were torched. Between 1827 and 1832, Cape Breton saw the arrival of a recorded 7300 Scots while many more arrivals were not recorded (Hornsby, 1990). In fact, more Gaels came to Cape Breton from 1827 to 1832 than any other part of North America. By 1851, the population of the island was 55,000 and the number of Scottish immigrants exceeded the number of Acadians, Loyalists, and Irish by a two to one ratio (Donovan, 1990). During this time the Mi'Kmaq population across Nova Scotia continued to decline as it had in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. They experienced increased encroachment on their land and were denied access to emerging forests and waterways. Still they sustained an economy that included traditional hunting and fishing.
MacSween (2004) notes that in the mid-nineteenth century Gaelic was the first language spoken in most Cape Breton homes. However, she suggests that language barriers added to the island’s isolation. Because English was the language spoken by the dominant members of society, Cape Breton’s interests were rarely raised and considered in political circles. In fact, Donovan (1990) notes that the limited English spoken on the island was often given as a reason why politicians and other social figures did not visit Cape Breton. He writes: “Nova Scotia’s most articulate spokesmen, men such as Joseph Howe and Thomas Halliburton, rarely visited Cape Breton and thus failed to provide intellectual leadership for the island” (p. 21). Eventually, the Gaelic language began to die on Cape Breton Island. “When you steal a people’s language, you leave their soul bewildered” (O’Donohue, 1997, p.67).

Farming and fishing were central pillars in the Cape Breton economy by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, Donovan suggests that the demand for farm produce and fish was limited, particularly because the local economic structure lacked a solid industrial component. Hence, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the island experienced outward migration and a decline in immigration. Many young men left in search of work elsewhere -- a story that reproduced itself time and time again and one that lingers in the present and future of countless young people in Cape Breton today.

**A Burning Heart of Coal and Steel**

The end of the nineteenth century marks a point of significant industrial expansion on Cape Breton Island with the rapid growth of the island’s coal industry.
MacSween (2004) notes: “In 1901, provincial revenues from coal exceeded one million dollars. Beck notes that at the beginning of the twentieth century royalties from Cape Breton coal provided ‘the largest single source of provincial revenue’ (15)” (p. 37). Although coal mining actually has a much longer history in the region.

In any overview of Cape Breton’s history, it is imperative to emphasize coal mining for the industry has affected the livelihood of generations of Cape Bretoners. Although small in landward area, Cape Breton’s Sydney coalfield was Canada’s largest producer of coal for over two centuries. Until 1960 it produced approximately one-third of Canada’s annual production. Coal mining has touched the lives of most Cape Bretoners for there were over 70 mines developed in the Sydney coalfield through the years (Donovan, 1990, p. 22).

Coal mining sparked the development of shipping, lumbering, and steel industries and the prospects for the island looked good. The growth and potential of Cape Breton as a ‘booming’ region brought many former Cape Bretoners back to the island along with new immigrants from Eastern Europe, Italy, the Mediterranean, and the West Indies, not to mention the influx of Newfoundlanders from their own island. Further, as Donovan (1990) notes, many people migrated to industrial Cape Breton from other parts of the island. The population of the industrial region (Eastern Cape Breton) ballooned from 18,005 in 1890 to 57,263 in 1911 (Frank, 1980).

All were not treated equal among the new diverse populations. Crawley (1990) contends that: “Blacks, Italians, Eastern Europeans, and Newfoundlanders constituted the majority at the bottom of the social structure in Sydney” (p. 152). They worked for the lowest wages doing the least appealing jobs in the mines and steel plants. The
Mi'Kmaq people had their community relocated from Sydney's waterside in part to accommodate the local industries:

Membertou was not always situated at its present location. Many years ago, Membertou (formally known as the Kings Road Reserve) was located just off of Kings Road, along the Sydney Harbor. In 1916, the Exchequer Court of Canada ordered the relocation of the 125 Mi'kmaq; the first time an aboriginal community had been legally forced through the courts to relocate in Canadian history ("Membertou: Welcoming the world", About us section, para. 1, retrieved December 13, 2006 from http://www.membertou.ca/about_us.asp).

Gonzales (1981) suggests that the Mi'Kmaq were not afforded the same employment opportunities in the mining industry as the rest of the population purporting direct involvement in the mining and steel industry was somewhat irregular and limited to those located in the Sydney area. "The largest skilled area of [Mi'Kmaq] employment in the coal-iron industry occurred indirectly through artisan activities, manufacturing ax and pick handles" (p. 81).

'Soul' Ownership

"And the foreign-owned companies force us to fight...For our survival and for our rights..." (MacNeil, 1985, p.157). While the Maritimes did experience economic growth and development in the late nineteenth century, by the 1920's the industrial economy was showing cracks. Frank (1980) points out that this was, in part, a result of central Canadian control of the region's economy and the fact that no regional community came forth as an economic leader. He suggests a Marxist analysis of

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regional disparities experienced in the Maritimes is useful. From this perspective it is understood that regional inequality is an element of economic industrial capitalism. Under a free market system, power and control of the economy is centralized in the hands of a few. He writes: “Once the structure of an inter-regional market in goods, labour, and capital was established, relationships of domination and dependency emerged between regions. As the process continued, regional disparities deepened and the subordinate communities entered a cycle of capital deficiencies, population losses and economic powerlessness” (p. 111). Frank (1980) points to industrial Cape Breton as a glaring example of a place where the centralization of economic capital played a significant role in the exploitation of a region’s natural resources, in this instance the coal fields.

However, not only were natural resources exploited, so, too, were the people. During the early 1900’s, control of the mines and steel plants remained off-island while passing through different hands. MacSween (2004) notes that in 1920 the British Empire Steel Corporation (BESCO) consolidated all mining works across the province. Donovan (1990) writes:

Although the miners were predominantly Cape Bretoners, the mines were controlled by Americans or central Canadians. Since all of the mining towns were single industry towns, the fate of the community was dominated by outside interests. To ensure control of the development of mining towns, the mine owners purchased large tracts of land near the mine sites and built company houses for miners and their families. Since they also owned the company stores, supervised access to medical services, and controlled other social functions in
the towns, the coal companies could dictate the terms of life and work to an entire community (p. 23).

Penfold (1994) contends that the one company monopoly of Cape Breton industry contributed to the underdevelopment of the region.

The company store serves as an explicit example of the power relations between the company and the workers in the one-company towns. Workers purchased the goods they required at the company store and the costs were taken off their weekly pay checks. Poor wages and limited work ensured that in time families were severely indebted to the company. At the end of every work week, they received their pitifully, small wages along with an account known as a 'Bob-tailed Sheet,' which showed the total amount of deductions for rent, coal, light, water, doctor, hospital, church, blasting powder, and company store purchases of food and dry goods. More often than not, they were left with little or no wages after deductions, especially when employed on short time with only two or three days work each week. Their weekly pay sheets were dubbed Bob-tail Sheets because of the company practice of cutting off the tail end to show that the miner had no wages due after he used up all his earnings at the company store in credit during the week (Mellor, 1983, p. 14).

Further asserting its dominance, and the oppression of the workers, once families were in debt, the company would decide how much as well as what workers' families could purchase. As Penfold (1994) writes:

The latter power was especially pernicious, since it allowed store managers to refuse what he considered 'luxury' goods in favor of cheaper and less desirable
'necessities'. Staples such as milk, butter, fruits and vegetables were often refused (or sold in tiny qualities), while cornmeal and molasses were considered appropriate for credit customers (p. 32).

Standing the Gaff

In the year 2000, my faculty association voted to take strike action against our university. We were urged by our executive to 'Stand the gaff' as we stood on the highway tucked up against barrels of fire on frigid February morning after morning after morning. The local labour unions supported us en mass but it was the miners who I remember the most. They taught us how to strike. The sheer determination in their eyes and conviction in their voices convinced me that they understood the striker's mind. They embodied the spirit of every miner gone before them who fought for the basic rights of survival for their families and who paid dearly, more than I ever would, for their action. Together with them we stood the gaff, each day becoming stronger, more assured, and enmeshed with our island's history. Never again would I dismiss their class actions as anachronistic. I learned Cape Bretoners have stood the gaff for a very long time.

For five weeks I simply had the honor to take my turn 'on the line' (Tanya Brann-Barrett, Fieldnotes, August, 2006).

Given the low wages that the company consistently tried to cut, working conditions, and control exerted over people's lives by the company it is little wonder that

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18 During the miners' strike of 1925, a company official claimed miners would eventually give up because they could not 'stand the gaff'. When asked to define 'gaff' he described it as privation and hunger. Determined to prove him wrong, miners claimed the slogan 'Stand the gaff' as their own. It is still used today to describe Cape Bretoners' determination and ability to withstand social and economic adversity.
Cape Breton's industrial history is riddled with labour discontent and actions. In the early part of the 1900's miners and steel workers took strike action on numerous occasions. And while I may claim to have experienced 'walking the line' my hardship pales in comparison to the experiences of the Cape Breton miners and steelworkers in the early 1900's. Strikers were often thrown out of their company homes in the dead of winter, refused credits at the company stores, and left to live in tents and watch their families literally starve. Striking workers were commonly blacklisted and the leaders were seldom rehired after strikes. If they were allowed to work, hours were most often reduced and pay never enough to support a family. Further, workers could not count on the provincial or federal governments for assistance as they most often supported the company and failed to provide adequate relief for starving workers and their families.

The complexity of the island's labour history has been extensively studied, described, researched and analyzed (for example, see Donovan, 1990; Frank, 1999; MacGillivray, 1980). The particular brutality leveled at workers and their families by the company, internal division among workers and unions at various points in history, the role of union leaders such as James B. McLachlan, and the numerous strike actions taken by workers are critical aspects of the labour stories. I could not begin to do them justice in one segment of one chapter. Instead, I present a brief snapshot of some events that occurred during the mining strike of 1925 in order to provide a greater sense of the oppression and victories that are embedded in Cape Breton’s social and economic culture.

In 1924, BESCO attempted to force miners to agree to a twenty percent wage cut. At the time miners were earning approximately $3.65 a day and working two or
three days a week. Workers, already underpaid and given little work, refused to accept the demand and the company further limited working days for some of the more militant mine locals in an effort to force them to accept BESCO's conditions. The provincial government showed little concern for the people of Cape Breton and the federal government often denied support contending it was a provincial issue.

His name was Eddie Crimmins
And he came from Port aux Basques,
Besides a chance to live and work
He had nothing much to ask;
No, not a dream he ever had
That he might work and save --
Was quite content to live and die
And be a working slave.
And yet, he starved, he starved, I tell you,
Back in nineteen twenty-four,
And before he died he suffered
As many have before.
When the mines closed down that winter
He had nothing left to eat,
And he starved, he starved, I tell you,
On your dirty, damned street.

The papers told of how the prince
Had caught a little cold,
And how the princess' youngest kid
Was nearly four years old;
Such news is featured foremost
In every yellow sheet,
But they don't tell when workers die
Standing on their feet;
Standing on their feet because
Nowhere to lay their head.
No, such news ain't featured much --
I bet you never read
How for days young Crimmins
Wandered round the street,
And how a half-froze apple
Was the last he had to eat.

Too poor to buy, too proud to beg,
He sunk down like a log,
You never threw the lad the crust
You'd throw a lonely dog.
Oh Capital! oh Capital!
You've an awful debt to pay—
Oh Capital, I hope it's true
There is a judgment day;
And when the great judge calls you up,
May I be there to see,
And if he wants a witness
I hope he calls on me.
If I have wings, I'll gladly fly,
If not, I'll use my feet,
And then I'll tell how Crimmins died
Upon your damned street (Fraser, 1994, p. 3-4).

In March, 1925, the company cut off all credit to miners at the company stores. This move breached an earlier agreement between BESCO and the workers that credit would not be entirely terminated. The union demanded credit be provided and the locals that had seen their work days slashed (to six or seven a month) have their normal number of days increased. If these demands were not met, one hundred percent strike action would be taken. The demand was ignored and on March 6, 1925 thousands of miners walked out of the mines.

The ensuing strike was brutal and violent. For example, in the midst of a heat wave in June, 1925, the company cut off electricity and water to the town of New Waterford. Townspeople had to create a human brigade to bring buckets of water from a nearby well into the town. Demands from the town’s mayor to resume power to the town were ignored by the company and the provincial and federal government failed to intervene on behalf of the workers and their families. Hence, the workers decided to take the matter into their own hands. Following one short lived attempt to take over the
power supply station in New Waterford an even larger group gathered to address the
dire situation. Workers came from Sydney, Sydney Mines, and Glace Bay and plans
were made to contact provincial and federal governments to demand their intervention.

In the meantime, a troop of the company's mounted police stormed the main
street in New Waterford attacking and beating people. Women and children were
chased with clubs and whips. Enraged miners retaliated with a fierce vengeance as
they set out to overtake the power station. Initially, they were met with mounted
company police firing guns and it appeared as though the miners would not be able to
sustain their fight. However, the miners and their wives and children fought
aggressively. Police were pulled and yanked from their horses and severely beaten.
Many of the miners were severely wounded, and one unarmed worker, William Davis\(19\),
was shot dead by the company police:

The police fired over 300 shots. A policeman bore down on the 5 foot 3 inch,
150-pound Davis; as he struggled to turn the horse away another policeman shot
him in the heart. He was dead within five minutes. Within ten minutes the police
were in full retreat, leaving behind many wounded (MacGillivray, 2004, Dictionary
of Canadian Biography Online, para. 4, retrieved April 16, 2007 from

During the riots that ensued, company police were held as prisoners and
company property was destroyed. This included the looting and burning down of
company stores. Canadian armed troops were called in on June 12 and they stayed

\(19\) Following Davis' death, miners declared no Cape Breton miner would ever again enter a mine on June
11, the anniversary of his shooting. These words were honored. Still today, Davis Day is a day of
mourning in Cape Breton mining towns. And while mines no longer operate, schools are closed and most
local businesses do not open in remembrance of William Davis and all miners who lost their lives in the
mines.
until the strike ended in August, 1925. A new provincial government helped broker a deal. However, workers were still forced to accept a 6 to 8 percent wage cut. As for the company stores, they were never rebuilt.

This brief picture of the deeply complicated strike of 1925 offers just a glimpse into some of the circumstances surrounding the lives of workers in Cape Breton in the early 1900’s. This strike was one of many. BESCO had assumed it could generate a surplus by reducing wages of its workers. But Frank (1980) points out that: “The outstanding feature of industrial relations in the coal-fields in the 1920’s was the tenacity of the coal miners resistance to wage reductions” (p. 123). And although the Cape Breton industrial workers did continue to endure wage cuts it can be argued that they also demonstrated that they could ‘stand the gaff’. Cape Breton miners played a major role in breaking down the monopoly BESCO had over the coal industry and the control the company had over miners’ lives, evident in the company’s collapse in 1928. As the title of one documentary on industrial Cape Breton in the 1920’s so poignantly states: “They didn’t starve us out” (Kipping, 1991). Perhaps it is that element of the miners’ habitus I observed on my own picket line 75 years after the 1925 strike.

The Bosses couldn't stand the gaff --

Oh, let me write their epitaph!

Let's see, now -- how should I begin?

Here lies a monster, born of sin,

Of sin, corruption, fraud, and worse—

Adieu, adieu, Cape Breton's curse (Fraser, 1994, p. 55).
Gender Relations

I've been a miner all my life; I work in Caledonia.

I had nine kids from a good strong wife but one died of pneumonia.

Now we only got the eight, some big and some are little.

It takes most of every cent I make; to buy them milk and vittles.

Cause I'm a plain old miner boy, a tough hard workin' miner boy.

I have a few on Saturday night and I sleep all day on Sunday.

Sunday night we go to town to hear our preacher Parson Brown.

I'll be goin' down that ole mine shaft when the whistle blows on Monday

(Campbell, 1985, p. 7).

Attitudes and actions of the working class women and men in early twentieth century Cape Breton mining towns also provide a context from which to begin to explore some of the gender and class discourses that have played out in these communities -- discourses that can provide insight into how gender relations are negotiated today. Penfold (1994) contends that: "...the work culture of the mine was deeply imbued with gendered images" (p. 24). In this section, some of those gender images are explored. Specific focus is given to dominant gendered responsibilities of miners and their wives in the early part of the twentieth century as they are tied to labour class struggles.

Masculine Discourses

Cape Breton miners were referred to as 'the men'. And the initiation into life as a miner was in many ways synonymous with entry into manhood. Penfold (1994)
suggests that becoming a miner not only involved the learning and acquisition of trade
skills but the development of the gendered characters of a miner that included strength,
independence, and courage. Further, a miner was the breadwinner of his family. Of
particular interest is the way in which the working class struggles were intimately tied to
the notion of men’s family responsibility. Penfold (1994) notes: “...working-class
grievances on a whole array of issues were defined in terms of the miner’s concern for
his family and his role as the sole breadwinner” (p. 25). Penfold (1994) notes that
miners measured their standard of living in relation to what was referred to as ‘a living
wage’. A living wage was one that enabled workers to go beyond providing basic
necessities to their families allowing them to ensure their families were comfortable and
content. A living wage assured not just survival but a sense of well-being and social and
economic comfort for miners’ wives and their children. A living wage also ensured
miners’ wives would not have to work outside the home. However, the notion of the
living wage did not acknowledge the un-waged work done by women in the homes that
played a significant role in ensuring the ‘comfort and contentment’ of the family. The
workers’ ability to be the sole waged providers and to establish a comfortable standard
of living for their families was inextricably linked to notions of manhood. Given the
meager wages earned by miners and the abject poverty many of their families faced, it
is difficult not to wonder about the psychological cost workers paid for having lived most
of their lives without ever obtaining the living wage they so closely coupled with their
sense of responsibility for their families. It may however help to explain, the ‘tenacity’ of
the miners, as described by Frank (1980), to resist wage reductions.
Penfold (1994) further points to the link between gender and class. He writes: “Because manhood was tied to the mine, to the labour process and to wages, a propensity to act in class ways was an important test of manhood for miners. In this context ‘real men’ were defined as those who maintained solidarity with their fellow workmen” (p.26). During strikes, union members were urged to be ‘real men’ and stand up to the company and act in solidarity with their fellow workers. Those who did not were often accused of having ‘no manhood’ (Penfold, 1994, p. 26).

Penfold contends, however, that gendered discourses as they were tied to class ideology were multiple and not static. They often collided and overlapped and how they played out in practice depended on the different contexts. One can look at the looting of the company stores as an example of two seemingly competing notions of manhood. The looting of the stores and taking of goods can be interpreted as a sign of manhood in that workers were taking back what they had been unjustly denied. Further, they were doing whatever they had to do to feed their starving families; perhaps responding to their ethic of family responsibility. Another discourse of manhood reflects those who refused to ‘steal’ what they did not own. Their ethic and honesty prevented them from taking part in the looting. Their actions, though apparently in opposition to the first, may be interpreted as another, yet I suggest, overlapping, display of manhood.

Feminine Discourses

My mother called. She and my grandmother had gone to see the film Margaret’s Museum the night before. It was set in the mining town of Glace Bay where my grandmother grew up. Mom said grandma was angry that they portrayed the
women and their homes as dirty, “We were poor but we weren’t dirty”.

Cleanliness was worn like a badge of honor by my grandmother (Tanya Brann-Barrett, January, 2004).

Varying discourses of class and femininity also existed in the Cape Breton industrial communities in the early twentieth century. For example, Penfold (1994) contends that feminine images were often used as a way to depict class enemies. Constructions of the image of women included that of the nagging wife who dictated her husband’s action making it difficult for him to engage in labour action. “In a particularly dramatic style, scabs were described as being victims of ‘feminine domination’, a circumstance that was bad enough in the home, but inexcusable in matters of class” (p. 27).

Another image of femininity described the female as the needy victim. From this perspective, women were depicted as unable to withstand the suffering endured during labour action. Such an image fed a discourse of femininity that described working class men who did not support class labour action as ‘weak sisters’ among the workers. Penfold (1994) writes:

Masculinity was thought to dispose one naturally toward loyalty to the working class and no one with the attributes of true manhood was thought to be a threat to working-class solidarity. This was not the case with femininity. Though women were recognized as potentially class-conscious, many attributes associated with femininity were thought to constitute a threat to working-class solidarity. A man who was not class conscious was acting unnatural to his gender, while a woman behaving the same way was not (p. 30).
Such feminine discourses serve to strengthen the masculine discourse of the working class male as a strong, courageous breadwinner. Yet many practices and behaviours exhibited by the women in the early twentieth century mine towns suggest two other feminine discourses. I refer to these as 1) women as financier and 2) women as class activists. These discourses are not mutually exclusive and often existed together.

Sixteen feet to keep in shoes; sixteen Hands in mittens.

Mae gives ‘em all a dose of oil sometimes when she sees fittin’.

Mae makes their clothes from flour sacks and thinks she can mend over.

But you can see ol’ Robin Hood sometimes when they bend over.

(Campbell, 1985, p. 7).

In most working class households in Cape Breton women looked after the finances. In fact, most male workers admitted to little knowledge of the household budget. Given the extremely low wages and extended periods of no work, women had to learn to make do with little to nothing. When there was no money at all, it was the women who stood in the ‘relief line’ to wait for funds. In many cases, there was no money available. To ‘make ends meet’, Penfold (1994) reports that some women had small gardens and kept chickens for meat and eggs. Soup bones were reused as recipes had to be designed to last. The wives of the working class men were known for their creative ability to make clothes out of sacks and to reuse old articles of clothing such as the arms of sweaters for socks.

Penfold (1994) points out that these activities were critical to labour actions engaged in by the workers. For instance, the women’s ability to ensure the family had
some food and clothing enabled the men to strike. But some women were much more directly involved in class struggles. Their actions and rhetoric may be described as a discourse of class activism. During strikes, women engaged in verbal and physical violent action against company police and company hired strike breakers and took part in looting the company stores. A ladies auxiliary of the steelworkers union was formed in Sydney and some women in mining towns joined the Women’s Labour League which was tied to the Canadian Labour Party and the Women’s Department of the Communist Party of Canada. Penfold (1994) writes:

> The women of the district engaged in important activities in the name of the organized branch of their class community. They operated much like the Women’s Labour Leagues in other areas, concentrating on union support work, self-education and fundraising, but they also availed themselves of a degree of autonomy to map out areas of particular local concern (p. 39).

The women used social events and gatherings as opportunities to create spaces for women to not just share domestic ideas but to educate women in an effort to raise class consciousness and to fundraise for organization such as working-class relief groups and labour-friendly press. The League was vocal and spoke out at labour meetings, protests, and demonstrations.

Penfold’s examination of discourses of gender, as they were tied to class in the Cape Breton working class communities, exposes many ways that masculinity and femininity were lived out in practice. While by no means an exhaustive list, recognition of such discourses is useful in subsequent chapters in which present-day gender identities in these same communities are considered.
From Private Ownership to Crown Ownership to Closure

And though companies come and though companies go
And the ways of the world we may never know,
We'll follow the footsteps of those on their way
And still ask for the right to leave or to stay.

(MacNeil, 1985, p.177).  

With the fall of BESCO in 1928, both coal and steel operations were merged as the Dominion Steel and Coal Company (DOSCO). Frank’s (1980) reflections on the coal industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provide insights into the distrust Cape Bretoners still express about outside interests dipping into the local economy. He writes: “The growth of the coal industry in Cape Breton expressed above all the financial opportunism of its successive owners, rather than any commitment to principles of regional economic welfare” (p. 128). Regional industrial growth remained underdeveloped throughout the decades following DOSCO’s formation. The government often subsidized the company and was seen to show little interest comparatively for the workers. Frank (1980) argues:

After the 1920s and 1930s, an even closer collaboration between state and capital was needed to maintain the essential structure of the national economy. In industrial Cape Breton the deteriorating local economy would be propped up by government subsidies, enabling private capital to continue profitably to exploit the region’s economic assets, while the deepening underdevelopment of the region would drive Cape Bretoners to leave their homes and enter the national labour market (p. 128).

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Frank does point out that the local labour force did continue to engage in forms of resistance to the destruction of their local economy. Although national attention often depicted such labour action negatively, creating a deeper sense of isolation and misunderstanding between the island and the rest of the province and country.

In the late 1960's DOSCO announced the coal industry in Cape Breton could only last another 15 years and the steel industry could not sustain itself. DOSCO was no longer interested in the Cape Breton mining industry. A commission recommended a crown corporation be created to oversee the phasing out of the coal industry in Cape Breton. Once again, the island's future was being determined by off-island interests.

In 1967, the federally run Cape Breton Development Corporation (DEVCO) took over all DOSCO mines. At the same time, the provincial government took control of the Sydney steel plant with the formation of the Sydney Steel Corporation (SYSCO). MacSween (2004) argues that although part of DEVCO's mandate was to establish and develop new industry for the Cape Breton economy, the corporation really amounted to further crown subsidization of the coal industry, as it had been when DOSCO owned and ran the mines.

During the oil crisis of the 1970's the demand for coal increased and DEVCO turned its attention once again to mining coal. Focus shifted away from the plan to phase out the industry and new mines opened. Recruitment began in earnest and a new generation of Cape Bretoners was encouraged to become miners. The 'boom', however, was short-lived. In the early 1980's oil prices dropped and the expansion of the coal industry was halted. Once again, the future was plagued with uncertainty for miners and their families. Subsidies continued but a lack of economic security was part
of the miner’s daily lives as mine closures, lay offs, shut downs, and threats of industry cessation hung over their heads.

The steel plant followed a similar course. After expansions were made to the plant in the 1980’s, the industry was deemed unsustainable and in the 1990’s the province made it clear they wanted out of the steel business.

The announcement in early 1999 that DEVCO would be dissolved was met with resistance by miners and their families. Given how working class struggles in the early part of the century had often been defined in relation to the family it is interesting to note one particular form of resistance organized primarily by a group of miners’ wives. Calling the themselves, ‘United Families’, and some using the name, ‘Cape Breton Miners’ Wives’, they were primarily concerned with ensuring fair pensions and compensation packages for all miners. They organized large rallies, protests, and information pickets (Gardiner Barber, 2002). They also met with provincial and federal officials and the National Women’s Caucus. Their action was explicitly framed within the context of family and community. They contended that the survival of the community and its families was directly linked to the fair compensation for the miners. MacSween (2004) quotes one of United Families’ founding member’s description of some of the miners’ severance package: “It is a package of no jobs, no future, no dignity...it is unjust, morally wrong, and unacceptable” (p. 65).

Her position resonates with a tone of familiarity to miners’ early class struggles for ‘a living wage’. To deny a miner a ‘decent compensation package’ is to deny him the ability to provide his family a comfortable life. Economic compensation becomes an
inherent right— one miners have insisted upon for generations in Cape Breton and one for which they and their families are willing to publicly advocate.

By the early part of the twenty-first century, both DEVCO and SYSCO were dissolved and the industries that were part of the fabric of the island were shut down. Since that time the Cape Breton Regional Municipality has attempted to restructure its economic landscape. Currently, the university and regional health authority are two of the major employers in the region. Tourism remains an important element of the local economy. Service industry employers, such as international call centre companies, have replaced DEVCO and SYSCO. Still, government subsidies attracted the call centre companies and there is little in the way of long term reassurance that they will stay in the community indefinitely. Further, many argue the job salaries offered through service industry work hardly constitute a ‘living’ wages such as that earned by those employed with DEVCO and SYSCO at the time of the closures.

At the same time, the Membertou First Nations’ community has experienced a significant economic turn around over the past number of years. Addressing high unemployment and social and economic depression, that community has eliminated its deficit, forged private and governmental partnership, and become a model for other First Nations community. I argue that it could serve as a model for the rest of the island.

Over the last ten years, Membertou’s budget has grown from 4 million dollars, to a current 65 million dollar operating budget. The number of employees has jumped from 37 to 531 to date. There are many new internal departments and businesses such as the Membertou Market, Membertou Advanced Solutions, Membertou Mapping Service, Membertou Quality Management Services, and
most recently the prestigious Membertou Trade and Convention Centre.


Some are reluctant to give up entirely on the coal industry in Cape Breton. In 2005, a Swiss based company won a bid to develop the Donkin Coal Mine in eastern Cape Breton, and it is hoped the mine will open in the next three or four years. “But still, it feels as though something has died.....” (December, 2006, Fieldnotes).

The casket on the coal wars was closed on or about the year 2002. By then, the last pithead was as quiet as the Western Front and the first body bags of the oxycontin epidemic were zipped shut. Whether we ever open the Donkin mine is less important than acknowledging that a part of our mining culture has died. Lamentably, we have yet to move beyond the second of the seven stages of the grief process, denial. It is too soon. (Michalik, 2005, p.10).

The labour history of Eastern Cape Breton Island is marked by the rise and fall of natural resource industries over which local residents did not have control. Contemporary accusations of a culture of defeatism are grossly inaccurate and fail to acknowledge the innovative ways women and men managed to survive despite dangerous, oppressive, and unjust working and living conditions at the hands of companies and with little, when any, support from governments for hundreds of years. Dismissal of Cape Bretoners’ demands for the equal distribution of social and economic resources as an unrealistic attitude of entitlement ignores the island economic contribution to the rest of province and Central Canada in the early part of the twentieth

21 ‘Oxycontin epidemic’ is a reference to an alarming increase in the abuse of the prescription painkiller, oxycontin, on Cape Breton Island. Thefts, violent acts and deaths due to overdose have been attributed to oxycontin addictions.
century. And still this working class history continues to inform and influence a new
generations of Cape Bretoners who, Bourdieu would argue, embody the collective
habitus that is shaped by and has shaped the island’s histories and will live on, I might
add, inherently in our future.

Everyone waves but the train goes on because it must and it does not care for
waving. From very far away I see my grandfather turn and begin walking back up
his hill. And then there is nothing but the creak and sway of the coach and the
blue sea with its gulls and the green hills with the gashes of their coal embedded
deeply in their sides. And we do not say anything but sit silent and alone. We
have come from a great distance and have a long way now to go (MacLeod,
2001, p. 97).
CHAPTER FIVE: LOCATING PARTICIPANTS -- PHYSICAL PLACES AND SOCIAL SPACES

The words, images, actions, and stories shared by the participants are central to this study. As such I am compelled to honor what they have shared and give their expressions a place of prominence. As you read their words and look at their photos in this and subsequent chapters, you will begin to know them as representatives of a particular population of young people and perhaps less as distinct individuals. So, I am fearful. My depiction of who they are is destined to be incomplete as I have only had glimpses into a fraction of their lives. Further, given their socio-economic status and an array of other circumstances that often push them into the margins of society, preconceived notions about who these young people are may not be based on meaningful interactions. How you begin to know the participants in the context of their lives, how you fill in the blanks and assumptions you make about them hinges initially upon how I introduce them to you, through their visual and verbal words. And still, in the end, how you choose to see these young people is in your own hands (Letter to Reader, Fieldnotes, October, 2006).

In this chapter, I begin to piece together the young women's and men's experiences and perceptions of social and economic health in their community. I draw from their stories and ideas shared through oral and photographic forms, numerous informal discussions, and my own participant-observations. As noted in chapter three, I felt it imperative to protect the identity of the participants, particularly given that they all live
in the same small semi-rural community. Further, in sharing their own experiences, many participants make references to family members, friends, and others in the community, and I am committed to respecting the privacy of those people. Hence, names, street names, and similar references that identify participants or others in the community are omitted from direct quotes.

I feel a degree of trepidation in regards to my attempt to introduce the experiences of the participants; perhaps, in part, due to the ever-present tensions between the potential emancipatory and reproductive nature of research. I am mindful that a collective representation of participants' experiences can, to use Arendt's (1998) words "negate human plurality" (p.86). I realize that while removing names and other identifiers honors confidentiality it takes away unique and important dimensions of each participant's life. Therein lies a danger of over-emphasizing commonalities and under-representing differences.

And I identify with Bourdieu et al. (1999) who write:

How can we not feel anxious about making private words public, revealing confidential statements made in the context of a relationship based on trust that can only be established between two individuals? True, everyone we talked to agreed to let us use their statements as we saw fit. But no contract carries as many unspoken conditions as one based on trust. In the first place, we had to protect the people who confided in us, in particular by changing the names of places and individuals to prevent identification. Above all, we had to protect them from the dangers of misinterpretation (p. 1).
In an effort to limit the possibilities of misinterpretation and still recognizing my inability to entirely resolve my concern, I use Bourdieu's theoretical tools to position the social and economic health experiences and perceptions shared by participants in the relational physical and social spaces (fields) from which they emerge. It is my hope that contextualizing and theorizing participants' narratives-- while still placing their words in the foreground-- will reduce the potential for misinterpretation and create a basis for deeper analysis in chapters six and seven.  

**Situating Agents**

Bourdieu (1999a) contends that human beings are situated in a site. “The site (le lieu) can be defined absolutely as the point in the physical space where an agent or a thing is situated... from a relational viewpoint, as a position, a rank in an order” (p. 123). At the same time, they exist within and in relationship with a social space or field that is defined by its: “[D]istinction of the positions that constitute it, that is, as a juxtapositional structure of social position” (p.124). Bourdieu goes on to note that in a hierarchical society, all space is hierarchical.

[T]he power over space that comes from possessing various kinds of capital takes the form in appropriated physical space of a certain relation between the spatial structure of the distribution of agents and the spatial structure of the distribution of goods and services, private or public. (p. 124).

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22 I use the term ‘misinterpretation’ mindful that there is no ‘true’ or ‘absolute’ interpretation of another person’s narrative. As discussed in chapter three, meaning is negotiated and the goal is to work towards deeper understanding. Still, attentiveness to how research participants’ experiences and perceptions are represented is an important dimension of the process of deepening understanding.
A person's placement in a physical site in relation to the placement of others suggests his or her social position. Further, because various fields are somewhat superimposed, physical spaces often reflect high concentrations of people and goods from within particular social positions (Bourdieu, 1999a).

Because social space is inscribed at once in spatial structures and in the mental structures that are partly produced by the incorporation of these structures, space is one of the sites where power is asserted and exercised, and no doubt in its subtlest form, as symbolic violence that goes unperceived as violence (Bourdieu, 1999a, p.126).

Participants in this study vividly described the physical and social space they inhabit. In the following sections, participants' perceptions of and experiences in their physical space are presented. Their examples are used to demonstrate where they are situated in the symbolic order of power as it is inscribed in the physical space they occupy.

Chained to Place: Social Positioning in Physical Space

Participants' descriptions of and experiences in relation to housing, neighborhoods, green space, and transportation expose elements of the physical place they inhabit. Further, their very 'physical' description of the drug culture as a dimension of their physical and social landscape, suggests it permanence in the site they inhabit.

Housing and neighborhoods

The ability to secure safe, affordable, housing in 'good' neighborhoods emerged as a concern for participants. Limited economic capital greatly reduces their choices of
living arrangements in the community. Some rent apartments and subsidized housing units. Others have rented trailers. Still, others live with parents and/or other family members. Many of the young people move frequently in an effort to find safer, cleaner, more affordable, or more accessible housing. In other instances, participants are forced to move for reasons such as conflict with the people with whom they live or for reasons related to rental leases. One participant did note that she appreciated the fact that there were opportunities to live in single dwelling units because the small community is not overridden with apartment buildings. She states: “I like that there are very few apartment buildings. It gives people the chance to get a house (rental) or a flat or whatever”. For this participant the ‘chance’ to live in a ‘house’ as opposed to an apartment building marked an opportunity to secure her ‘own’ physical space and the symbolic value attached to that space.

The lack of affordable, safe housing was a source of extreme anxiety and worry for some participants. One participant had been on a waiting list for a new housing unit for two years. During a discussion that was not audio recorded, a participant expressed concern for the health of his young family in their current home. There was mold in his porch and rats in the area.

Many participants are extremely frustrated by the conditions in their neighborhoods. They spoke of drug houses, regular break-ins, vandalism, and a lack of safe play space for children. One participant explains:

I live in a trailer court that is supposed to be quiet and a half-decent place to raise kids. I’ve been there almost two years now but since I moved and got my own trailer and moved up the back a bit more, I’ve had three times people try to

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23 Many apartment units in the community are in single dwelling homes converted into apartments.
break into my house that I know of. I was home in bed with my kids one of the
times. I would have to say it was about three o'clock in the morning. Another time
I got home and the bottom of my door was booted in, and another time me and
my boyfriend went to go out on the back step to have a smoke and someone had
taken a screw driver and tried to take the screws out of the casing on the door to
get in.

For this participant, each home invasion signifies a disregard for her space and
ultimately her social position as it is intricately tied to the physical space she occupies.

Setting fires was one form of vandalism that was an on-going concern for
some participants. They noted that many abandoned buildings in the community had
been set on fire and in some instances people had been in the buildings. One
participant shared his experience:

**Participant One:** I gotta story for ya. I was leaving my house... there at [name of
the neighborhood deleted] maybe a month ago ....I walked out of the house, I
turned left and there were two kids walkin' around the corner. One of them has a
lighter in his hand. I look back and my whole backyard's in flames. I mean like in
flames! Really high. Yeah. They lit the boat [in the backyard] on fire. Not just the
boat but all the bamboo and all the trees. They had the fire department down
there and everything. I look and the two kids are walking by and the other kid is
ducked behind my house running. I looked at them and said: 'Yeah well that's
nice now boys. If my trailer burns down I know both your faces and I'm coming
back and I'm gonna knock your teeth out. And they said 'Oh we'll make sure to
watch it.'
Participant Two: Well, that's [that neighborhood]. That's the way it is down there.

Participant Two dismisses the incident. Evidently, the behaviour of the two kids is deemed 'typical' in that particular neighborhood. Herein is an example of the symbolic nature of the social order as it emerges in physical space. The same behaviour, vandalism and disrespect for people and property, in a wealthier, more symbolically 'endowed' space, is unlikely to be accepted as 'the way it is'. Participant Two's comment suggest that the neighborhood where the fire was set does not wield much symbolic status and power, or ultimately, regard and respect, in the social order of space.

Some of the participants do note that there are nice homes and neighborhoods in the community. And some places are definitely safer than others. However, economic disadvantage makes these homes and neighborhoods inaccessible to many young people. One participant took a photo (see figure 2) to demonstrate what she considers two lifestyles on two side of a street.
She offered the following narrative about her photo:

This one here is a picture of two almost completely different lifestyles on the same street. So here's this side of the street to the left. It's all nice houses well kept lawns, no garbage or anything like that. And then to the right side there is the low income housing unit. There there's garbage, you see a lot of cop cars coming in and out, there's lots of drug abuse and stuff like that, alcohol abuse and what not.

The participant's photo and corresponding narrative provide a visual and verbal depiction of the relational nature of positioning within the social field. Each side of the street is defined in relation to the homes on the other side of the street and the social culture that is located in each physical space.

Participants note that some of the low income housing complexes and grounds are not properly maintained and kept safe. Consequently it feels as though the people who live there are not valued in the community. One participant took a photo of a

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24 In response to limitations of disposable cameras, particularly the inability to adjust the zoom and focus, the size of photo images vary in order to emphasize aspects of the photos participants intended to highlight.
housing complex including the outside of an apartment unit that had burned (see figure 3). A child had died in the fire and almost a year later the boarded up unit with people living on either side was still a reminder to those in the neighborhood of what had happened.

Figure 3: Burned-out housing unit

Another participant told the story of one housing complex where she lived:

I lived in a low income housing unit (she gives the location). Oh my gosh, I could cry how bad that place was. There was constantly cops being called there every night. Maybe four out of seven nights a week there was cops there. It got such a bad reputation in [the community].

The participant said that her apartment had been broken into five times. “[We] got broken into while we were sleeping with our kids in the house in the middle of the night... and the cops wouldn’t even dust for prints”. The lack of outside commitment to this neighborhood symbolically dismisses any sense of respect for people that live there (Bourdieu, 1999a) in this case, the participant, her children and her possessions. Moreover, this participant lacks what Bourdieu (1999a) describes as the “profit of occupation... where possession of a physical space (extensive grounds, spacious apartments, etc.) is a way of holding at a distance and excluding any kind of
undesirable intrusion..." (p. 127). Without the ‘right capital’ she is unable to relocate to a neighborhood that is safer and more comfortable -- a physical place that may enable her re-positioning in the field by drawing from the symbolic value inherent in the new space.

On numerous occasions, participants made reference to the ‘drug houses’ in their neighborhoods. These are houses and apartments where it is alleged that drugs are sold. As noted in the following discussion, whether involved in the drug culture or not, many people are aware of the alleged ‘drug houses’:

**Participant One:** I was going to drive around to every house [in the area] that I knew that sold drugs but then I thought I’d probably get shot (sarcastic tone). The crazy thing is that I’m not all that intimately involved or attached to that particular scene. I thought about it because I was half joking half seriously thinking about it because I could easily fill a roll of film

**Participant Two:** Oh yeah! I could fill mine and yours and yours and yours and yours (pointing to each of us) with drug dealers’ houses.

**Participant Three:** Oh, I’ve got three houses right beside my house. I could go on and on. It makes ya sick. And there’s another one now. You know what’s going on...people there at one o’clock in the morning til four o’clock in the morning goin’ bangin’ on his door. Wakes me up out of bed.

The disruption to this participant’s life makes him frustrated but his tone is not one of outrage. More so, he is stating a fact. His nonverbal expression suggests that he senses little can or will be done to change the situation. His response illustrates his
awareness of the limited power he holds in the symbolic order of the social and physical space he occupies.

Participants' photographs suggest a perceived link between the structural 'home' and social and economic health. Many of the photographs taken by participants depicted images of homes. Some were boarded up and dilapidated dwellings (see figures 4 and 5) and one was a home a participant perceived as beautiful (see figure 6). The structural units some participants call 'home' are an essential element of their conceptions of their social and economic health and ultimately their place in the social field. Moreover, participants refer to their emotional connections to the structural dwellings they call home. In Cape Breton the cost of housing is relatively inexpensive and owning a home is still a very realistic goal for some people. Single dwelling houses can be purchased for 40,000-60,000 dollars on the Northside. Further, family homes are still sometimes passed down to children. Yet many participants note their parents have sold or have considered selling the family home due to financial hardship. A couple with grown children that chooses to sell their home has a different impact on those involved than a couple with grown children that feels they have to sell their home against their own desire to keep it. In this Cape Breton community, home ownership endows agents with a degree of not just economic, but symbolic, capital. Bourdieu (1999a) writes: "An agent’s position in social space is expressed in the site of physical space where that agent is situated (which means, for example, that anyone said to be ‘without home or hearth’ or ‘homeless’ is virtually without a social existence)" (p. 124).

Participants' attempts to secure safe housing in good neighborhoods reflect a "struggle to appropriate space" (Bourdieu, 1999a, p.126). Space wields power and
participants’ efforts -- albeit often unsuccessful-- to gain space amounts to a form of symbolic violence. Without the appropriate capital, it is difficult to make a long term mobility shift to a safer, more secure physical dwelling and space. “The lack of capital intensifies the experience of finitude: it chains one to a place” (Bourdieu, 1999a, p. 127).

Figure 4: A boarded-up house

Figure 5: A boarded-up house
Safe, clean community green space

Many of the participants focused on the importance of safe, clean community green space. Their photographs, in particular, centred around a combination of images of what they perceive as ‘healthy’ green space (see figure 7) as well as space that they feel needs to be ‘cleaned up’. Figure 8 and 9 depict what one participant refers to as the two-sides of the beach.
Figure 8: A healthy looking perspective of the beach

Figure 9: The same beach from the other side. The yellow rectangle highlights a sewer pipe draining out of the side of the bank.
The two perspectives of the beach raise an interesting issue. For those who simply wish to enjoy the coastline from a distance, (for example, tourists visiting the area or boaters on the water), the beach is a nice attraction. It is the residents, those who live beside the polluted side of the beach, who each day see the sewer water pouring out of the ocean banks and who have to endure the odor. The ‘natural beauty’ of the physical space becomes something of value to those that can gaze upon it from afar. If they do not like what they see ‘up close’ they can leave and go back to their own space. Those who live in the space are not afforded the same privilege. Again, the symbolic social order is exposed -- those from the disadvantaged neighborhood occupy a lower hierarchical position than the visitors who come to ‘look at’ the coastline and then leave.

Participants, particularly the parents and females, frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of green space available for children to safely play. One participant notes: “Yeah, the park in town. Every time I take the kids there for a play I have to do a comb of the park because I find broken bottles and needles and everything
there”. In many cases, participants perceive the lack of safe, green space as a lack of concern for the community and people. One participant comments, “There’s only one park in Sydney Mines and it shows that some people get forgotten about, I think”. Her well-grounded conclusion is another example of the symbolic de-valuing of people living in a particular physical space.

One participant used a photo of a mobile toilet to highlight something that he perceives as a sign of investment in the physical space and, ultimately, the community. His photo (figure 10) drew particular interest during a focus group discussion. The photo of the port-a-potties (mobile toilets) was explained by the photographer:

[This] park is used quite a bit ...you know, kids play soccer there all summer, a lot of families bring their families there for the swings. The walking track goes around the park so a lot of people use it. So I think it’s great that [the port-a-potties] are there. My personal experience with them was, a couple of weekends ago I had to read. I was reading this novel for my English course and I didn’t want to sit at home all day and read so I went to [the] park and spent the whole day reading my novel. And when I needed to pee I went to the port-a-potty.

While the participant took a somewhat light-hearted approach to this photo he wanted to make an important point. Through his photograph, this participant introduced a discussion surrounding the need for community infrastructure to support citizens’ health initiatives. The potential use of this public park is enhanced by the simple fact that people have a place to go to the bathroom. Something perhaps taken for granted in other spaces -- access to public toilets -- becomes a symbol of commitment to a
community and residents or in other words, agents in a particular physical space in the social fields.

Some expressed concern that when community green space is developed the efforts are often sabotaged by local residents or more specifically, by 'kids' with nothing to do. Participants suggested that green space often becomes hangouts for youth and places to drink and do drugs. Cigarette butts, needles, broken bottles and other drug paraphernalia associated with such activity often litter the grounds (see figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11: A park space
When asked why they thought people would destroy parks designed for the community, some suggested it is hard to change past behavioural patterns. Bourdieu (1999a) offers further insight into the nature of self and community sabotage in communities where residents lack capital.

Like a club founded on the active exclusion of undesirable people, the fashionable neighborhood symbolically consecrates its inhabitants by allowing each one to partake of the capital accumulated by the inhabitants as a whole. Likewise, the stigmatized area symbolically degrades its inhabitants, who, in return, symbolically degrade it (p. 129).

The ‘kids’ live in areas of a community that lacks adequate infrastructure and opportunity for them and their families. They have experienced the symbolic degradation of their space. In turn, their destructive actions may be interpreted as their own acts of symbolic degradation of not just the physical but the social space they inhabit.
Adequate public transportation

Adequate public transportation is a concern for participants as local transit is not sufficient and reliable. Hence, it places limits on participants’ mobility. They are limited as to where they can work, where they can go to school, what social services they can access, where they can shop, and where they can take their children to engage in recreational activities. Given the semi-rural nature of the Northside, many people reside outside the former town limits and are isolated from any form of public transit and taxi cab services. One participant noted that she has to pay six dollars to get a cab to take her and her children to the closest bus stop. Many busses only run once every couple of hours and stop running by late afternoon. Another pointed out that taxis and public transit do not service the area where she lives. When contemplating the process of finding employment one participant points out:

I'm sure there's some odd jobs [around here] but reality is you gotta get to the job... transportation...if you want to get a job more than likely you're gonna end up in Sydney. Like Boston Pizza or something. Something small that you're makin' minimum wage but the thing is you gotta find transportation, you gotta eat while you're at work, you gotta find a drive home. When it comes down to it, if you had a car with license and insurance you'd be working for nothin'! You'd work to drive basically. I think the busses should run through all hours [and have routes] everywhere, like a big city, like Halifax. Here, if you don't have a car, you're walkin' 'cause there's no way you can afford a cab. The busses don't run that early in the morning.
Bourdieu (1999a) contends that desirable people and goods (such as educational, cultural, and health institutions) are forms of capital that tend to be located in close proximity to each other and are most accessible to those who live in the space and who have the means to access them. Thus, he notes:

Since physical distance can be measured in spatial terms, or better yet, in temporal terms, to the extent that going from one place to another takes more or less time according to the possibilities of access to public or private means of transportation, the power over space given by various different forms of capital is also, and by the same token, a power over time (Bourdieu, 1999a, p.127).

In other words, given the limited educational, cultural, and social resources available in their communities, the lack of transportation further reproduces the inequalities experienced by participants as it keeps them at a spatial and temporal distance from the spaces where such resources (or capital) are located.

Drugs

"This is just drug central and that's all there is to it. And that's why everything is going down the drain. It always comes back to that one problem [drugs] and that is it" (Participant). When participants discuss the issue of drugs in their communities it is as though they are describing a dimension of the landscape; perhaps because of the visual prevalence of the drug culture in their community. How they experience the drug culture is intricate to their physical space. They scan their streets and playgrounds for bottles and needles before their children can play:

I went for a walk up the road the other day to take my kids to the store. I found five needles on the way. A fifteen minute walk to the store, five needles on the
side of the road. It’s getting unreal and it’s getting dangerous to even take your children outside.

Their homes are surrounded by ‘drug houses’ and the noise of people coming and going disrupts their lives. Moreover, they experience and fear violence and vandalism as a result of rampant drug use in their neighborhoods:

There’s more harder drugs and stuff down here. There’s more people getting into it. My father died a year ago and my mother had some of his medication left in the house. And about a month before that there was another man who passed away -- cancer. While they were at the funeral someone went in and broke in the house to steal the drugs. So Ma said, ‘There you go, get rid of these for me’. And I said, ‘Well, what do you want me to do with them?’ and she said, ‘Take them up to the pharmacy and drop them off because if you don’t, the [drug addicts] are gonna come down here lookin’ for them’. It’s getting’ that bad around here now.

Some live with their own addiction and others live with family and friends who are addicts.

Only a handful a people I know don’t smoke pot. Anyone who’s a strict pot smoker, you don’t hear about them getting’ into fights. Or goin’ robbin’ people for money for that. I find it’s the harder drugs -- it’s the ecstasy, the oxy, the pills, the heroin- (Participant)

Two others reflect:

Participant One: Or let’s go to the beach and smoke a bolo [crack cocaine], that’s the way they think. You know, that’s reality in Cape Breton. And if it’s not a bolo, it’s snortin’ an oxy [oxycontin].
Participant Two: And if it's not snortin' an oxy it's bangin' something.

Participant One: Exactly. And you don't know who you can trust. Everyone's into needles. I'm generalizing not everyone.

Tanya: I know -- You're saying that stuff is out there.

Participant One: Yeah, I'm generalizing but I'm not meaning to say it like that.

Tanya: I know-

Participant One: It's just that, I lost a good friend from drinkin' and driving here. I lost a good friend, well not a really good friend but a friend, from methadone or methanol or whatever it was that [person's name deleted] took that time.

How a community drug problem presents itself in a semi-rural space is somewhat different than in a larger urban centre. For example, Chief of Police for the CBRM, Edgar MacLeod, notes that generally, in the municipality’s semi-rural setting, there is not the extremely high concentration of drugs and the related issues of violence and gang control in particular neighborhoods that you often see in urban centres (personal communication, December, 2006). Drug related problems tend to be spread over a large geographic space in semi rural communities. This may help to explain why participants sensed that the problem was ‘everywhere’ around them. One participant remarks: “Well, there is a lot of drugs around here and stuff. But I mean I don’t find it really that bad like in cities and that. But it is bad because [the community is] small”. Another states:

Like you can go to bigger cities like out in Edmonton and stuff. And there is a lot of drugs and stuff around there but you can find spots that are not so bad. But where [this place] is so small you here about it all the time -- constantly.
Participants’ perception of being surrounded by a world of drugs serves as a reminder of the inter-relationship between the physical place and social fields. As indicated, the geographic nature of a semi-rural community creates the perception that the drug culture is ‘everywhere’. Given that participants are in many ways physically isolated in their geographic space (for example, they have no means to transport themselves out of their neighborhoods or rural communities) and that they have little in the way of social and cultural capital, they have less opportunity to step outside the space and experience the parts of the community where drugs are not ‘visibly’ present. Their day-to-day practices (for example, clearing bottles and needles in playgrounds to create safe play area for their children or removing prescription drugs from their homes to avoid robbery) and attitudes (such as ‘drugs are everywhere’) are adapted to survival in the social space that includes a world of drugs. In turn, their practices, attitudes, and survival strategies help to shape the social space. In other words, their habitus is shaping and is being shaped by their social space that is grounded in the physical space the participants occupy.

If, as Bourdieu suggests, space is a site where power is exercised, participants’ perceptions and experiences suggest they embody little material and symbolic power within the physical space and social fields they occupy. This is further evidenced by the struggles to secure modes of capital in the various fields.

**Struggles in the Fields: Making it Work**

Discussing one of Bourdieu’s key concepts, Wacquant (1992) states: “Each field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles” (p. 17). The
various fields are characterized, in part, by the struggles among agents who occupy them to either change or preserve the parameters, depending on the positions they inhabit in the space (Wacquant, 1992). In this section, elements of day to day experiences and perceptions of social and economic health shared by participants are considered in the context of the various fields they occupy and the struggles they encounter in those spaces.

Figure 13: Boarded-up and vandalized corner store

Figure 14: Boarded-up and vandalized store
Economic Field

The economic field is a space in which agents attempt to secure material and symbolic resources that are recognized (or misrecognized) as economic capital (Bourdieu, 1992). In this section, participants’ day to day experiences in the economic field in relation to jobs and economic comfort are examined.

Jobs

For individuals, such as participants in this study, with little in the way of cultural capital (in the form, for example, of formal education), social capital (in the form of social networks and memberships), and exchangeable goods (such as property rights), monetary income earned through some form of labour is one of the few ways to obtain economic capital. On Cape Breton Island, everyday conversations most often include the question: “Are you working?” A ‘job’ is the rare good that agents try to obtain. Yet, in the economically depleted region, the struggle is not always fruitful. Participants shared photos of boarded up and vandalized corner stores as evidence of the failing local economy (see figures 13 and 14).

“They’re shuttin’ down all the good jobs that were around here, there’s nothin’ left. Most of my family has moved away because there’s nothing down here” (Participant). Participants, particularly the men, note the strong connection between their social and economic health and having a job. Job availability, job security, job salary, types of jobs, and industries are all aspects of the employment-health link.

There is overwhelming agreement among participants that the collapse of the coal, steel, and fishing industries means that the opportunity for ‘good jobs’ in their community are out of their reach, given their current social and economic circumstances.
or, in other words, their lack of educational and cultural capital. By 'good' jobs participants mean jobs that enable them to provide economic comfort for themselves and their families. Such jobs were traditionally accessible to manual labourers. Historically, working class Cape Bretoners relied on their physical strength to earn a wage. In a post-industrial era and an economically disadvantaged region, labouring skills have little exchange value in the economic field. Yet many of the participants still embody these historical values as they are an inherent dimension of their habitus. Their beliefs and attitudes, in regard to 'work', reflect a disjunction between the historical dimension of their habitus and the contemporary parameters and neoliberal principles of the economic field that reflect the values of dominant agents who occupy the space. This issue is examined in greater detail in chapter seven.

**Economic comfort**

Economic comfort refers to participants' sense that their basic needs are met and that they have the means to attend to what some might consider 'extras' such as activities for their children (for example, swimming and skating) and money for gas or public transportation.

Participants contend that given their current socio-economic circumstances and the conditions in their community, they are not economically comfortable. They indicate that they are unable to make ends meet. One participant takes a photograph (see figure 15) to explain a story that is familiar for all of the participants.
She narrates:

This is my wallet with a bill sticking out of it that hasn’t been paid. I did that yesterday. I took out my wallet and stuck a bill in it. And it was more or less saying there’s a lot of bills and not enough money. And I’m happy to be paid $7.15 an hour. I’m happy to be paid anything especially what I’ve been given in this program. So that’s me sayin’ I’m happy to have money but it’s not enough.

The participant qualifies her statement regarding her lack of economic comfort by emphasizing that she is ‘happy to be paid anything’ and referencing what she has been ‘given’ through the employability program in which she is enrolled. Such qualifications illustrates a form of symbolic domination. Referring to her income and work as something she has been ‘given’ instead of something she has ‘earned’, minimizes her efforts to secure economic comfort and de-legitimizes her work in the employability program. Hence, dominant notions prevalent in the economic field that value particular agents and forms of work over others as is evident in the monetary exchange value of work are not challenged.
At the same time, I suggest her emphasis on her appreciation of any income reflects not just an innate acceptance that she should be grateful for what she is receiving but an awareness that a lack of gratitude on her part may result in the income being ‘taken away’. Hence, I argue that to a degree she is cognizant of the little power she has in the economic field and her comment reflects her strategy to survive in that space. She is attempting to gather some degree of social capital in the form of support from those in agencies that she looks to for help. She has learned to temper her comments to ensure she does not offend the organizations and people she needs and in return they may continue to provide support. Her strategy may depict a form of agency -- knowingly adapting to the rules of the games to better position herself in the economic field. Nevertheless, she adapts to rules in a game in which it will be very difficult for her to make a significant shift in her social positioning.

Consideration of participants’ economic comfort helps to highlight, again, the inter-connectedness between the physical space and the field. Economic comfort in the community is exacerbated by the lack affordable transportation, appropriate space to live and play, and proximity to recreation and shopping. As noted earlier, the physical space inhabited by these participants reflects their social place in the hierarchical order. As one participant adamantly points out: “In Sydney Mines you can’t buy a pair of underwear. You cannot buy a pair of underwear!” The costs of traveling to communities where young adults and their families can participate in recreation and can comparative shop to ensure they are getting the best deals on clothing, groceries, and other necessities begin to mount. Add to the lack of comfort, challenges such as walking to
grocery stores with three small children and carrying groceries and the children back home, as one participant must do.

Interestingly, when participants discuss their economic comfort they do so within the context of family and community. In other words, they seldom focus on whether or not they, as individuals, have enough to be comfortable. Most participants talk about not having enough to provide for their children or extended family, the enormous cost associated with raising children, and the difficulties associated with providing ‘the extras’.

Even participants without children often think about their comfort in relation to the family they hope to have some day. One participant makes it clear that he does not feel like he can stay in Cape Breton because he could never ensure economic comfort for his family. He bluntly states: “I’d never be able to have kids here”.

Moreover, participants often imagine their economic comfort wrapped up in the comfort their extended families’ experience. Some participants expressed great concern and a sense of responsibility for their parents. One participant is tormented by the fact that, after raising a large family, his father cannot consider retirement until he is in his mid-seventies. Another participant voices his worry for his parents, who he perceives as having lived relatively comfortably, but upon reaching retirement age are facing the reduction of that comfort. Consequently, when participants consider economic comfort, they often see that as including their responsibility to ensure comfort for those around them. As discussed in the following chapter, ‘family care’ is a considerable dimension of the habitus of study participants and their classed and gendered identities.
Many participants speak of the discomfort and difficulty of budgeting a month at a time. Some participants receive income assistance once a month. Participants spoke of the challenges of going to the grocery store and trying to imagine exactly what is needed for the month. They contend that because they shop on a monthly basis, they are unable to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables because of food spoilage. Further, they note that the money, the food, and other necessities usually run out before the month’s end meaning that from that point they often rely in part on borrowed money or money obtained from pawning possessions. In most cases, interest rates are extremely high. Thus, participants start out the next month with most, if not all of their income already spent. The ‘system’ rings eerily familiar to that in place during the days of the company store. And while the domination experienced by their historical counterparts was sometimes more overt, the reproduction of the struggle in the economic field as it plays out in the daily practices of the participants reflects the inherent and historical nature of symbolic violence.

Cultural Fields

At stake in the cultural field are the knowledge, skills, and symbolic and material endowments that are recognized as capital that give agents status and power. Bourdieu (1992) contends that cultural capital can be: 1) embodied (patterns of behavior, attitudes, and tastes inherent through family, place, time, and history), 2) objectified (material goods that hold symbolic cultural value and perhaps can be exchanged for economic capital such as a piece of artwork), and 3) institutionalized (resources such as academic accreditation that are recognized by an institutional body as holding value).
Most participants in this study have limited cultural capital in the form of resources that are recognized as valuable when attempting to secure social and economic health. In this section, I look at education and lifestyle, specifically in relation to recreation, entertainment and sport, as two potential fields where participants struggle for capital.

**Education**

For many of the study participants, lack of formal education is a barrier to social and economic health. One participant had a university degree and another had completed grade twelve by taking follow-up courses. However, the others began to disengage from the public school system between grades seven and eleven. Some of their reasons for leaving school include disruptive family lives, drug problems, unidentified learning disabilities, and other conditions attached to poverty. One young woman spoke directly to what she perceives as the impossibility of being poor and going to school:

> When I was growin' up I had nothin'. I lived in a shack basically all my life. And elementary school wasn't that bad. But once you get to junior high school you don't have the right clothes and I was a tomboy. And I just didn't fit in. So I was fightin' my way in and out of school. And so I ended up passin' grade seven then I dropped out. Then I didn't go back til I was seventeen.

She adds:

> I mean, it's not as hard on the child [if you have money]. You wake up and there's no food in the house. You can't go to school without food...or work. You wake up, the car broke down, there's no way to get you there, you live in [a rural area far from the school]. You know stuff like that. I mean, it's hard.
This participant's experience depicts the link between embodied and institutionalized cultural capital. Her academic success is dependent partly on her ability to ‘fit in’. In junior high school, she did not have the right clothes and she did not act the way a girl ‘should’. Furthermore, she lived in poverty and often went to school hungry. Bourdieu contends that school is a site where social and economic inequality is reproduced (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Without the ‘right’ cultural capital, this young woman had to physically fight her way into school. Her engagement with the educational field served as a form of symbolic violence. True to her own habitus, she had developed patterns of behaviour that would enable her to survive in her own social space which included engagement in the home with poverty, drugs, and instability. These behaviors and attitudes were arbitrarily deemed to be of little value in the school system. The intent is not to suggest that the educational future of youth in poverty is determined to fail. Instead, this participant’s story exposes a specific example of symbolic domination and the capacity for cultural reproduction in the educational field.

Her example was not isolated. Many participants, caught between the public school system and the adult high school and training system, expressed their dissatisfaction with the educational learning opportunities available to them. On one occasion, two participants discussed the challenges of trying to engage in educational upgrading when faced with learning disabilities:

Participant One: I find it really hard around here because I went down to HRDC (Service Canada, formerly Human Resources Development Canada) and I was doing the GED upgrading on the computer and I got so far along and since I've been out of school for so long and I have a learning disability, that I got so far
into the program that I said, 'okay, this is where it stops because I can't do nothin' else'. They wouldn't help me with a tutor. They wouldn't help me with nothin'. I called about goin' to a centre up here. They told me, 'No, you wouldn't be able to do it because of your learning disability, so we can't put you in there'.

**Participant Two:** See now, I understand. When I got my disability testing done, they said that centre was probably... it was not a great idea to go there because they have a really hard time recognizing that kind of stuff *(learning disabilities)*.

The one participant enrolled in post-secondary education notes that his family's socio-economic circumstances provided him more support throughout his educational training than others participating in this research. He also had the benefit of a degree of inherent cultural capital endowed upon him by his parents. Having attended college, they 'recognized' the value of education and found the means to ensure their son had access to the educational system.

Participants’ emotional responses to their struggles in the educational field and the way they experience education along gender and class lines are examined more deeply in the subsequent chapters.

**Lifestyle: Recreation, entertainment, and sport**

Bourdieu (see 2002) investigated "'extracurricular' culture such as the arts, music, and sports, and how the knowledge, tastes, and dispositions formed in these class practices are misrecognized as 'intelligence,' 'creativity,' and 'character'...” (Stempel, 2005, p.413). Forms of cultural capital are at stake in the lifestyle fields that include recreation, entertainment, and sport.
Sport, entertainment, and recreation emerged as significant issues in the lives of participants. Many of the photographs were intended to present issues regarding recreation. Figure 16 represents a photo of a park and playground located by the water that is perceived as a healthy recreational space in the community. Figure 17 depicts the only playground located in a low income neighborhood. The playground once serviced the community school that has closed. The participant noted that the grass is rarely cut and the only playground equipment is the rusted remains of a set of monkey bars that are more of a hazard than a source of recreation. Figure 18 is a dilapidated piece of playground equipment that has been spray painted with graffiti.

Figure 16: Healthy recreational space

Figure 17: Playground in low-income neighborhood
Figure 18: Dilapidated playground equipment

One participant shared this narrative in reference to the photo in figure 19:

I took a picture of [basketball nets in what appears like a grown over playground].

This is the neighborhood I grew up in. And I lived there for thirteen years. In the last thirteen years there may have been one net up and torn down in this park. In the first three years there were two nets up and there was a merry-go-round, teeter-totters all worked good, and there was a great big jungle gym right here. Remember that *(looking at the person beside him)*? That was before my time. But I'd come up to visit my uncle so I remember seeing it. But the first three years I lived there, there was nets. And I lived there for another whole ten years and there was never a net put up. And this summer they put two nets up on either side of the court. So, I thought that was pretty good that they would do that.
All participants agreed that recreation is an intricate element of social health. Activity in the field of lifestyle culture was marked for many of them by what they perceived as accessibility and inaccessibility to recreation, entertainment, and sports. In some instances, accessibility is reduced because of a lack of economic resources. They discussed the costs involved in recreational activities and the fact that most facilities were located outside of the Northside district which raised issues of transportation and ultimately further expense. One participant points out: “A lot of people around here don’t have a lot of money so it’s hard to keep your kids in swimming lessons…or baseball or hockey”.

When asked about activities and entertainment for young adults, once again, participants indicated possibilities were limited. One single mother contends that once her bills are paid anything left over was for her children thus there is no money or time for her to engage in recreational activities. Others recall that in the past there were more facilities in the community such as a pool and a movie theatre.

Limited access to recreational opportunities makes it difficult for participants to secure cultural capital in that field. This is of particular significance in a community that
highly regards sports and athletes. Historically, in this community, it was often through sports, such as boxing, baseball, hockey, and running that working class citizens secured cultural capital and status, not through formal education. This was also cultural capital that was passed on through the generations. Contemporary families with sports heroes in their genealogy are held in high regard in the community.

Moreover, the activities which residents engage in when they do not have access to recreation have little, if any, symbolic value. After listening to the song entitled, *Photograph*, participants picked up on some of the lyrics that related to the lack of recreational facilities and activities in their community and the fact that they consequently spend much of their time ‘hanging out’. One participant remarks:

That song. The line [about singing to the steering wheel]? Other places people drive to a destination and they get out and go do something. We just drive. The other night me and [my friend] were out til 11:30 at night. Sittin’ around the mall parking lot, the beach, Tim Horton’s.

Another participant notes a link between ‘nothing to do’ and vandalism:

I thought [of the lyrics about the cops hating us hangin’ out and burning buildings down]. Both parts of that (*laughing*)... I think if you ask a lot of young people, maybe even a little younger than us, in this community, they would definitely agree with the first part of that --“the cops hated us hangin’ out”. What’s really unfortunate about that is that there’s really nothing else to do...but hang out...on the street or whatever. There’s nowhere to go..... So it’s a catch 22. You’re not allowed to hang out but there’s nowhere else to go. And then, you know, I think a more sadder commentary, particularly here on the Northside, not just here, but in
the last couple of years we've had a lot issues with structure fires, vacant buildings being burned down.

Participants perceive a direct link between the lack of recreational opportunities and drug use in the community. One participant reflects on his neighborhood:

Before I moved there, there was a baseball field and it all wore away. And kids would love to have it up there. And there's probably the big reason everybody's up in the woods smokin' pot because there's not a lot for them to do around there. And up in the woods there used to be lots of trails for walkin' your dog or bikin' or goin' on four-wheelers and stuff and motorbikes.

While on its own the lack of a baseball field may not lead to drug use, the complexity of the social and economical circumstances in the community coupled with the lack of recreational activities may indeed have such an effect.

Participants suggest the local economy accounts, in part, for the limited recreational opportunities in the community. Thus, individuals' inability to engage in the limited recreational opportunities available results in facilities that are under serviced and communities that cannot maintain them. Further, one participant suggested that in-fighting with neighboring communities also in desperate need of recreational facilities often stall the construction of spaces such as ice rinks and pools.

Participants also suggested that vandalism and illegal activities played a part in the shut down of local entertainment and recreational facilities. One participant shared photos (see figure 20 and 21) of an alcohol bottle outside a local outreach centre and graffiti on the building and offered the following narrative:
And I suppose the bigger story behind that is that it’s only one bottle. Every Monday when I come in after the weekend there’s bottles smashed on the pavement right out here. Other pictures here are of the graffiti on the back of the building. I think that’s one of the unhealthy things about the community... It’s kind of like a double edged sword where people complain that there’s nothing to do on the one hand and there’s not enough recreation facilities. But then when something does come like the park or the community centre like this, they vandalize it. So why is that happening and how do you deal with that?

Figure 20: Bottle outside an outreach centre

Figure 21: Graffiti on the building
Constructing a playground or opening a youth centre, alone, cannot propel a significant change in habitus. Particularly when such actions occur alongside continued cuts to material resources and services desperately needed in economically disadvantage communities. Hence, to expect overnight change in practices on behalf of agents is unrealistic. Bourdieu (1999a) writes:

[When] they don't have all the cards necessary to participate in the various social games, the only thing they share is their common excommunication. Bringing together on a single site a population homogeneous in its dispossession, strengthens that dispossession, notably with respect to culture and cultural practices..." (p. 129).

**Social Fields**

“Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Consideration of participants’ relationships with formal systems and institutions, as well as interpersonal relationships with individuals and family provides a way to look at how participants attempt to secure social capital that may help them navigate their struggles in the various economic, cultural and social fields they occupy.

**Formal social networks**

“You need help in a place like this” (Participant). The participants in this study have, at one time or another and to varying degrees, accessed formal social networks in order to
satisfy their social and economic needs. Outreach centres, churches, governmental and non-governmental department and organizations are considered formal social networks. In the context of this research, formal social networks also refer to the processes of navigating the formal network and the usefulness of the formal network. Some participants have extensive attachment to the social system and their social and economic survival and the survival of their families is dependant upon their eligibility for and accessibility to supports such as income assistance, affordable housing, food banks, academic upgrading, job skill development, drug rehabilitation, child care support, and transportation funds. Other supports include services for parents and children, such as parenting support groups and early intervention services for parents and their children with special needs. Further, participants have received assistance from local community groups in the form of recycled furniture and clothing. One participant shared the story of a church that provided her and her young family with a place to stay when they needed it:

This church took us in for two weeks; let us live in the church. They didn’t know us, they didn’t ask for references, nothing like that. And then, paid for us to go to Bible camp for two weeks; me, my husband and my two kids at that time. So they more or less housed us for a month.

Several of the participants noted that they were unaware of many of the supports and services available in the community. For example, a single mother shared that she was not aware that there were play groups and parenting support for parents and children under five until her children were no longer part of that age group. Apart from one participant who actively and regularly inquired about social services available in the
community, most participants relied on word of mouth from their friends or youth workers, including case workers with whom they were already connected. At least three possible reasons exist for the apparent disconnect between services and the people who need the support. First, oral and written literacy barriers often deter young adults from reaching out and accessing materials that are often complex and difficult to understand. The second reason is linked to circumstances attached to the population of young people represented by this study. As indicated earlier, these young adults tend to move frequently and periodically do not have a permanent residence, hence they may not be receiving information through the mail. Some do not have regular phone, computer, and internet access, and as such can not easily receive or seek out support through these forms of media. Participants also note that some of the organizational supports are located outside of their immediate communities and consequently they do not have the means to access them. Finally, many of these young adults have indicated they cannot count on anyone but themselves and trust takes time to develop. Thus they may not be willing to respond to offers of support without knowing the people involved and what motives may be at work. Participants' limited affiliation with formal networks is an example of ways that agents' location in physical and social space and how they engage in that space through their habitus (such as their distrustful disposition towards certain formal institutions and professionals) has an impact upon their ability to access institutions and people that can help them secure social capital.

Participants expressed frustration with the process of navigating the formal social networks associated with funding assistance.
And it sucks to have to go and write letters and talk to workers. And it’s two or three weeks they’re screwin’ around until you actually get to talk to somebody and they’re like, “All right, how much do you think your gonna spend, and where you gonna spend it? All right, well, here’s a voucher for this much and if you don’t get that then bring it back because it’s not worth nothin’”, you know what I mean? It’s all bullshit! You’re better off to go sell something and buy what you need.

Hah! Steal something and sell it.

This participant is aware that he has little power when attempting to secure resources through formal networks. He knows that there are rules to the game that he has to play to ‘work’ the system and he does not have any respect for the rules. His threat to ‘steal and sell’ to make an income is an attempt to claim some form of power so he no longer has to play the game of the ‘system’. Still, he knows he needs the system and thus he endures the symbolic domination, but not totally unaware of the domination.

As discussed at length in chapters six and seven, emotional responses to ‘dealing with the system’ run deeper than frustration. Individuals’ sense of self-worth and their ability to believe that there is genuine desire to help them are frequently eroded as indicated in the following dialogue:

**Participant One:** Yeah, Yeah! It’s when you see people practically having to beg to get support just to get some of the bare necessities. Just to make ends-

**Participant Two:** groceries!

**Participant One:** Yeah, groceries. Beds for children. You know what I mean, that’s ridiculous!
Participant Three: Yeah, Yeah!

One participant who worked at an outreach centre offers his perception of the formal system of support:

What I see is a system that doesn’t value the people who need the help. And I know people get angry with their case workers and stuff and a lot of times it’s justified. And in a lot of cases, you know, you have a really small staff that has a humongous case load. I would like to become a social worker. And I know a lot people who work at Community Services are social workers but I would never want to work there. Because you’re not actually a social worker, you’re not actually helping anybody. Everybody becomes a number. And every request that comes in is like, ‘Oh my God, it’s something else I have to deal with!’ I guess it’s like, ..(taking time to find the right words) I guess it reminds me of some of the stuff I read in history with peasants and stuff and there’s a powerhouse, a kingdom or whatever-

I mean, Canada is one of the wealthiest nations in the world. I have phone calls here by people -- who were turned away from Community Services and what not because they couldn’t help them for whatever reason -- saying, “Please, I have a four year old daughter who is sleeping literally on the bare floor (bangs on the table)...in my apartment”!

The metaphorical sea of red tape that many young adults are forced to swim through to access and qualify for support can, at times, be unbearable. Their attempts to secure support collide with neoliberal assumptions imbedded in procedures and policies that are characterized by what Bourdieu might call the abdication of the state.
(Bourdieu, 1999b) from social responsibility evident through a refusal to acknowledge the full scope of consequences associated with living in poverty. Neoliberalism was not simply marked by an ideological shift in society. Bourdieu (1999b) writes: “It was accompanied by a destruction of the idea of the public service...” (p. 182). Further, he goes on:

By making economic liberalism the necessary and sufficient condition of political freedom [intellectuals] assimilate state interventionism to ‘totalitarianism’; by identifying socialism with the Soviet system, they suggest that since inequalities are unavoidable, the struggle against them is ineffective (which does not keep them from blaming the system for discouraging the best people) and, in any case, can only be undertaken to the detriment of freedom... (p. 182).

Despite difficulties with the social networks as institutions, participants did find ways to connect with individuals within the system. This was evident by the disjuncture between participants’ description of the ‘system’ and some of the individuals who work within the formal social network. One participant described the support she has received from one organization and specifically one employee:

She’s been my support person I guess you could say, my person to be there when I’m really, really happy about something or really, really sad about something or really angry. She’s always been there. She’s gone out of her way for me.

This participant shares a story about a time when a portion of income assistance that she had been receiving to help with child care and transportation costs was discontinued and she had already spent the money in anticipation of receiving it.
So I called [the support person] up and I was all upset and didn’t know what to do blah, blah, blah. She helped me with a thirty-five dollar gift certificate for food, she bought me pull-ups for my son and she got me eight liters of milk. I mean, because I had no food or nothing. I would have bought groceries but I figured okay, we’re gonna be getting this money so I can take it out of that, and then I wasn’t getting it, so.

She continues:

So if it wasn’t for her I wouldn’t have had nothing. And she’s been there for me more times than I can count. If I needed to find out information, something for my kids, she would have found it out for me. If I needed a drive somewhere, if she couldn’t take me, she’d arrange a cab. So I could go in a cab and I didn’t have to pay for it. As a matter of fact....well it wasn’t actually her because she wasn’t in that week, but when I found out my son was autistic, it was her co-worker that came with me to find out the results. She drove me to the appointment and was there as my support because I didn’t know how to take something like that. And drove me back home and talked to me about it and stuff. [My support person] has been there since...three or four years ago. They’ve been my supports here.

As is discussed in greater detail in the final chapter, there is a sense that being listened to without judgment is important in relationship formation with people from within the formal social systems. One participant speaks of an organization when she shared a photo (see figure 22):

I took a picture of the youth leadership sign. It’s just the [youth] organization and people like [the centre’s coordinator] try so hard to see the good in you. The way
that you’re worthwhile. It’s good to see that people like that exist. Especially when down here the youth get crapped on a lot. And there are people like [the coordinator] that are more or less our positive voice. Like, these people might be doin’ bad things but show them what good things they can do. So the organizations and [the coordinator] in particular is the one I want to highlight most because I’ve seen her do a lot of good work.

Figure 22: Youth Leadership sign

Another discussion about some of the people who work at another organization also centres around the need to feel valued:

**Participant:** Just because they’re so supportive. I mean even if you tell them things you think are going to shock them or make them look down on you.

**Tanya:** They never do?

**Participant:** No, they are always so positive and so encouraging.

**Tanya:** Is that important?

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25 The sign reads: “Youth leadership is caring enough and taking responsibility to make things go right for your life, for your family, for the program, for the community.
Participant: Really! Very important. Especially for me. Because I'm one of those types of people that I may do things good or I might think I do things good but I need to hear it from other people. So like I said, when you get places like [this] you get a lot of that support, and encouragement and praise and what not.

Participants’ ability to befriend support workers and to find organizations that ‘value’ them becomes key skills in their struggle to obtain the resources they need to survive. For some, their relationships with these workers and organizations become a principal source of their social capital. In reality, the support people and organizations often wield little power of their own in various social fields. However, support people’s knowledge about the field and the rules of the game is still extremely helpful to the participants who embody less social power and capital than the workers.

Family networks

Family networks play a double-edged role in the social and economic health experiences of participants in this study. Family emerged as an intricate part of every participant’s life. Participants’ family of origin -- parents and guardians and siblings along with extended family members-- actively have an impact on the decisions, actions, experiences, and perceptions shared by participants. In some cases, aspects of the relationships are positive and appear to enhance the participants’ sense of social and economic health. One participant states:

Well, my dad was my biggest influence since I was young. He got a [labourer] job when he was seventeen years old. He’s been there for thirty-five years. And he’s been a wicked dad! He took us for walks when we were little kids. If he didn’t have money to do something with us, we were happy, we were doin’ something
else. And that’s the way I want to be. I want to be that for my children. I don’t want them to revert to drugs and alcohol because they don’t have a car. Or they don’t have money to go to the movies or they’re not involved in baseball or hockey or whatever it is that they want to do. They’re gonna be able to do it ‘cause I’ll have the money and say, ‘here, go do it’.

It is interesting that while the participant credits his dad for being a good dad even with limited resources, the young man recognizes that in the contemporary social field he must have economic capital to endow his own children with any form of social or cultural capital.

Participants suggest that they need to rely on family when there is family that can help:

**Participant One**: Dependence is a big thing. Like me? I’m very dependent. I depend on my parents for everything. If it wasn’t for them I’d be (pause). And that is how it is! And I mean, they don’t have a lot...they don’t have anything!

**Participant Two**: If it wasn’t for my [partner’s mother], I wouldn’t be here now. I’d be that broke I wouldn’t have been able to afford groceries since about 3 months ago. You gotta borrow until your next money comes.

The ‘dependence’ the participants describe is somewhat commonplace in family systems on Cape Breton Island and suggests that de-traditionalization and individualization, particularly in relation to the family, has been, to a degree, resisted and has not occurred in this semi-rural community to the same extent that it may be occurring in other regions.
Still, in some instances the support from family is conditional, unreliable and inadequate. Participants refer to encounters with family members that resulted in the help and support they had received being terminated without warning. Some participants spoke about their home life as being unstable when they were younger and being forced to move out as teenagers and being cut off from any family support. Some participants recalled being isolated from their family unit through negative verbal and nonverbal behaviours:

Me and my mother don’t get along. She did try her best but she was an alcoholic.

I was adopted so I heard a lot of different things like you were only adopted because we wanted you to do house work, you’re not our real [sibling]. I’m still called the black sheep of the family.

In many cases, the family members are experiencing their own serious barriers to social and economic health. They have little social capital of their own. Further, as mentioned in the next chapter, if participants do try to shift their position in various fields, some families seem to perceive the shift as a threat or devaluing of their own power in the field of family.

Participants spoke about the concern and worry they feel for family members, particularly in relation to their parents’ and siblings’ economic circumstances. Others told stories about moving away only to return out of concern for family members whom they felt needed them. The price of the return was sometimes participants’ own social and economical health. For example, some participants gave up jobs in other parts of the country, returned to Cape Breton and were unable to find work and no longer had access to the social capital available to them before they relocated back to Cape
Breton. Hence, in many cases, the family network becomes a factor that impedes the participants' attempts to engage in positive and active personal development and attempts at upward mobility in the current social field they both occupy. Participants' apparent 'willingness' to give up opportunities to secure their own forms of capital in order to care for their families provides an interesting point for analysis. It is possible that within the field of family, participants do have some power and their behaviors reflect their need to hold on to such power. They have no guarantee that their attempts to make a mobility shift will be successful and so they may be reluctant to relinquish the capital they do hold in the field of family even if it has little value exchange in other fields.

The often conflicting role family plays on participants' experiences of social and economic health are looked at more closely in chapter six. Historical and gendered dimensions of family care deserve consideration and are examined in chapter seven.

**Informal social networks**

Informal social networks refer to the roles that friends, neighbors, and fellow parents, play in social and economic healthy living. Young adults in this study suggested that when attempting to make class and personal upward mobility shifts, their social circles of friends and family often hinder that process or at least add to the emotional price of making such changes. Moreover, it becomes a challenge for participants to find people with whom to develop healthy informal social networks.

There is sometimes a perception that in a small community everyone looks out for one another. While in certain instances this may be the case, challenges abound when individuals try to make positive personal changes in a small community.
According to the participants, it is virtually impossible to be ‘anonymous’ in their community. Thus, a move towards a healthier lifestyle is often thwarted or impeded by peer and social groups who are not always prepared to support a young person in their struggle for a better life. Again, peers’ responses may be a result of what they perceive as a threat to their own capital (such as status within a social network of friends and acquaintances). Because it is a small community, it is not easy to avoid or remove oneself from a social circle that has a negative impact on one’s life. For example, a young woman spoke of her struggle to overcome drug addiction and break free of the peer network that was connected to her drug abuse.

**Participant:** ....My other friends, that I used to have, are all drug addicts and everything. And I mean when I was high they were my friends. But now that I’m not anymore? *(shakes her to indicate they are no longer her friends).* And if they cared enough to stop and say, “Well I can’t be around her” [it would be easier]. But you have to distance *yourself* from that stuff.

**Tanya:** Is that hard to do in a small community?

**Participant:** Oh My God!! Yeah!! I mean everybody knows everybody and that may be good in some ways, but in a lot of ways it’s bad. You can’t escape it. There’s no way to escape it.

The participants’ comment illustrates, once again, the enmeshed nature of the physical space and social positioning in social fields, as well as the challenges associated with attempts to transcend one’s position. Some participants suggest that if they lived in a city they could avoid the neighborhoods associated with high drug use and avoid the drug culture. Their comments confirm the point made by Chief MacLeod.
regarding the spread out nature of the drug problem in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. In the small community, some participants believe ‘drugs are everywhere’. For those concerned about their own drug use it is hard to find a ‘safe’ place to go and ‘break the habit’. Moreover, even if they do manage to stop using drugs, they are still perceived as part of the drug culture wherever they go in the small community.

Moreover, this participant’s entire way of being in various social fields has been influenced by a drug culture. Drugs were part of her home life as a child and the capital she was endowed with from her parents included learning how to function in the social fields that included that drug culture. Her desire to ‘escape’ is not enough to propel a significant shift in her habitus and her current endowment of resources and capital has little value outside of the physical space and social fields which she occupies.

One participant says he will not do drugs anymore if he moves away because he will stay away from places and peoples where drug use is common. He thinks about the kind of people he will associate with if he moves off the island.

[One person I know] he’s makin good money out [west] and he’s by himself. He’s not into drugs and he’s a wicked hockey player. That’s the kind of people I’m going to get involved with out there.

He also stated:

Alot of people are like “You’ll love it out west, it’s a wicked party town, lots of bars’. And I’m like, ‘Listen man, don’t give me your number because that’s the last number I’m gonna call’.

This participant believes that a shift in his physical space will be enough to enable him to avoid the social spaces he has occupied in Cape Breton. While there is
no way to know for sure whether the physical shift will be enough to ensure a change in social positioning for this young man, the embodied nature of habitus and social space cannot be underestimated. The process of change may not be easy.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter participants' experiences and perceptions of social and economic health in their community were presented within the contexts of the inter-related physical and social spaces they occupy. Through their own words and photographs, participants provided meaningful insights into their day to day lives that depict their struggles in economic, cultural, and social fields.

The physical space participants occupy is characterized for them by housing and neighborhoods, green space, public transportation, and the presence of the drug culture as it manifests in their space. Lack of adequate housing and access to safe neighborhoods serves as a symbolic example of participants' place in the hierarchy of social order in the community. Lack of transportation draws attention to the spatial and temporal distance between participants and access to goods and people that symbolize power and status. The physical presence of the drug culture in a semi-rural community leaves participants with the impression that drugs are everywhere and it is difficult to escape the impact drugs have on their neighborhoods, greens space, and ultimately their social space.

Participants' daily experiences, attitudes, and perceptions shed light on how they engage in struggles for social and economic health in economic, cultural, and social fields. Endowed with little capital that has significant exchange value in each field, they
do develop strategies that enable them to survive but that make it difficult for them to orchestrate a significant mobility shift within the various field.

The themes presented in this chapter are important in and of themselves. Still, they require more in-depth analysis and examination within the theoretical context of this research; a task taken up in the next two chapters
In this chapter, the concepts of habitus, field and symbolic domination are used to examine the implications of day to day struggles for social and economic health. First, the impact of the interplay between participants' habitus and the social fields they inhabit on how they understand and experience two key dimensions of social and economic health, family and economic security, are explored. Second, some of the psycho-social and emotional implications of symbolic domination as experienced through struggles for social and economic health are investigated.

**Interplay Between Habitus and Social Fields: Complexities and Tensions**

I tend to see the world as an intricate pattern of contradictions, complications, and blurred boundaries. The moments that cause me the deepest discomfort are those when I attempt to organize it as black and white (Fieldnotes, January 2007).

The analytical process of sifting through pages of transcripts, fieldnotes, photographs, and memories can be an overwhelming experience for researchers (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). A desire for clarity among the apparent chaos may lead one to search for pieces, like those in a puzzle that fit together neatly, in the hopes of constructing a clear and distinctive image. And yet, such an approach often masks complexities and seemingly divergent insights that deserve a place among the data and to be taken up as points of analysis. In this section, I investigate experiences and
perceptions presented by participants that are laden with conflicting and complicated perceptions. Specific attention is given to their struggles in relation to family and economics. The complicated nature of how participants articulate their experiences and perception around these themes suggests the complexity of their understandings of social and economic health as it is entrenched in their habitus and provides opportunities to investigate, at a deeper level, multiple issues relevant to the participants, particularly elements of social and economic symbolic domination they experience in the various social fields.

**Understanding Family through Habitus, Experiencing Family in Social Fields**

Family of origin and early family experiences are inscribed in agents and manifest and evolve in their daily practices, thoughts, and attitudes — understood here as their habitus. Further, agents' habitus, in turn, shapes the present day field of family. Hence, how family is experienced and perceived by participants and how family relations inform their daily practices in various social fields deserve close examination, particularly given that participants indicate family relations are central to their social and economic health.

Participants' focus on family may be somewhat typical given the working-class history of the community. Crompton (2006) reports that routine and manual workers tend to hold more 'traditional' attitudes regarding family than those with managerial and professional careers. She writes:

It is not being argued here that a tendency to place a greater emphasis on the family is necessarily class-specific, but rather, that the characteristics of working
class jobs are more likely, in aggregate, to result in people in such jobs putting a
greater emphasis on their families than people in more rewarding jobs (p. 666).

One participant’s notion of a ‘good dad’ supports Crompton’s position:

My dad worked fourteen [days], on fourteen [days] off. My dad had lots of time to
raise me and my sister and brothers. But a lot of time he wasn’t there but if
anything was ever needed or you needed him for health issues [he was there].
Like when I had my appendix taken out, no one knew what was wrong with me. I
was in the hospital for a week. My dad was workin’. [He] called off for a whole
week, spent every night with me in the hospital. And that’s a dad, that’s a good
dad. That’s what I want to be (Participant).

The participant shared other aspects of his notions of ‘family’ including the
importance of having a parent at home with the children, the desire for families to
remain physically close together and the sadness that exists when that is not possible,
the recognition of parental sacrifices for their children, and the responsibility children
have for their parents. He compares his perception of ‘family’ with what he perceives as
how ‘family’ plays out in more urban centres:

Participant: That’s the way it is [in Cape Breton]. You go to Ontario and you see
kids, they got off the bus from school and go home and their parents aren’t home
until about eight o’clock at night. They gotta make their own supper. They gotta
do the dishes. They gotta do their homework and by the time their dad and
mother get home from work everything’s done. They’re done eatin’. You know, sit
down, watch tv, have a chat. On the weekends [you] may be able to go out and
do family things but during the week between school and them both workin’
there's not a real family. And I hate it, I hate it. I agree with the men working and
the women not. Or vice versa. Who ever is more comfortable with the job. But
[it's all] for children....

_Tanya_: You think there needs to be someone home.

_Participant_: There has to be! There has to be a mother or father there. ‘Cause
it's not right. I don't know where I'd be or what I'd be if I never had my mother
there every day when I came home for school or makin’ my lunch every morning.

This participant identifies a distinction in how he experiences and understands family
(as a dimension of his habitus) and how he imagines other’s -- who occupy a different
physical and social space -- experience and understand family. And still, recognizing all
these factors, the participant’s other comments also express a disconnect -- a
contradiction between his attitudes and his actions and capabilities. Continuing his
discussion regarding ‘a good dad’ he adds:

And the reality is that here [in Cape Breton] if I was workin’ two weeks on, two
weeks off and my son was sick and he ended up in the hospital and I had three
other children, I can’t go home and spend that week in the hospital because I
can’t afford that. And in the same sense even if my wife or girlfriend worked, I still
couldn’t afford to take the time off.

The participant is adamant in his intent to move away in order that he can start a family
some day and provide for them the way he wants. At the same time, he recognizes that
he would be doing that in another part of the country where, from his perspective,
families exist in a way that he does not want for his family. The participant does not
currently have enough economic, social, and cultural capital to enable him to honor his
values and attitudes about family. And yet, in order to try to gather such capital, he may not be able to adhere to his family values. Hence, herein lies a tension between the participant’s habitus as it relates to family and the social fields he must occupy if he hopes to provide adequately for his family. It also marks a place where slight changes or shifts in habitus occur as individuals respond to their social field and the social field in turn responds to the shifts in the patterns of dispositions exhibited by agents.

**Contradictory nature of family**

I am beginning to articulate some of the tension I feel in regards to notions of ‘family’. In my community, I understand family as a concept tied up with ‘duty’, ‘obligation’, and ‘expectation’ that spreads out almost endlessly across extended and distant relatives and in-laws. Apart from what I imagine to be solid relationships with my parents and my own family made up of my spouse and children, I sense I have failed miserably to live up to my responsibility as a ‘good’ Cape Breton family member (Fieldnotes, January, 2007).

How family is experienced and perceived is complicated. Cape Breton like, many small communities, has a reputation of close knit families looking out for one another. People are often identified by their family. Most new interactions begin with the question, ‘What’s your father’s name?’ and from there begins the process of positioning an individual in a family unit. My great grandmother reveled in revealing that new acquaintances I brought to visit were in fact distant relations -- family in her mind although not necessarily in mine. I believe my own understanding of family to be deeply rooted in my historical and working class Cape Breton background-- in my habitus. Further, the disjuncture between the familial expectations I believe are placed upon me
and which I place on those around me and what I perceive as my experiences and abilities to meet those expectations is somewhat commonplace; particularly in a community that is struggling to re-identify itself in the face of post-industrialism and social and economic disadvantage. Moreover, I argue that the sense of a disconnect between commonly held conceptions of ‘family’ and lived realities is somewhat typical among individuals who seek economic security and jobs with a living wage that can support their family values. Perhaps because they understand family has less symbolic value if it is not accompanied by economic, cultural, and social capital.

The experiences and perceptions shared by participants in this study express the complex nature of their own familial experiences. Focusing on their complicated family relationships, the social and economic health inequalities as they relate to the family are exposed. Furthermore, a space is created for a critique of how social and economic health disparities in relation to family are sometimes tackled (or not tackled) at a societal level. Two overlapping realms of complexities as they relate to family are examined; those tied up with family responsibilities and those attached to dominant notions of family and parenting and class advantage and disadvantage.

Complexities of family responsibilities

Earlier in this chapter, tension embedded within a participant’s expectations of a ‘family’ and his ability to fulfill such obligations while living in Cape Breton was presented. His experience is similar to many of the participants. And further tensions surrounding family responsibility and duty and participants’ social and economic health exist. For example, some participants expressed a sense of responsibility for family members even when those family members have been a source of abuse and neglect.
Their sense of ‘duty’ collides with their distrust of and anger towards members of their family. In addition, participants who express displeasure with attitudes and behaviours exhibited by their family members also rely on those same people. One participant’s comment very clearly depicts the conflicting nature of family ties:

[Having extended family] has its benefits and its downfalls. And its benefits are (pause). Okay (pause) let’s say my kids get to the age where they want to experiment with drugs. It would be a lot easier for me to find out whose givin’ my kids drugs but at the same time there’s a very good chance it’s probably one of my family members that gave it to them.

The same participant on other occasions spoke of the importance of extended family and how she wants her children to know their family in the community. Some participants expressed anger and sadness towards the destructive behaviour of close relatives that causes the participants severe emotional, social and economic pain for a great portion of their lives. And still, in many cases, they often protect these people even when it may be detrimental to their own circumstance. Moreover, some participants, like many other members of society across socio-economic boundaries, have made decisions that severely limit their own opportunities for upward mobility in an effort to appease the same family members. Such decisions include turning down employment opportunities, dropping out of school, and moving back to Cape Breton even when it means losing economic security. In other cases, a ‘family name’ can haunt young adults who perceive that their life chances in the small community are severely inhibited as a result of ‘guilt by association’. Some participants contend that they have missed out on opportunities because of negative reputations associated with their
families. The sense of 'obligation' to family -- a critical aspect of participants' habitus --
despite the potential harm it brings to participants, draws attention to the durable nature
of habitus and its deeply-rooted existence within agents.

A youth worker who has extensive experience working with young adults and
who has forged positive relationships with many youth, addresses the nature of family in
the lives of the young people with whom she has worked. She observes that family
often becomes a significant barrier to positive personal, social, and economic change.
Families, knowingly and unknowingly, discourage -- and in some instances even
sabotage -- young adults' efforts. Consequently, many young adults feel unworthy of
their changing life circumstances and are unable to carry though with their
development. She notes that even when family life is less than positive it is still a
significant part of young adults' social network and often the only one they know. The
fear of losing that support, even when it is inconsistent and conditional, is great. While
the social resources they obtain from their family connections have little value exchange
in other social fields, for some, such social resources are all they have. Further, the
connections do sometimes enable them to survive in their physical space, even though
that space may be less than socially and economically healthy. Hence, it makes sense
that as the youth worker has seen in many cases, while young adults may make
significant positive life changes they have difficulty sustaining the changes over the long
term.

This youth worker contends that for any lasting positive change to take place,
one thing that must happen is young adults' way of thinking must undergo a shift. She
points out that many young adults, with whom she works, including some people in this
study, are at physical, social, economic, and psychological risk and have been at risk their entire lives as a result of their lived circumstances. As young adults, their thinking is in survival mode and what they have to do and what they imagine they have to do to survive is sometimes physically and psychologically damaging to themselves and others. The notion of habitus is useful here in that it helps to clarify the depth of the patterns of thought and actions exhibited by young adults in regards to their families. The historical notions of ‘family’ along with early childhood and familial experiences are shaping the participants’ habitus. Hence, a shift in habitus may be needed to precipitate a shift in thinking that can help facilitate positive changes in the lives of the young adults in this study. Interestingly, participants’ response to their disadvantage and their often verbalized awareness that family expectations placed upon them are sometimes unrealistic, do imply changes, however slight, are occurring (albeit not always socially and economically healthy changes) in the habitus. Still, until the conditions that have placed the young adults at risk in the first place are addressed, expecting a significant shift in habitus is probably unrealistic.

Some may contend that this scenario presents itself across many settings and is not necessarily unique to semi-rural post-industrial communities -- and to an extent, I agree. Still, the degree to which the situation is complicated by socio-economic disadvantage and lack of material capital within not just family units but entire communities and regions cannot be underestimated. Many of the tensions participants experience in relation to their extended family are significantly linked to all parties’ lack of social, cultural, and material capital in the physical space and social fields they occupy. As discussed later in this chapter, there are psycho-social costs to class
disadvantage and those costs often manifest in all dimensions of individuals’ lives, including their family relationships. Traditionally-held roles can seldom be fulfilled in a new economy. The generative nature of habitus means that individuals react to the shifting social and economic landscape in different ways along different timelines; and factors such as generational and gender gaps further complicate how people respond to their lived circumstances and the people in their lives.

Hence, the complex nature of how participants experience and perceive family responsibility has an impact upon the socio-economic circumstances of their lives and their struggles to secure capital. The situation can lend itself to a reproduction of social and economic health inequalities through experiences and notions of family. At the same time the generative dimension of habitus becomes more evident as participants’ comments and expressed experiences illustrate changing aspirations (such as one young man’s plan to leave Cape Breton and start a new life despite the fact that he knows his father wants him to stay) and reflective concern regarding family ties (such as one woman’s concern regarding the potentially harmful influence family members may have on her children). Consequently, what may emerge is space to disturb those commonly held conceptions that support inequality.

Complications surrounding dominant notions of family and parenting and class advantage and disadvantage

In recent years, issues of class have received little attention in social theory (Gillies, 2005b; Walkerdine; 2003; Walkerdine, Lucey & Melody, 2001; Reay, 1997). Skeggs (1997) argues: “The recent retreat from the study of class has been enacted by those who do have the requisite access [to be middle class] and are claiming that their
privilege is not an issue” (p. 75). Still, in keeping with research conducted by others such as Gillies (2005a; 2005b), Walkerdine et al. (2001), and Skeggs (1997), the findings from this study strongly indicate that class and access to economic and social capital that can be used to gain educational and other forms of cultural capital play a significant role in the social and economic health of the participants and their families.

For example, one mother struggles to accrue cultural capital through education that she will be able to pass on to her children. However, her lack of economic capital means that she cannot afford what she considers adequate childcare. Instead, she must rely on family members with whom she does not share views on parenting and who she feels do not care for her children the way she would care for them. Consequently, she feels she sacrifices her parenting values. Her ‘choice’ to employ what she considers less than adequate childcare places her in conflict with dominant notions of parenting. Other parents note that as much as they want to expose their children to particular cultural and recreational opportunities, their geographic location and financial resources make it almost impossible. At the same time, they make every effort to distinguish themselves from ‘bad’ parenting discourses that are often associated with the economically disadvantaged parents. Parents in this study walk a tight rope, well aware that how they parent is judged by society and that the unequal distribution of resources is seldom factored into the judgment. Participants’ misrecognition of dominant notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ discourses of parenting, and their struggle to obtain the ‘right’ cultural capital to endow upon their children without the privilege of economic capital, depicts the embodied nature of symbolic domination and serves as an example of symbolic violence.
Crompton (2006) holds that empirical work (for example, see Walkerdine et al., 2001 and Reay, 2004, 2002) reveals class differences in how children are socialized and the ways and amount of time parents invest in facilitating their children's social and educational skill development. She continues:

This has been described as the generation of 'habitus' -- things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to a probable 'upcoming' 'future' (Bourdieu cited in Ball, 2003:16). From a relatively early age, therefore, children acquire, (or do not acquire) behaviours appropriate (or not appropriate) for educational and occupational success, as cultural capital is transformed into 'consecrated' educational capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Class differentials in educational and occupational attainment, therefore, are maintained via the unequal endowments of 'cultural capital' possessed by individuals in different classes and largely acquired within the family (Crompton, 2006, p. 661).

From this perspective, poverty and class disadvantage become tied up with morality, intelligence, and personal character. Walkerdine's (2003) explanation of the use of the term, class, demonstrates a genealogy of this connection. She writes:

The use of the term 'class' as a mode of classification is taken to have begun with Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army in the nineteenth century, and was therefore always a moralized category. The mapping of areas of the cities in terms of the spread of disease, and of crime, went alongside the emergence of psychology as a tool for the classification of types of personality and intelligence. Sociology and psychology became the twin disciplines through which class was produced as a truth through which urban population of industrialized cities could
be managed. This mode of classification of the population became, following Marx, also the basis of an emancipatory politics and an account of economic exploitation and oppression (p. 238-239).

Certain approaches to social policies in contemporary Canadian society appear to have roots in a ‘moralized’ conception of class such as that described by Walkerdine. For example, a thread of social policies in this country aims to ‘teach’ citizens how to be ‘good’ parents in order that their children may grow up and contribute positively to the greater good of society. Jenson (2004) describes this paradigm of family social policy in Canada as ‘investing in children’. She explains:

[The investment in children policy paradigm] describes the responsibility for children’s well-being as one of partnership; parents are not left to their own devices to provide all that their children need. Indeed, according to this paradigm, general societal well-being depends on children. In this vision, children are investments for the future. They have present needs, but the way they are addressed will have consequences for the future of the society. Therefore, early childhood initiatives, early childhood education and care, and developmental monitoring become important policy instruments. In this policy paradigm, it is legitimate to help parents realize their investment and therefore for the state to “invest” in children (Jenson, 2004, p.176).

26 Children as social investment is positioned beside another social policy paradigm Jenson refers to as family responsibility in which parents are solely responsible for the welfare of the children. She writes: The role of public policy is to facilitate their decision-making by opening a range of options and allowing parents to make choices. However, finding the necessary resources, especially financial, to support certain options is also the responsibility of families. Therefore, this policy paradigm addresses the needs of children only indirectly (Jenson, 2004, p. 173). Jenson contends that both paradigms exist parallel to one another yet children as social investment is gaining more ground.
From within this framework, the state is involved in ‘helping’ parents become ‘good’ parents. The intent here is not to engage in a comprehensive analysis of a particular policy. Instead a goal is to highlight that at policy and programming levels there are particular notions of family and parenting that are promoted as ‘right’. Hence, it is useful to note that there appears to be particular assumptions underlying an *investment in children* policy paradigm. For example, there seems to be a notion that so-called ‘good’ parenting will produce ‘good’ citizens. But whose values are deemed as most likely to facilitate good parenting and what values are embodied by good citizens? Gillies (2005a) argues middle class parenting strategies have been determined as the ‘proper’ approach to parenting in order to produce adults endowed with middle class values. Consequently, many policies and programs designed to ‘educate’ parents are often directed at socio-economically disadvantaged parents. Good parenting is hailed as the way to help children ‘break free from the cycle of poverty’ (Gillies, 2005a, 2005b). Using Bourdieu’s theoretical tools, it appears that in the social and cultural fields, practices and resources embodied by the dominant agents in the field (in this case, those classified as middle class) are misrecognized as legitimate and having value. Other agents in the field struggle to access the valuable resources by adopting practices symbolically recognized as valuable. The struggles and patterns of behaviour adopted by the agents, in turn, reinforce the field and legitimize the symbolic capital at stake.

The prevalence of ‘good parenting’/‘bad parenting’ discourse was apparent through many of the comments made by participants in this study, particularly as they described their experiences with family and social networks. In a discussion regarding youth crime one participant claims:
I think the parents are a big, big part of [the problem]. Because most of the parents down here (on Cape Breton Island) are idiots! I'll be straight forward. They’re idiots! ....They don't care about their kids. They let them run loose...all the time they’re just running around. And there's no stability, there's no responsibility there. Cape Breton's just turning into a great big joke in my eyes. A great big joke.

One parent went as far as to suggest that when a child from a 'good' family gets into trouble it is usually a result of their involvement with kids from 'bad' families. I've even seen kids come from good homes get into bad things and the parents sit there and blame themselves. But it goes back to what you *(pointing to another participant)* say -- peer pressure -- who they're hangin' around. Because the ratio of parents that are good to parents that are bad...the ratio of parents that are bad, there are more of. Their off-spring is affecting the off-spring of the good parents. And then, you know, what I mean, it poisons the pot. I'm not sayin' the kids are bad and it's *all* their fault, it's just....

By adopting this discourse, participants help to reproduce the assumption that parents who fail to accept their responsibility to 'invest' in their children by parenting a particular way and instilling particular values are not contributing to the social good of the community. At the same time, most participants are part of a demographic that is often accused of not 'investing' in their children’s future. This may help to explain why a number of the parents in this study were eager to differentiate themselves from the 'bad' parents as is evident in the following comment:
The other thing that I find...that I've had a really, really, really hard time is makin' friends with other parents, present company excluded, because of habits I wouldn't normally let be done around my kids. Because they (other parents) have absolutely no idea ...because to most of us it would be obviously wrong but to them it doesn’t. Like stuff like getting high [in front of kids] (Participant).

The language adopted by this participant suggests that despite challenges, she 'chooses' to parent a particular way and other parents she encounters have no idea they are making 'bad' choices. Hence, she 'chooses' not to interact with them. The language of 'choice' she adopts is reflective of prevalent neoliberal discourses in contemporary society based on the assumption that parent can 'choose' to parent well and, in turn, their children will become healthy 'good' citizens. ‘Good parenting’ discourse such as the one described above leaves little room to consider the role class advantage and disadvantage plays in parenting and conceptions of family. The nature of habitus might help to explain why class disadvantage is not always recognized as such and why it is often reframed as flaws in individuals and groups of individuals. Lawlor (2004) suggests that habitus is relational to fields. Accordingly, families are always negotiating economic and cultural fields. Lawlor (2004) further notes that habitus exist in relation to one another:

Because habitus are profoundly social, they carry traces of the line of divisions and distinctions along which the social is organized. That is, class, race, gender, sexuality, and so on, are all marked with habitus. Further and because these social distinctions are hierarchical, not all habitus are worth the same. Some are normalized while others are pathological (p. 112).
Lawlor (2004) explains further:

What gives habitus its particular force, in this context, is that power is conceptualized as working such that it is not what you do or what you have, that is marked as wrong or right, normal or pathological, but who you are. This is not to deny that subjects can resist such a positioning, nor that habitus may be imperfectly aligned with the field. However, it is important to note that there are some people who, by virtue of their habitus, are able to pass judgment, implicitly or explicitly, on others, and to make that judgment count. Differences between habitus, then, come to be made into inequalities (p.112-113).

As already suggested, when differences between habitus are judged, as they are in classification struggles in various social fields, middle class values tend to be perceived as the 'norm' and typical working class values are often perceived as flawed. Social policy and programming that advocate educating families on how to parent do not always reflect the social and economic realities of families. For example, Gillies (2005b) found that working class families teach their children survival and how to 'fit in':

...parents in our sample with severely restricted access to resources struggled to preserve their limited stock of capital, and in the process actively inculcated their children with crucial survival skills. Working-class mothers and fathers in our sample were emotionally and practically engaged in helping their children negotiate disadvantages and challenges that were considerably less likely to trouble middle class children or their parents. This often set their practices at odds with the normative values structuring 'inclusion' initiatives, particularly in terms of education and discipline. Poverty, low social status, and high
vulnerability to emotional and physical violence were rarely compatible with middle class ideals of parental investment in education and democratic child-rearing styles. Instead working class parents were more concerned to ensure that their children have the skills and the strength to be able to cope with the instability, injustice, and hardship that will most likely characterize their lives. (p.842).

One participant in this Cape Breton study noted how she had received little in the way of help as a student in public school and attributes her decision to leave school before completing high school, in part to the lack of support she received. It was not until years later she was diagnosed with a learning disability. One of her children has also been diagnosed with learning difficulties. Accordingly, much of her energy as a single mother goes into ensuring her child feels emotionally secure in school. It appears that while she wants him to achieve academic success in school, his sense of well-being in the educational environment is at the heart of her concern. She does not want her child to experience a sense of isolation. She wants him to fit in. She worries about how the teachers will treat him. And she fears if she advocates for him it may have a negative impact on how teachers and administrators treat him. Her concerns are similar to those of many of the working class mothers in Reay’s (2004) research who placed their children’s emotional comfort ahead of academic success. Their approach was differentiated from that of many middle class parents who tended to place academic success first, even when there was an emotional cost (such as stress related to the pressure to succeed) on both parents and children. 27 The intent here is not to claim

27 In many cases, Reay found that the middle class parents felt the long term benefits outweighed the short term emotional costs.
either approach is better than the other. Still, the educational field values academic success and the approach adopted by the middle class parents tend to be perceived as normative. Regardless of the circumstances, if the study participant’s child does not achieve academic success he will have difficulty securing social and economic health.

Discourses of ‘good’ parenting/ ‘bad’ parenting and children as social investment shift focus away from the very real economic conditions of many parents and their economic disadvantage. Affluent families are better positioned to provide economic comfort for their children and more likely able to ensure their children inherit material capital. The participant concerned about her son’s learning disability indicated that economic security would make it easier for her to help her child achieve academic success along with emotional comfort. She would be able to hire tutors and take advantage of other supports that are available to those who can afford to pay for them. What actually happens is that she has to set aside her own educational and career goals to provide her child the additional help he needs -- making it increasingly difficult for her to achieve economic security. She explains:

Especially with [my child] -- his learning disability. They’re talkin’ about later on if he needs it they’re goin’ to get him a computer and everything because they don’t know if he’s gonna be able to read or write or anything. It’s gonna take a lot. I could go and study my butt off. But I still need to have the extra time to deal with him and help him with everything he needs. And spend time with my daughter. I mean, it’s hard when you’re a single mother...it’s hard. I just don’t have enough hours in a day.
On top of increased concerns for their children’s emotional well-being in the educational system, economically disadvantaged parents contend with the very practical economics associated with school success:

It is really tough especially as a single mother. It is very, very tough. It’s like this month here (August) I’m ready to pull my hair out because I’m trying to get all the school supplies. I’m trying to get their back- to- school clothes. I still didn’t get their school bags and sneakers. I just put down a two hundred dollar lay away. I got each of them a snow suit (Participant).

Gillies (2005b) argues:

The notion that parenting practices can be separated out from socio-economic status and then used to explain the inequality it is necessarily grounded in, highlights a very particular understanding of class in terms of gradients of personal development. Structural and other constraints on action are dismissed in this model of agentic, reflexive self, with appropriately raised citizens assumed to be able to negotiate and transcend obstacles in their path by exploiting opportunities, developing skills and managing risk (p. 840).

While participants in this study often appear to ‘judge’ what they deem as ‘bad’ parenting and work to distinguish themselves from commonly held perceptions of ‘bad’ parents, they also acknowledge ‘poor parenting’ as a result of material poverty. Further they recognize, in most instances, how economic disadvantage makes their work as parents challenging. Parent participants in this study unequivocally stated that economic disadvantage is an on-going barrier to their families’ social and economic health. Their lack of material capital cannot be separated from the functioning of their
families and their ability to positively facilitate their children’s life chances. Accordingly, they sometimes engage in practices in an effort to minimize the impact of the inequalities they experience -- such as the steps taken by the mother cited above to attend first to her son’s emotional well-being in academic settings to protect him from potential discrimination. Hence, there is a degree of consciousness of practices exhibited by parents in this study. But, as Bourdieu (2001) contends, raising one’s consciousness is not enough to entirely disrupt the deeply embedded nature of symbolic domination.

Gillies’ (2005b) own research with working-class and middle-class parents confirms that economics coupled with social, cultural, and personal resources work in concert in families. They must be explored in relation to one another. She writes: “…our research highlights the way individualized understandings of class facilitate a middle-class ‘discourse of entitlement’ which itself becomes key resources for cementing family privilege” (Gillies, 2005b, p.842).

In this segment the complex nature of participants’ experiences and notions of family were considered in light of contemporary discourses and publicly held assumptions of family and parenting. Economically disadvantaged young adults in this economically depressed region of the country are attempting to negotiate their traditionally held notions of family embedded in their habitus with those in contemporary social fields of practice. In a neoliberal climate characterized, in part, by individualized discourses -- as evident in social policy that aims to ‘teach’ good parenting, without acknowledgment of the need for adequate social and economic state support -- attention is diverted from the social and economic disparity among citizens. By
attempting to survive culturally and materially, economically disadvantaged young adults have little recourse but to attempt to adopt dominant discourses of family and parenting and accordingly they experience the weight of symbolic domination.

However, as is noted throughout this dissertation, these participants are not entirely in the dark as to what is going on. They know there are serious flaws in the 'system' and they are unfairly paying the price for those flaws. Still, as pointed out earlier, awareness of 'systemic' problems is not enough to disrupt the inequalities.

If it is quite illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with the weapons of consciousness and will alone, this is because the effect and conditions of its efficacy are durably and deeply embedded in the body in the form of dispositions. This is seen, in particular, in the case of relations of kinship and all relations built on that model, in which these durable dispositions of the socialized body are expressed and experienced in the logic of feeling (filial love, fraternal love, etc.) or duty, which are often merged in the experience of respect and devotion and may live on long after the disappearance of their social conditions of production (Bourdieu, 2001, p.39).

Nevertheless, participants efforts to 'negotiate' with their children their way through the contemporary social field of family may reflect shifts in their habitus that challenge, to an extent, historical notions of class and family relations in this post-industrial community.
Economic Security: Exiting Physical Space

I wish I wouldn’t have to move. I wish my father hadn’t passed on—there’s nothing I could do about that. I wish I hadn’t been living on my own since I was 15 till I’m 21. I wish I could have picked a better time to have a child. I wish I hadda had the sense in my head to not plan a pregnancy when I was 20 years old. (pause)

There’s so many things, right? (Participant)

Economic security refers to participants’ sense that their economic circumstance is stable and secure. For example, they want to know that they will have money in the future. They do not want to have to worry about whether or not they will have a job tomorrow, next week, next month or next year. Or they do not want to find out with little or no notice that their income assistance has been adjusted, shifted, or terminated.

They do not want to live with uncertainty. In other words, they want to secure economic capital. And yet, in their community, participants struggle with little success.

Consequently, to get out from under this sense of economic insecurity, many young adults contemplate leaving their community. Currently, ‘out west’, which usually refers to Alberta, is a common destination for many young adults. Ontario, and to a lesser extent Halifax, are also mentioned as places to go to find economic security. As one participant puts it:

But there’s not enough jobs around here and everything is closing down and it’s just horrible. I mean people are actually having to leave. They have to leave.

They have kids comin’ and they’re livin’ out on the street because they’re fightin’ with their parents. I mean what options do they have if nobody’s gonna help
them. They gotta go somewhere where they’re sayin’ they’re gonna help them and right now that’s out west. That’s why everyone’s leavin’.

‘Moving away’ creates additional concerns and worries such as leaving behind partners and children and starting a life in an unfamiliar environment. Participants struggle with their decisions concerning whether or not to move away to gain economic security. Hence, the issues associated with staying or leaving are riddled with complications and many participants change their views on the issue on a regular basis as is evident in the following discussion:

Participant One: No, I don’t think I’ll stay. I got plans of leaving actually. I’m waiting to get a letter faxed down from an employer in Calgary. ‘Cause there’s not enough money here and I can’t be bothered to wait and wait for nothin’.

Tanya: Would [your partner and children] all go?

Participant One: I’ll go and she’ll stay with her mother or ...I don’t know if I’ll have her move in with her mother or keep the place I got down there. ‘Cause I don’t know if I’ll want to come back. I might get out there and like it. If I get out there and like it I might send her the money and get her to come out. Get a place out there, right? ‘Cause I mean, it’s a lot easier to survive out there. There’s more work. There’s more everything, right?

Participant Two: You can always come home to visit if you want to see your parents, you know? That’s the only thing holding me back. My parents aren’t getting any younger.
Participant One: The only thing is when you think about it, it’s a big city. It’s not what we’re used to. We’re used to growing up in a place like this. It’s a lot different.

Participant Three: Yeah, I know. It’s not slow...it’s fast.

Participant One: It’s gonna be a big change. Run off your feet, right?

Participant Two: Shock to your system. You get jet lagged right away when you get there.

Participant One: Think of the heat! Like if I get out there in the next couple of weeks...say I get out there in a month or the next month. I’m still gonna die in the heat. I’ll be out there workin’ my guts out.

‘Considering leaving’ is entrenched in the historical habitus of many Cape Bretoners. Most immigrants to the island left their countries of origin in order to survive. Almost every generation since has had to contemplate leaving for similar reasons. ‘Leaving’ sometimes offers a potential escape from social and economic disadvantage. The conception that escape from social and economic inequality is possible by changing one’s physical space demonstrates the significant relationship between physical and social spaces.

At the same time, the difficulty inherent in the decision to leave suggests a physical space is never entirely escapable. Agents embody the physical space they inhabit and it is a dimension of their habitus. Patterns of behaviours, attitudes, and values reflect an agents’ physical place and social spaces. And while in a new physical space how habitus plays out in day-to-day practices may vary somewhat from those...

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28 The complexities of ‘leaving’ a rural community are multiple and deserve in-depth consideration. For a deeper analysis of the issues of ‘leaving’ coastal communities as it relates to education see Michael Corbett’s (2007) book, Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling in a Coastal Community.
exhibited in the original physical space, the habitus still remains intact; fluid and
generative, but still intact. Further, there is the chance that patterns of behaviours and
attitudes that hold some value and perhaps wield some power and status in the original
physical place and social fields may have little exchange value in the new place.

Throughout the course of this study, participants frequently considered leaving
the island and two actually did. The rollercoaster decision-making process regarding
whether to stay or leave in order to find economic security has a direct impact on
participants’ perception of their community’s future as is evident in the following
comments:

I say in ten years that’s all any of us will have- a memory or photograph of what it
used to be like in Cape Breton.....In the future looking back at where I’m going to
be. Saying, ‘Man I wish things could have went differently’.

A month later the same participant made the following comment:

Like I’m sayin’, there’s a lot more hope, like everybody’s tryin’. There’s more
businesses that are tryin’ to hire more young people. I mean they’re givin’ us a
chance, right? It’s not like it’s totally hopeless and it makes you feel good, right?

I suggest these conflicting perceptions may be a reflection of a dimension of
participants’ habitus in relation to how they experience the state of ‘now’. Most of these
young people live from day to day and have done so their entire lives. As such, they
seem to describe their insights as they appear to them ‘in the moment’. Hence, in many
ways, as their photographs capture a ‘moment in time’, their insights and perceptions do
as well. The aspects of their perceptions they choose to share often reflect the
circumstances in their lives on that day. If they run out of funds, have a falling out with
family members or friends that causes them to be without a place to live, or receive a lead on potential work or employment, these events appear to immediately color and shape their perceptions of social and economic health in their community which, in turn, has an impact upon their actions and practices, including deciding whether to stay or leave.

And yet the next day their expression of their views may be significantly different as those circumstances change. For example, the young man quoted above had a possible job opportunity in Alberta when he made the first statement. He had only a few days to make arrangements to leave if the job became a reality. Before the next statement was made, that plan had fallen through. He made the second comment a few days prior to an employment interview for a job in his own community. As it turned out he did not get that job. For this young man whose partner is expecting a baby, finding a source of income is critical to his ability to support his family. Whether or not he is going to have to move four thousand miles away from his pregnant partner is an enormous concern. And yet instead of being able to prepare one way or another, the plan keeps changing from week to week and some times from day to day.

While my own experiences alter my perceptions, my life circumstances are such that it is seldom on a daily basis that major events alter my social and economic security and comfort. Hence, it may appear that my perceptions alter more gradually over time and accordingly are not perceived as contradictions. Whereas, for many of the young people with whom I worked, their social and economic health is less secure and consistent and tends to shift radically and frequently. Returning to the issues of family values and parenting, such circumstances make it difficult for parents to ensure a
sense of security and stability in their family structures. Consequently, the ability to engage in what has been deemed ‘good’ parenting in contemporary Canadian society (parenting that reflects middle class values) becomes extremely difficult under the weight of uncertainty in regards to economic security and where a family or family member must go to try to find it.

Moreover, because participants’ often-changing perceptions appear contradictory, they may be unfairly dismissed as less thought-out and deeply seated. Hence, what are legitimate strategies of survival among a group with little power in various social fields are disregarded as weakness and serve to ‘justify’ and reinforce existing modes of symbolic domination. Instead, I argue their shifting perceptions speak to the nature of their habitus shaped, in part, by the precarious nature of their social and economic health. They expose the extent to which habitus and social fields inform and shape one another. Moreover, the changes in perceptions may be a sign of wider social changes shifting the habitus.

**Emotional Costs of Symbolic Domination**

Hope, contentment, worry, guilt, depression, stress, anger, frustration, joy, sadness, fear...over and over I heard the participants in this study express their emotional responses to their social and economic circumstances, to their social and economic realities and to how they want it to be...the emotional dimension of their social and economic health permeates all other dimensions.... (Fieldnotes, September, 2007).
Reay (2005) argues that “emotions and psychic responses to class and class inequalities contribute powerfully to the making of class” (p. 912). This emotional response is often intensified by agents’ ‘sense’ of the unfairness and inequality they experience. As Bourdieu (2001) asserts:

The practical acts of knowledge and recognition of the magical frontier between the dominant and the dominated that are triggered by the magic of symbolic power and through which the dominated, often unwittingly, sometimes unwillingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting the limits imposed, often take the form of bodily emotion—shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, guilt—.... (p. 38).

Symbolic domination takes its emotional toll. Participants’ perceptions and hopes for the future, couched between the socio-economic circumstances of their lives in the past and present, carry psycho-social implications. Often, throughout our discussions, the emotional level in the room was electric as participants articulated the day to day circumstances of their lives and their perceptions of how they wanted their lives to be.

Some of my fieldnote entries speak to this:

I was taken with the candid nature of their expression, particularly the men. 29

And while it was sometimes difficult for participants to find the exact words, they rarely hesitated to try to tell me how they ‘felt’ about their lives in their community. So, often it was about how they ‘felt’. It was as though the emotion was bubbling out of their bodies and voices like boiling water. Sometimes it felt overwhelming to watch and listen (Fieldnotes, July 4, 2006).

29 The gendered nature of the emotional responses is discussed in chapter seven.
The lived emotional significance attached to how participants experience symbolic domination is explored from three angles; 1) the emotional price of social and economic disadvantage, 2) the manifestation of emotions in social fields, and 3) the emotional costs of participants’ attempts at upward mobility.

**Emotional Price of Social and Economic Disadvantage**

When the participants described the particular day to day circumstances of their lives and their perceptions and hopes for the future they often shared their emotional responses to the experiences. Here, some of these emotions are discussed.

**Fear and anxiety**

Social and economic insecurity is a tremendous source of fear for many of the participants in this study. As I listened to them tell me their stories, I often sensed they felt as though they were moving through life on a tight rope with no net. The fear seems to manifest on two levels; large, ever-looming fears regarding the future and fears associated with day-to-day survival. It seems that talk of moving away is a response to the larger fear. To contemplate leaving familiarity, partners, and children, participants have to be relatively confident it will facilitate a shift from social and economic disadvantage to advantage. Yet such confidence is hard to gain in a climate of uncertainty. Many of these participants do not know if they can stay in Cape Breton and yet the thought of leaving is scary. As quoted in the previous section, on one occasion during the research, three male participants discussed the possibility of having to move out west to find work. During the course of that interaction, their concern and fear was apparent. As the participants spoke their voices became more tentative and they looked
to each other watching each others’ responses to the dialogue. The greatest fear appeared to be that of the unknown. As one participant suggests, "What was that word you said earlier? (pause) Security! You got less sense of security going away because you don’t know what you’re getting’ into, you don’t know..." Herein lies another tension. In order to move toward security participants must move away. At the same time, the shift away from home increases their sense of insecurity.

Other researchers note fears of the future as a theme in their research. For example, Reay (2005) contends that young black and white working class girls in her research feared that they would become ‘nothing’. She writes: “These girls, in the context of schooling, inhabit a psychic economy of class defined by fear, anxiety and unease where failure looms large and success elusive; a place where they are seen and see themselves as literally ‘nothing’” (p. 917). I suggest the men and women in this research embody a psychic economy of class defined by fear in the contexts of their social and economic health. Yet the fields in which such fear manifests are slightly different for women and men. When addressing the fears for the future, women tend to fear whether or not they will achieve economic security through educational success and cultural capital and men appear more fearful whether or not they will achieve economic success and economic capital through employment. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter seven.

Fears of the future are entangled with fears associated with day to day life that ironically make it difficult for them to focus on their futures. For example, many participants feel unsafe in their own homes and fear robbery and vandalism. As one participant argues:
But that's bad, boys, when you can't even leave your house. I'm scared to death to leave anything out beside the window because if they see anything worth any money you know there going to break in, right? Who wants to live like that?

Participants expressed fear for their children's safety. One participant admits:

You know the drugs are my biggest fear. [Fear of] my kids havin' to do drugs. Like seriously. Because unfortunately, like I said before, I'd end up losing it with a family member. Because the first time the kids get into [drugs] I think that's where it's gonna come from.

Another participant describes her fears:

[My kids] are still little but it's just... [drugs are] around everywhere now. I heard about people in grade six who are doin' drugs, who are havin' sex, who are doin' all this stuff now and I'm thinkin' ok my daughter's goin' into grade three...so I mean it's everywhere. The parents are doin' it, the kids are doin' it younger now and it never ends.

These social fears for their personal safety and the safety of their family are coupled and often exacerbated by economic fears that are a part of the daily lives of these participants. Because the amount of money going out exceeds their income, many participants are always fearful about how to make ends meet. The day to day fears regarding material needs compound the larger fear discussed at the beginning of this section concerning the future and how participants can ensure that social and economic success will ever be part of their lives.

Walkerdine (2003) argues that in the current globalized economy individuals are expected to be able to constantly re-invent themselves and cope and adapt to constant
change. However, little attention seems to be given to the unequal distribution of the social and economic resources required to help accommodate such ‘change’. Hence, in a climate of the new economy and neoliberal thinking, ‘fear’ is perceived as a personal ‘flaw’ or ‘weakness’ of character that education or therapy can ‘fix’.

Interestingly, the fear experienced and articulated by participants can also be interpreted as a sign that their ‘hope for the future’ is still alive. The participants in this study have not given up on their desire to attain social and economic health. They have not entirely resigned themselves to their current situations. They are unsure how they will orchestrate a social and economic shift, particularly as they struggle with the day to day fears of their social and economic circumstances. Still, they believe upward social and economic mobility is possible. Their ‘hope’ and continued struggle depicts the relational dynamic that exist between modes of autonomous agency -- evident in their ‘hope’ and efforts to make a change which seem to reflect a resilience in their nature -- and symbolic domination -- characterized by their continued struggle for social, economic, and cultural capital that reinforces the current parameters of the fields they inhabit.

**Anger and a sense of being disrespected and shamed**

I see where all the money goes and where everything goes. We all pay taxes, we're all the same. We put just as much money in and it goes to Halifax. We don't see any of that. Halifax is just getting bigger and bigger...and as Halifax is getting bigger, Cape Breton is getting smaller (Participant).

Anger was another emotion articulated by participants. The anger was often tangled with feelings regarding how they have been treated or viewed by others. For example, participants often described their anger toward the rest of the province and
country. Many of them expressed their feeling that Cape Breton and the people who live here have been ‘forgotten’, ‘dismissed’, ‘disrespected’ and ‘undervalued’ on provincial and national stages. Some went as far as to suggest that the government intended to force them off the island so it could be turned into a retirement community.

I think maybe someday it’s going to be almost like a resort. I think they’re blocking us out as long as they can. Many of us will move away, until there’s a very small community left here. And then they’re going to make it into a [resort]. You know, none of the taxes we pay here stays here. It goes to Halifax. You drive down the street in Halifax? It’s smooth sailing, buddy! You’re not hittin’ no pot holes and everything you look at it…it’s brand new! And the money! I looked on the job site for Halifax right now. It was 900 jobs! 900 Jobs in Halifax right now!!!

Another comment further demonstrates the depth of the distrust many participants feel toward the provincial and federal governments.

[The government] know what they’re doing and they’re not doing anything about it. It’s like this: Nova Scotia and Newfoundland [have the] highest unemployment and welfare rate in Canada. And yet they’re the only provinces that have gambling in every single bar you walk into. You know why that is? They want welfare cheques back. They think people [from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland] need [gambling], they need something to do for fun. Yes! We do need something to do for fun but [gambling is] the last thing! Because we have very little as is. And if it wasn’t for gambling and stuff like that? I mean, [people I know] went in
the hole from gambling…. I mean it’s their own mistake but this is a big thing that bothers me...

It may be argued that the sense of distrust participants feel towards the rest of the province and country exposes elements of the historical roots of the collective habitus participants embody. As presented in chapter four, the communities of Cape Breton and people who live here have experienced the brutalities of ‘outside interests’ and what was often perceived as a lack of protection by the governments of the day. Habitus has a memory and I suggest the anger expressed by young adults in this study has an historical trail anchored in their collective past.

In other instances, anger expressed by participants appears tied to their sense of being shamed; they perceive treatment and comments directed at them as attacks on their character and sense of self worth and self-value. Participants did not use the specific terms *shame* and *humiliation* to describe how they felt or how they were treated. Yet their verbal and nonverbal responses to particular events suggested they felt they were being made to feel bad, this treatment was unfair, and this made them angry and frustrated.

For example, as pointed out in chapter five participants expressed anger toward the social systems including social services and the public education system upon which they have to rely. Many contend that they do not feel valued and respected when dealing with social services. And while some participants were quick to note that there were people working within the formal social networks who treated them with dignity and respect, it was not always the case. At one point during the course of this research, some participants waited week to week for over a month for the start of a paid
employability program. Each week of delay was another week without the income they had anticipated. I was with the participants on a Friday afternoon when they learned the program that they expected to start three days later had been further delayed another two, possibly three weeks. The lack of regard for their need for income, their need to arrange for transportation, and child care and other responsibilities associated with working outside the home, not to mention their need for a basic sense of security in their lives sent an overwhelming message that they were not valued and was reminder of their lack power in the social fields.

Another participant shared the story of running into a former public school teacher at a training session. With a sarcastic comment in the presence of the training group, the teacher made a derogatory comment; a supposed ‘joke’ about the participant’s character and his ability to accomplish anything. The participant received this comment as an attempt by the teacher to ‘shame’ him. The comment struck at the core of this participant’s self-esteem and reminded him of similar experiences in public school. Others study participants noted they had comparable stories.

The incidences just described sound similar to what Reay (2005) refers to as slights of social class. Referencing her own educational research in which she examines the psychic dimension of class, she contends social inequality can inflict significant psychic damage and she adds:

[M]y data was also permeated by the petty mundane humiliations and slights of social class that infuse both interactions between teachers and pupils and those between pupils. Class recognitions, visceral aversions and feelings of inferiority and superiority are routine everyday aspects of school life (Reay, 2005, p. 917).
Participants did not speak in terms of class distinction but they suggested that the lack of regard with which they are often treated is unfair. Further, on many occasions they stated that the people (such as some former teachers and some social services employees) that treat them with disrespect would not be expected to tolerate similar behaviours and attitudes directed at them. Similarly, at the community level, some participants noted the distinctions between the investment in infrastructure in other parts of the province and country, such as in Halifax, as compared to the infrastructure investments in Eastern Cape Breton. To reiterate a participants’ comment quoted in chapter five, regarding to the lack of community infrastructure, “It shows that some people get forgotten about I think”.

The examples discussed above are reflective of a perception held by some participants that that those more privileged, either by status, income, or location, are treated with a respect not afforded to them. Their perception marks a consciousness of their place in the social order. Moreover, the participants ‘feel’ and ‘recognize’ that such treatment is unfair. Sayer (2005a) writes: “Emotions may be expressive but they are also about what we believe to be happening regarding things which we care about” (p. 960). The participants sense and recognize that they are being disrespected and shamed and it from this place of recognition they become angry. Sayer (2005a) continues:

When someone says they ‘have good reason to be angry’, they imply that someone has done something that objectively harms them, such as injuring them or slandering them. Likewise, feelings associated with class such as envy, resentment, compassion, contempt, shame, pride, deference and condescension
are *evaluative* responses to particular properties of class inequalities and relations. They are influenced but not predetermined by position within the social field (p. 950).

Following Sayer’s (2004; 2005a; 2005b) work, I suggest that what participants are articulating emerges from the ethical and moral dimensions of their habitus. Some participants are consciously aware of the different modes of respect given to different groups of people and they question the morality of such actions. It is possible that their emotional response reflect an affective resistance to the broader social conditions and mechanism of power at play in their lives.

At the same time, their emotional responses to such experiences, particularly when they are visibly expressed, are often ‘used against them’ in the exercise of symbolic domination.

[E]motions are all the more powerful when they are betrayed in visible manifestations such as blushing, stuttering, clumsiness, trembling, anger or impotent rage, so many ways of submitting, even despite oneself and ‘against the grain’ [à son corps defendant], to the dominant judgment, sometimes in internal conflict and division of self, of experiencing the insidious that a body slipping from control of consciousness and will maintains with the censures inherent in the social structures (Bourdieu, 2001, p.39).

**Manifestations of Emotions in Social Fields**

“Just the stress... [It’s] just more stress than it’s worth” (Participant). Participants in this study perceived a link between drugs, alcohol, and gambling and the social and
economic circumstances of people and the community. I suggest that drug and alcohol abuse and gambling are, in part, manifestations of the emotional and psychic costs of social and economic disadvantage. Moreover, I contend that the participants in this study were cognizant of the links between social and economic disadvantage, emotional depression, and drugs and alcohol abuse and gambling. Consider the following commentary:

**Participant:** When I was young there wasn’t as many thirteen, fourteen year olds out smokin’ joints. In the last seven years so much has changed. How many years ago did the steel plant close? And DEVCO?

**Tanya:** Five, six years ago.

**Participant:** That alone and the mines closing down. Because of that a lot of those people’s children are out smoking dope and the reason why is or I’d say a lot of the reason why is mental....Psychologically, so many of the people who lost these jobs resorted to drugs and alcohol because it was so much of a depression for them. Then kids seen that and they think it’s right because their father is their mentor, he’s who they look up to. And so they go out and do it.

And another participant comments:

The economical part is what causes the rest of it. If there was money people wouldn’t have to sell drugs and have to go through the depression of not having money so they resort to drugs and alcohol and stuff like that. If there was money....

Participants still perceive individuals in part responsible for their own addiction, but they recognize that social and economic hardship is contributing to the emotions.
that often, from their perspective, lead to addictive and destructive patterns of behaviour. Their awareness is significant in highlighting, again, the conscious aspect of habitus. It may be possible that the agentic capacity of people is in part awakened through emotion and identification of the source of that emotion; namely inequality. However, when agents’ emotional response to consciousness of domination manifest in destructive behaviour, their reaction can reinforce the blame and negative judgment inflicted upon the dominated in the social field (Bourdieu, 2001). Still, cognizance of domination triggered by emotion may be a place to begin to consider potential shifts, however slight, in habitus. This is considered further in the concluding chapter.

Emotional Costs of Attempts at Upward Mobility

“I just want to have a house and a car. Just an ordinary house, just livin’, just makin’ it, right?” (Participant). With this statement, the insidious nature of symbolic violence is clearly revealed. Attempts at upward mobility are powerful examples of the potency of symbolic violence. Agents accept that arbitrary goods and resources have particular symbolic value that can be exchanged in various social fields for economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. However, it is the dominant in each field who assign the value; it is not inherent in the goods, people, and resources. Hence, in their struggle to secure capital in a field, all agents participate in symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 2002).

All the participants in this study aspire to move out of their current social and economic circumstances. They want to acquire the material, cultural, and social capital that they misrecognized as valuable and potential power sources. Yet, most of the
participants have significant struggles ahead. Attachment to formal education systems and the formal labour market are perceived as key criteria for social and economic ‘success’ (Jenson, 2004; Reay, 2004). Apart from the participant who went to university, only one other participant finished high school and formal schooling experiences have been challenging. Moreover, many have had little, if any, experience in the paid labour market. They have not secured the social capital that may propel an upward shift. Further complicated by their day to day lived circumstances, it is little wonder that attempts to secure upward economic and social mobility exact an emotional toll.

One participant shares an experience of her efforts to return to school as a young adult:

I was havin’ a real hard time because I was only there from September to February and comin’ on the end I was gettin’ really, really, depressed. Because they do it by correspondence there and you’re allowed to take as long as you want to do it. But the people who...well, the people I was sittin’ with, they were like (she motion as though she typing very quickly on a keyboard, indicating the others in the room were progressing quickly) goin’ right through it and I realize, yes, they were smart and I don’t downplay that or nothin’ but it was kind of like a knock in the head for me. ‘Cause I was sittin’ there tryin’ to learn how to do fractions for a month and in the end I couldn’t do it. And [my husband] was tryin’ to get into school and they were tellin’ him no because they wouldn’t help out with the extra childcare, so by the end of it I just said to myself, I couldn’t take it. I told my career counselor, who is absolutely amazing to me. I’m blessed with her. But I said to her, I miss bein’ with my kids, I’m havin’ a hard time without them,
I'm havin' a hard time in school. You know they're providing me the help, they're providing me the tutors. It's just stuff they're teaching me is not sticking. And it's really playin' on me. The school itself is really good but getting back and forth [to the school which is about two hour bus ride away] is ridiculous.

In this case, the participant appears to see herself as the odd person out among a group of 'smart' students. She questions her own intelligence and ability to learn. Although she does describe some of the social and economic barriers to her success, her tone and emphasis seems to focus more intently on the fact that she cannot 'handle' the challenges -- evidenced by her claim that even though the school provided support and she was blessed with people willing to help her, the material just would not stick in her brain. She was eager to make sure that blame not be placed on the school or her career counsellor. Even though she was attempting to go to school under incredibly difficult circumstances, she seems to position what she perceives as her academic and emotional 'weaknesses' as central to her dropping out of the program.

Interestingly, in this case the participant does not focus to a great degree on the social systems that are crippling her attempts to make a social and economic shift; such as the inadequate 'self-directed' computer-based modular approach to upgrading, inadequate income support, inadequate childcare options, inadequate affordable public transportation, and inadequate services available in the heart of disadvantaged communities. It seems as though she is attempting to adapt her thinking to a dominant discourse of individualism that requires individuals to take responsibility for their personal re-invention of self and self-betterment. Further, as discussed in more detail in chapter seven, it is also reflective of a commonly-held perception by women in this
community, who historically saw their ability to ‘handle’ adversity and challenges with a stoic strength as a way to earn respectability. The participant’s story and her response to the situation helps to depict how symbolic domination plays out in lived experiences. The participant ‘recognizes’ that accredited schooling is a necessary step in obtaining educational capital that is needed to gain the economic capital she requires to orchestrate a social and economic upward shift. Her efforts to gain economic comfort and security are premised upon her ‘misrecognition’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) of ‘value’ attached to formalized schooling. In this particular case, she does not question the historically rooted ‘value’ attached to formal education, but her ability to learn. As noted in chapter two, Bourdieu uses the term ‘misrecognition’ to describe agents’ acceptance of arbitrary practices that, through history, are perceived as ‘reality’. Hence, while the participant -- like so many of us -- recognizes that most jobs and careers require accredited education and is wise to act accordingly, Bourdieu would argue that this social practice is acceptance of an ‘arbitrary’ practice as a ‘natural’ practice and, as such, is a form of symbolic violence. This example demonstrates how all agents embody and participate in symbolic domination. In the mean time, the emotional and psychological cost to the young woman in terms of her confidence and self-esteem is great and helps to explain the sense of depression she describes at the beginning of her quote.

Emotional costs of upward mobility cause further emotional suffering when individuals perceive clashes between their own principles and values and those they understand to be requirements of success. Some of the participants were constantly
torn between their responsibility to care for their families and a 'good' work ethic which they perceived as in conflict with each other. One participant remarks:

I’m the kind of person who if I really, really need to...I will drop everything I’m doing if there is something going on with my family, which really sucks job aspect-wise because one of my competencies is supposed to be ‘demonstrate willingness to secure and hold a job’. Now, I believe I have that ability but I believe I will put other things before that. But unfortunately when you’re doing that, you’re losing out on money too. Even if it’s only minimum wage. So you know what I mean.

Hence, this participant must live the tension created by a notion of the ideal worker who is totally committed to the job within an economically deprived community where families are facing a variety of crises related to economic depression.

Other participants remarked that they are often at odds with family members who feel that family should take priority over work and/or training even if that means repeatedly showing up at work late and sometimes missing work altogether. At the same time, they are in conflict with employers and teachers who argue that the participants are not demonstrating the proper work ethic; a form of poor-bashing according to Swanson (2001) who notes that social policy language often depicts economically disadvantage and poverty as a result of lack of effort and commitment to work on behalf of individuals. The emotional cost to the participants as a result of these conflicts often took the shape of stress, anger, frustration and ultimately a sense of failing to please anyone -- a psychic and emotional consequence of symbolic domination.
Walkerdine (2003) speaks of the sense of guilt that individuals often feel when they make class shifts. She refers to it as survival guilt; a person's sense of guilt that they survived and 'moved up' when those in their family did not. The participants' experiences vary somewhat from that described by Walkerdine. They have not yet 'moved up' but they are aware that the changes they are trying to implement have an impact upon people they care about and, in some ways, the impact is not perceived positively. As noted in chapter five, family members' discomfort with the change may reflect their fear of losing capital or power in the social fields they occupy as a family. Still, participants go back and forth between feeling 'bad' for their family members and feeling angry with them for the lack of support. Trying to navigate a mobility shift emphasizes a clash between the historical dimension of habitus through which participants hold a sense of duty and responsibility for family and the contemporary conditions of social fields that values a particular work ethic that makes it difficult to honor family in a traditional sense. The conflict with their employers and teachers is equally stressful. In many ways they feel as though they are being forced to choose between family and work. It may be argued that it does not have to be either/or because in the 'new' economy there is the possibility for flexible work schedules that allow people to balance family and work. In reality, this may be possible for some middle class individuals with careers and the social and economic means to work from home or perhaps job share, although I contend that it is difficult. It is far less plausible for working class individuals who rarely have social capital symbolized by negotiating power with employers and the material means to engage in 'non-traditional' work schedules. Further, in the case of the participants in this study, given the local economy, paid work
often involves moving away from family. Consequently, many of the participants have
had to choose between work (and school) and family and in many cases they chose
family. Regardless of the ‘choice’ they make, the conflict participants experience marks
a potential change and shift in habitus as participants respond to the changing social
conditions of the fields they occupy in relation to family ties and work ethic. In other
words, their conflict in regards to family and work and their emotional responses to that
conflict can be read as an illustration of the generative nature of habitus in operation in
the thinking and attitudes of participants.

Issues of upward mobility are often experienced differently by males and females. In the following chapter, upward mobility will be addressed again from a
gendered perspective.

**Conclusion**

Experiences and perceptions of social and economic health are often complex,
ever-changing, and rooted in history and place. In other words, social and economic
health is experienced through the relationship between the habitus and various physical
places and social fields people occupy. In this chapter, some of the ever-changing
complexities, as articulated by participants in this study, were taken up as a site for
deeper contemplation and analysis.

First, attention was focused on how family is understood by participants’ in
relation to how they experience family in the social fields. Through this analysis, it
became clearer that some historical and traditional conceptions of family are not always
in sync with participants’ lived experiences of ‘family’. The tensions are further
complicated by notions of ‘family’ in a globalized society that seldom reflect the social and economic realities of the young adults in this study. Interestingly, the tensions experienced by participants may be interpreted as a slight shift in the habitus as agents respond to wider social conditions. Accordingly, how they cope with tension on both affective and behavioural levels may become reflective of the generative dimension of habitus at work.

All participants want social and economic security for themselves and their families. If economically disadvantaged Cape Bretoners want to find security, they must consider moving away. Participants in this study expressed inner-conflict associated with deciding whether or not to stay or leave the island. Ironically, much of the conflict stems from the issue of security. While leaving the island may contribute to their economic security, it jeopardizes the limited capital and power they hold in the social fields and physical space they inhabit at present. Further, participants’ social and economic circumstances further complicate the decision to leave or not leave, and in some cases, dictate whether or not they can leave.

The complicated issues of social and economic health create significant emotional fallout that is investigated in the second part of this chapter. As Reay (2005) argues, class has a psychic landscape and elements of the psychic landscape include fear, anxiety, shame, humiliation, and anger. Emotional responses to social and economic circumstances appear, in certain cases, to contribute to conscious awareness through the moral dimensions of habitus. Participants recognize that they are treated differently than those with dissimilar social, material, cultural, and geographic status and the participants feel the inherent unfairness of that reality. Some participants also
perceive an emotional link between social and economic disadvantage and destructive behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and gambling. Bourdieu (2001) holds that such manifestations of emotions ‘betray’ the dominated agents, submitting them to further judgment in the social fields.

Lived practices and attitudes such as those exhibited during attempts of upward mobility suggest that some participants take more than their share of responsibility for the challenges they face -- at least when it comes to doubting their academic capabilities. This may be indicative of living in a neoliberal moment that honors individualism, regardless of the amount of cultural, economic, and social capital an agent possesses. As a result, participants’ self-esteem and confidence are negatively affected by what they perceive, in part, as their personal failure to succeed. Consequently, systemic barriers to their success fly under the radar and avoid critical scrutiny, enabling them to stay intact. Hence, upward mobility struggles depict the damaging nature of symbolic violence.

What emerges from this chapter are multiple tensions of the psycho-social-cultural dimensions of social and economic health as experienced in an economically disadvantaged community. What is becoming clearer is the degree to which psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors are entwined in class disadvantage and any attempts to address inequality must encompass all four elements. In Cape Breton, gender is a cultural element of class disadvantage that requires further examination. Hence, gender is taken up in chapter seven.
CHAPTER SEVEN: GENDERED MEANINGS ATTRIBUTED TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH EXPERIENCES

"[G]ender identity is a deeply rooted, bodily anchored dimension of an agent's habitus" (Krais, 1993, p.170). How gender is experienced and how notions of masculinities and femininities are understood in relation to one another is a significant dimension of how participants' experience social and economic health. In this chapter, the oral and photographic narratives of young women and men who participated in this study, along with personal observation and involvement with the system through a youth centre board and discussions with youth workers, are used to examine gendered meanings attributed to their social and economic health experiences in their community. Discussed are: 1) how gendered identities ascribed to these young adults through historically-rooted habitus and the contemporary social fields play out in their lived experiences of social and economic health; and 2) relationships between masculinities, femininities, and inequalities in a classed society during an era in which the relevance of class is often dismissed. Drawing primarily from Bourdieu's concepts particularly, habitus, and the work of others such as Skeggs (1997) and Walkerdine (2003) relations between gender, class, and education theoretically inform this analysis.

**Historically Bound Habitus in Contemporary Social Fields: Negotiating Gendered Relations**

It's a working man I am.

And I've been down under ground.

And I swear to God if I ever see the sun.
Or for any length of time,
I can hold it in my mind,
I never again will go down under ground
(MacNeil, 1985, p. 138).\textsuperscript{30}

Many Cape Bretoners imagine the song, \textit{Working Man}, as something of an anthem. A live rendition of the song that includes the voices of the choir known as the \textit{Men of the Deeps} usually brings a crowd to their feet. As discussed in chapter four, one notion of 'manhood', particularly in the area formerly referred to as industrial Cape Breton, has, for much of the region's history, been closely tied with industrial laboring -- namely, coal mining and steel working. In working class communities, 'the men' were most often perceived as the 'breadwinners'. Similarly, women took on their own responsibilities in the labour economy, often as the household financier and, in many cases, as class activists.

Today, times are changing. Coal mines are closed and steel plants are shut down. And the 'death' of industry is painful. Gender identities so closely tied to the economy are coming loose and no longer make as much sense. And so, as is often the case when a major event rocks a habitus, shifts in gender relations are emerging in the community. But like the death of industry, the shift that continues to take place, is not neat, tidy, and pain-free. Bourdieu (2001) might argue that the men and women of the region still embody the class bound notions of gender that are an inherent dimension of their habitus. Consequently, they are negotiating their gendered identities to address the disjuncture between their historically bound habitus and current social fields. In this section, aspects of this negotiation are examined.

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Dimensions of the Male Gendered Habitus

The young male participants in this research have accepted that the industrial economy of Cape Breton has collapsed. Their fathers and grandfathers counted on coal, steel, and fish and built lives around the industries these resources spawned. But the young men in this study hold little hope that industry will see a rebirth in their communities. Most of them are unemployed sons of working class parents and grandparents. Still, as it is historical, their habitus is marked by elements of traditionally assigned gendered values that are revealed through expectations, patterns of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and a sense of responsibilities.

A ‘living’ wage

As pointed out in chapter four, industrial workers in the early twentieth century marked their economic success in terms of what was referred to as a ‘living’ wage. A living wage referred to a wage earning that enabled workers to meet their families’ ‘basic’ needs and ensure their comfort. Their expectation was not uncommon. Fraser (1997) writes:

The gender order that is now disappearing descends from the industrial era of capitalism and reflects the social world of its origin. It was centred on the ideal of the family wage. In this world people were supposed to be organized into heterosexual, male-headed nuclear families, which lived principally from the man’s labour-market earnings. The male head of the household would be paid a family wage, sufficient to support children and a full-time wife-and-mother, who performed domestic labour without pay. Of course, countless lives never fit this pattern. Still, it provided the normative picture of a proper family (p. 41).
The young men in this research hold a similar notion of their responsibilities to their family. They are not satisfied just having enough money for basic necessities. They want to be able to provide their families with what they consider the ‘essential extras’. Affording the ‘extras’ came up time and time again throughout this research. Extras include treats such as ice cream and pizza and enrolment in extracurricular activities. For example, one participant offered the following example to explain what he saw as part of his responsibility to his children:

When my baby’s out there on the road and the dickety-dee or the ice cream truck comes and all the kids are out there getting ice cream, and my kid comes up to me and says, “You got money so I can get an ice cream, da?’ I want to be able to give him the money. I don’t want to say, ‘Oh no, you have to wait for pay day’. Or call somebody and borrow the money.

The young man repeated this statement two more times in approximately five minutes of focus group dialogue. His concept of what constitutes ‘properly’ providing for children is influenced by his early life experiences with his father who died when the participant was a teenager:

The thought of being able to do for my kids what my father done for me when I was small. I want to be able to take my son to hockey, or my daughter, or whatever. I want to be able to afford to do things with my kids.

When this participant imagines not being able to be the kind of father he wants to be he states: “It’s the thought, it’s that feeling, you know that feeling…you don’t want that, right?” He was referring to the feeling associated with not being able to properly provide for his child. This example exposes the complexity of the emotional costs of
economic disadvantage as they become tangled with contemporary and historical gender relations. Like the industrial workers of the early twentieth century the young men in this study want a 'living' income for their family. The miners and steel workers battled with the 'company'. The participants often 'battle' with a system that has a very different notion of what they 'need' to survive.

Still, there are some differences. The men of the early twentieth century were working. And although their wages were incredibly low and the way they were treated by the company was oppressive, there were functioning industries in the community. The men could choose (to an extent) to withhold their labour in the form of striking to fight for what they believed they deserved. And even though, as demonstrated in chapter four, social, economical, emotional, and physical costs of striking, were great, over time their efforts did have a positive impact in the form of better wages and working conditions and the creation of a sense of solidarity and community. Throughout much of the island's labour history, workers organized collectively. Resistance in this form can generate community support. The social networks help to buffer, somewhat, the economic hardships.

Today, many young men are not working. There are very few well-paying, long lasting labourer jobs. Many are reliant on social and income assistance. And in a working class community where traditional gender identities are difficult to dislodge, there is an emotional cost for young men who are unable to 'work' to support their family. As some of the participants noted, they experience stress and anxiety on a regular basis. Moreover, when they recognize that they are not being treated fairly by social systems they have little leverage with which to negotiate; withholding their labour
in solidarity with others is not an option. Despite Cape Breton’s labour union history, there is not an organized union of people with whom economically disadvantaged young men can affiliate. Any actions they do take are most often done in isolation without the support of any organized body. I argue that this situation causes significant emotional damage to young men’s sense of self-esteem and self-worth. The young men express anger and upset with the ‘system’ but many see their only recourse is to leave the island.

Hence, in numerous cases, this generation of young men has experienced a social and economic shift downward from the positions held by their parents. Further, they know it. In reference to one of the songs introduced during a critical dialogue session, one young man stated:

I like the line [about every child getting as far as his father got]. If I stay around here I never....I’d NEVER EVER lead up to my old man’s route. I’d never be able to have kids here. So....that’s why I’m going to Alberta and I’m staying there. That’s all that’s to it!

Even though the concept of a ‘living wage’ appears cemented in participants’ individual and collective habitus, some of the young men feel their parents have different conceptions of economic comfort and security. One participant laments:

The thing about it all is I’m telling my dad I’m moving and he won’t give me any recognition for that....He says to me, ‘You go out there, you know what? The only time you’re ever going to see me is when you come home because I’m never gonna come out there”. And that’s small town, small mind. That’s how he’s raised but that’s small town, small mind. They think if you have food in your cupboard
and you're living, that's all you need. But, no! I don't want to struggle my whole life. I don’t want to not know where my next dollar's coming from!

Thus, there is little dispute among the generations that economic comfort as opposed to economic survival is a realistic expectation. However, how economic comfort is defined differs from one generation to another. Although habitus is durable and historical (Bourdieu, 1990b), attitudes and behaviours are not frozen in time. Agents engage in relation with social fields, and both habitus and fields are fluid as they shape and are shaped by one another in the present as well as the past. The contemporary society in which these young men live is characterized by heightened consumption practices that are easy to observe through television and other media forms and can influence what they feel they ‘need’ to be comfortable. Moreover, in a global economy in which ‘jobs for life’ are dismissed as a thing of the past (Walkerdine, 2003) and in a severely economically disadvantaged community where there is a perception that ‘nobody knows’ how long a job will last, economic certainty has become a critical element of young men’s understanding of and expectation for a ‘living wage’ that can facilitate economic comfort.

**Education and work pathways to economic comfort**

Well you know a lot of the men [like] my dad dropped out of school in grade 10 and got a job at CN. Now you can’t get on there without your Grade 12. They can’t fire him because he doesn’t have it now because they already hired him. He came out of school to go to work and had a good chance; like my grandfather did in the coal mine (Participant).
Working class boys' engagement with the education system has been an area of research investigation (such as Willis, 1981a, 1981b) and recognition of changing economies has spurred further research (see Weis, 1990, 2004; Reay, 2002; Kenway and Kraack, 2004). A similar thread through much of the research is an apparent disconnect between working class boys and young men and the public education system. Similar results emerged from this research.

As indicated earlier, all but one of the young men in this study disengaged with the public school system between grades nine and eleven. Looking back, they express regret. The following discussion ensued after the male participants listened to the song, "Photograph:

**Participant One:** The part of the song [when they sing], 'I wonder if it's too late/ Should I go back and try to graduate'.

**Participant Two:** Yeah, that, too!

**Participant One:** Because it feels like it is too late. You can't get your grade twelve and stuff like that. I don't know. I mean, it's too late. You're old, you know what I mean?

**Participant Two:** It is [too late], we dicked it away. It's the truth, we dicked it away. Wish we hadn't of but we did.

The participants do acknowledge that they need at least a grade twelve education if they hope to find a 'good' job in their community; one that would enable them to support their families. And yet, at times, they seem more willing to leave Cape Breton than to go back to school. A number of issues may be at play here. First, the young men indicate it is very difficult to find suitable education programs when you are
in your late teens and twenties. When one participant attempted to resume his education when he was nineteen he had little success: "When I first called the high school, they said I was too old. I think it was eighteen to get in and they sent me everywhere lookin’ for a place. It was just confusin’, so I gave up". Without adequate economic and social capital, it can feel impossible for a young man, on his own, to ‘figure out’ the educational system. Young adults seem to fall in a gap between the kindergarten to twelve public education system and adult education and training opportunities.

Second, the young men are part of a working class community where, historically, men ‘work’. Traditionally, self worth is tied to a man’s ability to work. “The self-respecting man should always be busy doing something” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 175). Formal education did not give a man the physical and mental strength he needed to be good at his work; the strength came from his character, from his manhood. The ability to engage in labour intensive activity was, in the past, a form of men’s symbolic capital. It had some exchange value in the economic fields and it brought with it respect (or a particular type of status) in the social fields and physical spaces occupied by working class families. Such values are deeply embedded in the collective and individual habitus of the participants in this study even though labourer skills have little value in the economic fields that these men currently occupy. This may help to explain why some of the young men are more willing to leave the island and go somewhere they can work and earn a living (thus practicing the intrinsic gendered values they embody) than they are to stay and go to school.
Ironically, this decision can position a young man at odds with his family. One young man states: "[My father] was lucky he got a job. He doesn’t see that. He says, ‘Stay around, go to college, there’s things here if you go to college’". It seems as though the young man’s father recognizes that in the new economic reality of their community his son needs to obtain educational capital. However, he does not necessarily have the material and cultural capital to help facilitate his son’s academic success.

**Supporting family: Doing whatever has to be done**

Interestingly, another part of the son’s reason for leaving is connected to his sense of responsibility for his parents. As indicated in chapter six, responsibility for extended families weighs heavy on some of the participants in this research, particularly the young men. The young man who plans to move away suggests he must do this, in part, so he can ‘give back’ to his parents. If he stays on the island he is unable to fulfill his responsibility to them.

The young men seem most concerned with ‘financial care’. They spoke of earning enough money to ‘look after’ extended family members. In reality, the young men often still rely on their parents or other family members financially and their talk of financially supporting family is not possible given their current economic circumstances. Hence, some young men are determined to leave even when the family they want to help clearly want them to stay. Ultimately, the son who suggests he would stay ‘in a heartbeat’ if he had secure work in Cape Breton, moves to Alberta.

Throughout the course of this research many of the conversations with the men centred on what I would describe as ‘the big picture’. They spoke of how they wanted to have and provide comfort and security. There was less discussion about the day to day
struggles and specifics regarding the many daily needs. I suggest that they measured their ‘success’ and ultimately their ‘manhood’ by their ability to say they can take care of their family. Some young men suggest that a man has to do what ever he can to support his family.

A youth worker who has worked extensively with economically disadvantaged young people suggests that for many young men survival as an end, can justify means that may involve questionable behaviour. Herein lies another attitude that resonates through the historical element of habitus. As pointed out in chapter four, when striking miners looted and burnt company stores it was suggested their actions could be perceived as a response to their ethic of family responsibility and tied to their notion of manhood. Some economically disadvantaged young men see their ethical responsibility to their family as one that overrides rules -- rules that often serve to maintain the social and economic inequalities in their lives. One participant attempts to explain:

What happens if you apply for a job and don’t get it? What’s the first thing you’re gonna do? Look on somebody’s lawn or something, see something and say well that’s worth something. Go take it and go sell it to go get money, right? ‘Cause to them that’s their job. They do what they gotta do, right?

Still, whether or not the ‘do whatever it takes’ attitude is an example of resistance is questionable. Wacquant (1999) cautions against:

... [A] populist reading which celebrates the virtues and inventiveness of the dominated and portrays as a heroic strategy of ‘resistance’ what is often an economic tactic of self-preservation in the face of domination so total and so
brutal that it is not even perceived as such, and thus as unchallengeable (p. 152).

On another occasion, I asked participants what they want their lives to be like when they are fifty. One young man started by asking me if I had seen the movie, *The Godfather*:

‘member when he dies? Don Vito? He’s running around the backyard with his grandson. He’s chasin’ him around with the apple goin’, ‘hmmmmm’ and the old fella takes a heart attack? That’s how I want to be when I’m that old. I wanna be able to run around the backyard with my kids or my grandkids or whatever. I don’t want to sit there and worry about havin’ to go out west to work for another 6 months or another 5 months. Get another pogie\(^{31}\) claim and come home and be stressed out for another few months. Sit there and collect my money, wondering where I’m gonna work next time. You know what I mean? Forget that!

This young man did not speak to the fact that Don Vito was a mafia godfather and that was how he earned the money to create the lifestyle he had at the end of his life. What the participant emphasizes is a man, playing with his children and grandchildren, in a nice, safe backyard and then dying a natural and respectful death. The young man’s admiration for the ‘Godfather’ character exposes another interesting dimension of his contemporary gendered habitus. For economically disadvantaged young men in a post-industrial community, who hold little power in social, economic, and cultural fields, possessing the ‘courage’, ‘willingness’, and ‘skill’ to engage in illegal risk-taking behaviour in order to support their families, becomes a form of symbolic capital. These qualities can have value in the economic field, at least a dimension of the

\(^{31}\) Pogie is a term for employment insurance benefits.
economic field, in that the men can make money. Moreover, these qualities may be exchanged for a certain type of status or power in fields where young men’s masculinity is at stake. By ‘doing, or threatening to do, whatever it takes’ they assert their masculinity in a present-day culture that still holds a man to his traditional gendered responsibilities regardless of whether or not the opportunities to meet such expectations exist.

Dimensions of the Female Gendered Habitus

Although both male and female participants in this research expressed many of the same issues of concern, their perspective did reflect gendered differences. And as with the males, links were apparent between historical and contemporary female gendered habitus. Industrial Cape Breton working class women during the early twentieth century took care of the household. Women looked after children, husbands, extended family members, along with the house, the meals, and the finances. They were concerned with the day to day struggles. The participants in this study, particularly the mothers, engage in similar practices and attitudes, reflecting the historical dimension of their gendered habitus. While the men spoke about providing for their family’s economic comfort, the women were specific about what they needed and the problems that needed to be addressed.

Women as household managers and class activists

Similar to working class women a century ago, women in this study take on responsibilities as household managers. One task the women spoke about at length
was financial budgeting. The mothers in this study spoke very specifically about incoming and outgoing money and were often able to tally up their budgets in a matter of minutes in order to illustrate their financial disadvantage. Their focus on budgeting is evident in the photo displayed and described in chapter five (see figure 15). For example, one participant discussing the issue of child support wanted to demonstrate that what she receives is insufficient:

As I said [the children's father] gives me $280.00 [a month] for the kids. Welfare was giving me 300 for babysitting and transportation and I think it cost 40 or 50 dollars on top of that. Okay, the money [the children's father] gives me has to go right to babysitting and travel for work. So it's not like I'm getting any extra money to help the kids. So I don't even see the point in it.

This participant's ability to recite expenses in relation to income is a survival skill that is necessary given her financial situation. She has to know at all times exactly where she stands financially in order to make ends meet. As mentioned in chapter five, participants spoke of the budgeting skills that are required in order to function on an income that they receive once a month as opposed to weekly or bi-weekly. They spoke of the need to calculate quickly in the grocery store to determine how many cans of juice or soup they need for the month. And they spoke of the hardship that their families endure when they miscalculates what they need. The ability to forecast expenditures and to calculate and tally expenses against income requires a degree of mathematical savvy. The skills do facilitate economic survival however, without official 'accreditation' they are not recognized as educational capital. Even the female participants seemed unaware of the value of their basic mathematical skills. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) may argue their
acceptance of the arbitrary value of skills acquired through formal schooling as opposed to informal learning and practices suggests agents’ complicity in symbolic domination.

When the women in the study spoke of their role as household and family managers, they again spoke in specifics. For example, they spoke extensively about inadequate infrastructure in the community such as affordable housing, public transportation, and recreational facilities. They perceive housing, transportation, and recreation as three significant barriers to social and economically healthy living, in particular, for children. Interestingly, all female participants, mothers or not, spoke about the impact poor infrastructure has on children and child rearing.

The women also spoke extensively about the drug culture in the community, again in relation to the children. They talked about needles in the parks and broken bottles on school grounds. One young woman, who is not a mother, claimed she would not raise children in the community unless something was done to control drug abuse and the fallout associated with drugs and alcohol. The men also spoke of the severity of drug use and dealing in the community. However, they tended to focus more specifically on the roots of the problem, such as depression as a result of unemployment and poverty, and in the case of young people, the lack of recreational facilities and affordable things for young people to do.

The women want to see better housing, better transportation, and more recreational facilities for the community’s children. They also want people to be available to ‘watch out’ for the children. One woman remarks:

I’d definitely like to see more recreational things around for the kids -- playgrounds, swimming pools, places for the kids to go and hang around. And
hopefully people to keep an eye on the drug situation around here. And even the
drinkin' is getting bad around here with the younger kids.

Interestingly, the men spoke of family in relation to what they should and could
provide on a financial level and the women spoke specifically about social and
economic factors at the community level that had to be addressed in order for them to
be able to parent effectively. Again, this may be connected to the historical elements of
habitus. In chapter four, it was noted that women often engaged in class activism. The
women in this study used some of their time with me to state what they perceive as
barriers to raising socially and economically healthy children, to state what they feel
needs to be done, and to voice their anger that little is actually being done ‘for the
children’ in their community. Their decisions to use their time with me to voice their
concerns and advocate for change may be interpreted as a form of class activism. They
would often say ‘write this in your report’ or ‘tell them this’. For example, one participant
was voicing her disagreement with the closure of small community schools:

They’re tearin’ that school down in a few years. They’re takin’ down [a number of
little schools] and they’re makin’ a mega school which I think is the stupidest idea
ever. And could you (to Tanya) express that point when you do your thing?
Because you put primaries to grade nine -- I think it’s to grade nine -- in one
school, I don’t care how sectioned off it is, it ain’t gonna be safe!

Further, even though I told them I would not use their names in this research, when the
women voiced their anger and their concern for the community they would often say,
‘You can say who I am’. I understand their willingness to ‘go on the record’ so to speak,
as a form of public advocacy for social and economic change. I do not suggest that the
males did not loudly voice their concerns and indicate that social change was necessary. Women simply engaged in such rhetoric, within the discourse of family, to a greater extent than the males who focus more specifically on elements of their identities as breadwinners and providers.

Female participants' actions expose a tension between agency and symbolic domination. From one perspective, the women's decision to make their opinions public may constitute what McNay (2000) would refer to as a condition of particular modes of autonomous agency. They are moving into a public arena, so to speak, and calling for change. Such action may be different than what might be expected from these women. However, reflection on the gendered habitus, as expressed through history, suggests the behaviour is not entirely unexpected. Further, in both historical and contemporary incidences, the welfare of the family is at the heart of the activism. In fact, as discussed later, female participants were less likely to advocate for systemic change when it came to conditions that have an impact on them as individuals. Their actions appear to be manifestations of their position as caregivers and, if so, depict a mode of symbolic domination that enables gendered inequalities to stay intact. As in the past, the men are concerned with work and their responsibilities as breadwinners, the women are tending to all the other conditions, enabling men to stay focused on their 'work' or lack of work. Further, women's activism in the name of the family holds little symbolic value in the public realms of social fields. Historically, it was men's activism that was most often publicized. For example, the historical literature review conducted for this study revealed that documented Cape Breton labour history focuses most extensively on the industrial workers who, for the most part, were male, and less on the activism of
women. Cape Breton historical researcher, Marie MacSween, concurs with this conclusion (personal communication, July, 2007). As well, much more has been written about Atlantic Canadian community development leaders, such as Moses Coady and Jimmy Tompkins, than the women, such as long time cooperative movement worker, Ida Delaney, whose activism enabled the men's work (Neal, 1998). Hence, without dismissing the importance of the female participants' public vocalization of their social concerns, their degree of 'power' or 'agency' to evoke change in the social fields they inhabit should not be over-emphasized.

**Access to upward mobility through education**

The women who took part in this research suggested that they knew they had to go back to school to receive accreditation that would help to facilitate an upward mobility shift. As previously noted, historically, Cape Breton working class women engaged in educational pursuits to facilitate social and economic change in their communities and families (Penfold, 1994). And at the time of the closure of the steel plant and coal mines many women responded to their families' economic crisis by going back to school in order that they may find work (MacSween, 2004).

The men spoke about the importance of finding work and the women were more specific about the kind of work they wanted. As one woman claimed:

I used to think, when my confidence was shot down, yeah, I'd take any [job]. But now...I don't think I would [take just anything]....I always said to myself, I don't want to wake up every day and hate my job and hate my life and have to work there all day miserable. And I don't want to do that. I'm not gonna do that to myself.
The kind of work the women want to do includes professions in the fields of social work, counselling, teaching, and law. Interestingly, all of their fields of choice fall within the realm of helping professions and involved working, for example, with children, teenage mothers, elderly people, and people in trouble with the law. These choices may be an example of their gendered habitus slightly shifting and reshaping in an economy where women are more apt to work outside the home while the historical dimension of the habitus still has bearing on the fields young women 'choose' to enter. In this semi-rural, post-industrial community, de-traditionalization has not occurred to the same degree it has in more urban centres. Consequently, traditional gender relations have not changed as rapidly as they may have in other communities. However, the collapse of the economy coupled with young women's shifting gender identities has played a part in women attempting to enter the paid workforce. Still, economically disadvantaged women with limited educational capital may perceive work in the helping professions as a familiar and realistic goal -- a so-called 'natural' life trajectory-- given the social and economic realities of their lives and the gendered nature of their habitus. Bourdieu (2001) argues that:

Through the experience of a 'sexually' ordered social order and the explicit reminders addressed to them by their parents, teachers, peers, themselves endowed with principles of vision acquired in similar experiences of the world, girls internalize, in the form of schemes of perception and appreciation not readily accessible to consciousness, the principles of the dominant vision which leads them to find the social order, such as it is, normal or even natural and in a sense to anticipate their destiny, refusing the courses or careers from which they
are anyway excluded and rushing towards those for which they are in any case destined (p.95).

The women described their own experiences as a useful resource they would bring to work in a helping profession. One young woman who wants to work with teen mothers sees one of her greatest assets as her own experiences:

I'd actually like to be working with [teen mothers] working with teen parent stuff. Because I learned a lot from my situation. I was seventeen, I didn't have a place to live, I was livin' on the street, I was couch surfing a lot goin' from shelter to shelter. I wasn't very healthy. I kept smokin' pot during my pregnancy. I mean I always took my prenatal pills; I was makin' my doctors appointments. As for eating every day I wasn't able to do that. And my [partner] tried really, really hard. We were staying in a trailer with no electricity no plumbing or nothing, right. He'd go to work and bring home money every day and that was how we'd eat so if he didn't work we didn't eat unless, God love my sneaky partner, one of the donut places would have their back door open and there'd be donuts sittin' by the back door. He'd go grab a couple and take off.

It might be argued that these women are preparing to convert their lived experiences into a form of capital that will actually help them in the economic field of work. Still, they acknowledge that they need academic accreditation if they want to find work in their chosen fields. Noteworthy, they often imagined themselves as assistants in fields such as teaching and law. For example, they spoke about becoming teachers' aids and paralegals. This may have been, in part, a response to fears associated with the amount of formal education required for different professions and their awareness of
the realistic barriers that could make long term education difficult to attain. It is also possible it is an example of the women making ‘choices’ that are shaped by their gendered and historical habitus as it relates with their ‘place’ in the hierarchical order of the social fields they occupy.

The women described the difficulties they face when they return to school. Similar to the men, only one woman who participated in this study completed high school. The others began to disengage around grades nine and ten. As a result, schooling poses challenges. First, a number of the women noted they have learning disabilities and they feel typical classroom environments for adults are not conducive to learning. Second, transportation issues are an on-going concern. Many of the programs of interest to them are located outside of their immediate community and as discussed at length in this study, public transportation is inadequate. Third, for the young women with children, their responsibility as mothers makes attending school and studying very difficult:

**Participant One:** [Studying] was another thing I had a hard time with. Tryin’ to figure out [how to do the work]. I should have been doin’ homework but for me to bring home books, math books and stuff, I think I might have done it twice in that time, it’s just you got housework, you got supper, you got dishes-

**Participant Two:** bath the kids...

**Participant One:** yeah...spend some time with them...

**Participant Two:** yeah...

Many of the women question their ability to juggle all that is expected of them and although they did note systemic issues that contributed to their challenge, when
they spoke of their own educational experiences it was evident they worried about their perceived successes and failures and wondered about their ability. In fact, they were much more likely to hold the system accountable when it came to their children's education than when they spoke of their own schooling.

It appears that young women's self-worth and self-esteem is closely tied to their educational success similar to the way the young men's self-worth and self-esteem appears tied to their ability to secure 'work'. The young women often state they want to go back to school so their children will be proud of them and so they can be role models for their children. As one young woman stressed in reference to going back to school, "I just want my kids to see me do this!" As discussed later, by securing their own education, mothers may feel better positioned to facilitate their children's access to cultural capital. Still, their struggle serves as a potent example of symbolic violence as experienced in the cultural and educational fields as they are seeking accredited formal schooling as the 'legitimate' route to success, thus reinforcing its symbolic value in the fields.

**Forms of Masculinities, Femininities, and Social, Gendered, and Geographically Situated Inequalities**

In the previous section, gendered identities attached to and adopted by the young people who participated in this study were examined in relation to the historical dimensions of their gendered habitus as enacted in their communities and families. And while remnants of past identities still exist, the drastically changing economic landscape erodes those historical roots and deems traditional gender relations less relevant today.
In working class communities that still honor tradition and place, women and men are expected to reconcile with a new world order in which "loyalty to tradition, location, and social class are understood by 'industry' as impediments to growth" (Kenway & Kraack, p. 98).

In the past, young men in eastern Cape Breton went to work in their teens and worked in the same job for most of their lives. 'One life, one job' was often how job security was measured in Cape Breton industrial communities. But now:

Jobs for life are being replaced by a constantly changing array of jobs, small businesses, and employment contracts. In such an economy, it is the flexible and autonomous subject who is demanded to be able to cope with constant change in work, income and lifestyle and with constant insecurity. It is the flexible and autonomous subject who negotiates, chooses, succeeds in the array of education and retraining forms that form the new 'lifelong learning' and the 'multiple career trajectories' that have replaced the linear hierarchies of the education system of the past and the jobs for life of the old economy...” (Walkerdine, 2003, p.240).

The economic discourse articulated by Walkerdine, points the microscope at 'the subject', the individual -- in this case the young woman or young man -- who is seemingly failing to adapt and make it work in a changing world. Subsequently, the socio-economic inequalities that exist across geographic space and that significantly inhibit men's and women's life chances, slip out of view and slip off critical public dialogue agendas. Agents' struggle to secure economic, social, and cultural capital in these changing fields amounts to a sinister mode of symbolic violence.
These struggles have a significant impact on young women and men and their experiences and perceptions of their own feminine and masculine identities. In the following section, the analysis is taken to a deeper level. Given the theoretical framework guiding how masculinities and femininities are conceived in this research (as outlined in chapter two), the relationships between and among forms of masculinities, femininities, and inequalities experienced by these economically disadvantaged people living in a small, primarily White working class community where heterosexual gendered discourses are most prevalent are investigated.

**Forms of Masculine Identities**

“Male privilege is also a trap, and it has its negative side in the permanent tension and contention, sometimes verging on the absurd, imposed on every man by the duty to assert his manliness in all circumstances” (Bourdieu, 2001, p.50).

“There is something devastating going on inside some of the men in this study... I think inside many of the young men in this community... “(Fieldnotes, July, 2006). This research points to how masculinities enacted by male participants as inscribed in their gendered habitus are, in part, tied to the breadwinner image, the family home, and their perception of women and gender bias. Here, each is examined.

**The breadwinner**

Since the Industrial Revolution in the West, the term (economic) provider has traditionally been linked to ‘masculinity’ (Bernard, 1981; Tolson, 1977). Consequently, an important component of what it meant to be a man included earning a wage in the public sphere and thereby breadwinning for a dependent nuclear family located in the domestic sphere (Willott & Griffin, 2004, p. 53).
The messages shared by study participants who participated in this research support Willott's and Griffin's position. The young men indicated that they feel it is their responsibility to work in order to support their families. However, regardless of this self-expectation, their location in physical space and the social fields makes it difficult to secure work.

They feel restless, frustrated, and fearful as they wait for something to change. Still, I suggest the sense of ‘responsibility’ they have to family and the sense that they should ‘do something’ about their current situation, even though they seem to have no idea what that something is, places them on an emotional roller coaster.

**Participant One:** Oh yeah! There was a part [in this song] I really liked ...Like right here [about the restlessness being passed down to the people in the small town]. You know what I mean?

**Participant Two:** It’s like what we’re doing. We’re waiting around for something to happen.

**Participant One:** We’re waiting for something to happen but nothing’s happening, you know what I mean? The restlessness was handed down, like, it gets worse and worse from generation until you do something about it...The mess of things.

**Participant Two:** That’s the way I look at it.

**Tanya:** How do you feel about it? Starting a new family...

**Participant One:** Scared to death.

This sense of ‘duty’ and ‘responsibility’ is closely linked to the participants’ notions of masculinity and what it means to them to ‘be a man’. It is an inherent
dimension of their gendered habitus. Moreover, in the contemporary neoliberal economic psyche, the fear they feel and their inability to be flexible and to make the necessary changes in their lives are perceived as character weaknesses. In reality, the fact that they do not have the social, cultural, and material capital to be able to negotiate such changes is ignored.

One young man indicated that a man working and supporting his family was part of 'normal' life -- further indication that over time the arbitrary is misrecognized as the 'natural' (Bourdieu, 2001). He argues that if it takes leaving the island to find work then a man must be willing to leave.

_Tanya: (in response to his comments) _So, you think for a lot of men, just from your perspective, that there’s this pressure that [men] have to work? Gotta find work? And if that means they have to go they have to go?

_Participant: _Men, oh they have to! And if they have to go, they have to go!

There’s no other way. People want to live a normal life.

Some of the young men in this study hold tight to the breadwinner image even in an economic climate that makes it almost impossible to find the kind of work through which they could earn a wage that would guarantee economic comfort and security for their families. One young man believes so deeply that a man must work that he argues drug and alcohol abuse and violence often stem from men not working.

_Tanya: _So, [are you saying] you think there’s a connection between not having a work and drugs?

_Participant: _Yeah if your sittin’ home getting’ a welfare cheque or something, month to month you’re not doin’ anything but your getting money. And you do
have that little bit of money to go spend. And you’re usin’ drugs, you’re gonna buy it just to have a good time because you don’t have anything to do. And that’s the same with the alcohol and all this. They buy alcohol, go home and drink it all. That’s why half the people end up with no rent or stuff like that, right?

So why do young males continue to so closely link their notions of masculinity with the breadwinner image? Willott’s and Griffin’s (2004) research with working class men in the United Kingdom who have experienced long term unemployment may help to shed some light on this question. They write:

First, the breadwinner persona offers greater symbolic capital to [unemployed working class] men than it would to other, more socially privileged groups with increased access to other types of capital. Second, it makes little sense to lose a scarce resource in the short term, with no guarantee of recompense in the longer (p.67).

I agree with Willott and Griffin. Further, I argue that the young men envision the notion of breadwinner as one that is respected in the public sphere of their community. Skeggs (1997) writes: “Respectability has always been a marker and a burden of class, a standard to which to aspire” (p. 3). She also holds: “Respectability contains judgments of class, race, gender, and sexuality and different groups have differential access to the mechanism for generating, resisting, and displaying respectability” (p.4). For the young men in this study, respectability is earned by adopting the breadwinner persona whether or not they are actually working. One way they display respectability is by ensuring their children have the ‘extras’ spoken about earlier. For example, they spoke about ‘pizza day’ in the public school. These are days that, for around a dollar, children can buy
pizza for lunch at school. One young man states: "I don't want to say, 'Hold on I gotta go sell something so my kid can eat pizza at school this week'. You know what I mean? Forget that! I want to have the money, right?" By providing their children with money for pizza day or the ice cream truck, or by enrolling them in hockey, the young men can, in Skeggs words, display their respectability regardless of whether or not they are 'working'.

Because the young men in this study accept the symbolic value attached to the breadwinner image and because it is increasingly difficult for them to meet gendered expectations, their sense of self-respect suffers. Sayer (2005b) contends that when people believe in a particular set of values and they are unable to live up to those values, feelings of shame can manifest. It appears that for the male participants, their masculinity is tied to a breadwinner persona and the breadwinner persona is tied to respectability in the public sphere and ultimately influences their sense of self-respect. Hence, in the socio-economic climate of their community their sense of self-respect is consistently under threat.

I just need a job, it ain't no mystery
I ain't no lazy slob, mister can't you see
I just need a chance to get back to the grind
Don't give me excuses, just get me from this bind

'Cause it hurts when you try to do the best that you can
But you can't make a move 'cause you're waitin' on the man
And it hurts when you know by the way that you feel
That you've gotta keep control and you've gotta have nerves of steel
Many men are happy just to bide the time away
Ridin' on the pogie, living day to day
Other men are idle but it goes against the grain
They just become restless, they don't wanna feel the pain
People gettin' harder to trust this day and age
Politicians lies got you locked up in a cage
I've gotta make a stand, gotta cop a plea
It's a constant battle to keep my sanity

(John Campbelljohn, Nerves of Steel, 2000).32

Master of the house

For the men in this study, having a home, particularly a family home, is also linked to their sense of masculinity as understood through their habitus. As discussed in chapter five, the home structure holds great significance for male participants. Some of the men express pride when they speak of the family homes in which they grew up. Because these young men are not in economic positions to buy their own homes, they often express emotional attachments to their first families' homes:

The reason I wanted to buy [the house] is because that's my father's home. It may have been put there by a co-op or something like that but my father finished it! I mean he bought the home, he owned it outright!

The young man's desire to buy his father's home is an attempt to secure some of the symbolic capital his father had gathered and that which he may have 'passed on' to his

32 © Used by permission granted by John M. Campbell.
son had he not died. Owning the house would also link this young man in ‘place’ to the respectability he feels his father earned.

Another dialogue further illustrates the depth of their attachment to their homes:

**Participant One:** [My parents] are not going to be able to afford to keep this big house. And where do we go? And I feel kind of strange about that because [I lived in that house my entire life].

**Participant Two:** That was like me over there and they don’t understand why I wanted to buy the house. I mean, I grew up there. I spent fifteen years there before I moved out. That’s your whole childhood.

**Participant One:** Yep!

**Participant Two:** People just don’t understand that.

The sense that people ‘just don’t understand’ suggests a disjuncture between the male participants’ gendered habitus, still tied to place and historical and traditional understanding of what constitutes masculinity, and contemporary social field in which these young men hold little economic and symbolic capital to secure their own sense of masculinity.

Another young man struggles with the possibility that his parents may have to sell the family home and his sadness, in part, stems from considering how his father must be feeling ‘as a man’:

**Participant One:** But him givin’ up that house and everything he’s worked for? Yeah, that’s a big thing. At the same time, every day knowing that he can’t make ends meet and he’s depressed because he don’t have money in his pocket, and
he walks into one of our bedrooms and all he can think of is us, and all that stress on his head-

**Participant Two:** Can you imagine what that would do to a man? Jeez, you imagine!!

**Participant One:** ...It makes me want to cry when I think of it. When I think of what my dad has to go through, it makes me really depressed.

The symbolic importance male participants attach to the family home is also closely linked to the breadwinner image. The family home is another way for men to display their respectability. None of the men in this study own their own homes. Further, as discussed in chapter five, most of the men lack access to safe, affordable housing. The 'need' to own a home marks a dimension of participants' struggle in the social field for symbolic status and power. At stake are their masculinity and ultimately their sense of self-worth. Once again, their struggle demonstrates the particular violence inherent in symbolic domination as they accept the symbolic value attached to an arbitrary object, in this case a house, and measure their own masculinity and self-worth in relation to whether or not they can attain the object.

**Masculinities and perceptions of women and gender bias**

As noted in chapter two, masculinities and femininities must be understood in relation to one another. How some male participants perceive aspects of 'being a woman' sheds light on aspects of this dynamic interrelation.

When first asked to discuss perceived differences between the social and economic circumstances of males and females in their community, some men were reluctant to voice their opinion. In time, however, two issues emerged. First, some of the
men talked about women and the labour market. Second, they spoke about what they perceived as a gender bias in regards to expectations placed upon men.

The men indicated that in the current economic climate both men and women are pressured to find employment. One young man noted that while he believes both men and women have to work outside the home it is a major shift in mindset for many people.

**Participant:** Women are [working]. My mom's friend, her husband works on the lake boats, she never worked, she raised all the kids, she took care of them. He worked on the lake boats, he'd come home, supplied the money, he was a wicked dad. And the reality is now she works at Wal-Mart. She works at Wal-Mart forty hours a week and she didn't start workin' until she was fifty-one. It's a hard thing... It's a hard thing to do. To go from never havin' a job or work experience in your entire life, then have to turn around at fifty-one and have to work.

**Tanya:** Do you think it's hard on the men that their wives have to work? Or do they accept that that's the reality?

**Participant:** Well, my dad won't allow it. In the hole, into debt, into debt, into debt, going further and further in the hole every day before he considers letting mom go out to work. And that's the life that he... (pause)

**Tanya:** knows?

**Participant:** (nodding) That's the way it is here.

In the case of this young man who clearly respects and admires his father, it is not difficult to imagine the emotional conflict he feels in relation to his own life. He
argues that both men and women must work outside of the home in order to support a family and still he believes that a parent should be home with the children. At the same time, he still embraces, to a degree, the male breadwinner image that he believes his father is still managing to abide by even under extreme economic stress. He has yet to resolve the tension between notions of masculinity and femininity inscribed in his habitus -- shaped in part by his family experiences and the social fields he occupies -- which also have bearing on how he imagines masculinities and femininities are practiced in contemporary spaces.

To an extent, his feelings are further complicated by what he, and some of the other male participants, perceive as a gender bias in society. Some of the men suggest that they feel as though they are expected to be able to find work and women are not subject to the same expectation. One young man states:

**Participant:** 'Cause [social services] don't look at ya if ya don't have kids. Say if you're a guy and you go and try to get on [social assistance]. They try to shove you away as much as they can before they let you on it. But if you have kids, if you're a girl, they'll put you on it. But if you're a guy and you go in they'll be like, 'Yeah, you should be out workin'. That's what they're thinkin', right?

**Tanya:** So there's almost an expectation on men?

**Participant:** Yeah.

**Tanya:** Does that make it harder?

**Participant:** Yeah, it does. I never had that problem but it's what I'm hearin' from most people.

Another participant claims:
The government gives [mothers] the money, all the money that they need and they don't have to work. But then the husbands are out west workin' their ass off for twenty-eight days, get two weeks off, have to come home and see their children and go back out in a week.

Hence, while earlier it was noted that most of the young men still hold on to the breadwinner persona, this is reinforced by a perception that there is an external expectation that they should be working. Their perceptions are not unfounded. Fraser (1997) contends that: "Existing welfare states are premised on assumptions about gender that are increasingly out of phase with many people's lives and self-understandings" (p.41). Male frustration was sometimes directed towards women who they believe take advantage of a perceived gender bias. Their views reflect a destructive gendered stigma attached to economically disadvantaged women who rely on social assistance and who are not 'given' all the money they need.

Young men legitimize their disadvantage by portraying women as recipients of unfair gendered support, thereby, de-legitimizing females' continued economic disadvantage. The struggle for legitimization serves to further entrench social and economic gender inequalities between and across gender and class lines. It also exposes the relational nature of masculinities and femininities, particularly the antagonistic element of that relationship (Krais, 1993). From a position of gender power, male participants de-legitimize women's practices and pass judgment on females' 'worthiness' for support. Their position, in turn, validates their own practices, helping them to protect their masculinity and 'worth'. Moreover, a particular dominant notion of
masculinity, as embodied by some participants, preserves its dominant position in social fields.

**Forms of Feminine Identities**

Kim's the first girl I kissed  
I was so nervous that I nearly missed  
She's had a couple of kids since then  
I haven't seen her since God knows when  
(Nickelback, Photograph, 2005)

Without a doubt, motherhood was a significant factor shaping the gendered identities of the women in this study, even those without children. Still, it was not the only one. Three factors in particular have a bearing on female participants' conceptions of femininity; 1) mothering and caring, 2) education and social mobility, and 3) perceptions of men and feminist discourses.

**Mothering and caring**

"My kids come before everything. Nothin' and nobody comes before my kids!" (Participant). The women in this study placed a great deal of responsibility for the social and economic health of their community on parents. On numerous occasions, each woman suggested that 'bad' parenting was to blame, in part, for many of the communities' ills, such as the drug and vandalism problems. They adhere to notions of 'good' and 'bad' parenting infused in dominant discourses of parenting and mothering which value middle class practices over the parenting strategies of the working class (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). Referencing Walkerdine and Lucey (1989), Duncan
(2005) writes "...the practices of middle class mothers were seen as implicitly right and even natural, whereas the parenting of working class mothers was often perceived as inadequate, even pathological, in relation to this norm" (p.52). McRobbie (2004) writes:

Middle-class women have played a key role in the reproduction of class society, not just through their exemplary role as wives and mothers but also as standard-bearers for middle-class family values, for certain norms of citizenship and also for safeguarding the valuable cultural capital accruing to them and their families through access to education, refinement and other privileges (p.101).

Some parenting discourses also stigmatize so-called 'welfare moms'. Low income single mothers, teenage mothers, and other economically disadvantaged mothers who are dependent on social and income assistance are stigmatized as 'welfare moms' who drain the system and lack adequate parenting ability.

Female participants are aware of stigma attached to being a mother on low income, a phenomenon that is, again, characteristic of what Swanson (2001) describes as poor-bashing. She writes: "Poor-bashing means ignoring facts and repeating stereotypes about people who are poor" [italics in original text] (p. 12). Some of the stereotypes raised throughout this research by males and females include: 1) some women on welfare have babies so they can get a cheque from the government, 2) some women on welfare are lazy and sit at home and do not want to work, 3) some women on welfare ‘abuse’ the system, and 4) some women on welfare use their cheques to buy drugs and alcohol instead of paying bills and buying groceries. The mothers in this study do not trouble or disturb these stigmas. They do, however, differentiate
themselves from the stigmas attached to women and mothers in receipt of social and economic assistance. One young woman states:

Most people my age are goin' out to bars because around here that's the only thing to do. I find I'm different than a lot of the people around here who have kids because I'm not one... (pause) When I lived out on (names a neighborhood) for instance, cheque day or baby bonus day or whatever, you'd see them comin' in with their liquor and with everything else (reference to drugs) and two bags of groceries, not a whole lot of groceries. Okay, I'm one, my kids are priority. I go get the groceries. I pay the bills and make sure everything is done. Then if there's anything left over I take the kids and go do something. I don't have a whole lot of money for myself (Participant).

Reid (2004) describes a similar finding in her research with women living in poverty. Participants differentiated themselves from social assistance recipients they deemed 'bad apples' who took advantage of the system. She writes: "While the women actively negated their personal conformity to the stereotype of the welfare recipient, through this discourse they stereotyped others" (p. 169). McRobbie (2004) questions whether such attitudes reflect a re-invention of feminized social divisions in a shifting economic climate characterized by individualization. She writes:

Female individualization is, then, a social process bringing into being new social divisions through the denigration of low class or poor and disadvantaged women by means of symbolic violence. What emerges is a new regime of more sharply polarized class positions, shabby failure or well-groomed success. The pre-

Participants in this study would not have to look too far to witness and experience this new regime of classification divisions as it is perpetuated through the media. McRobbie (2004) points specifically to the popular genre of reality television, in which individuals -- typically women -- are 'made over' in order that they can find a partner, get a job or improve their lives on other social and economic fronts. She writes:

The programmes I am concerned with actively generate and legitimate forms of class antagonism particularly between women in a way which would have been socially unacceptable until recently. That is, the rules of television were such that public humiliation of people for their failure to adhere to middle-class standards in speech or appearance would have been considered offensive, discriminatory or prejudicial. Denigration, however, is now done with a degree of self-conscious irony, both the presenters and the audience are assumed to know that no harm is intended and that, in post politically-correct times, this is just good fun. It is now possible, thank goodness, to laugh at less fortunate people once again. And the message is that the poor woman would do well to emulate her social superiors (McRobbie, 2004, p. 100).

Interestingly, welfare stigmas were attached to both males and females. However, as noted in the previous section, not working is often perceived as 'unnatural' for men. As a result when men were described as 'sitting home on welfare' they were perceived as being depressed because they were not working and that was why they would use their money for alcohol and drugs. The stigma attached to women suggests
that they do not want to work and somehow manipulate their situations so they can stay home and collect money. Moreover, it demonstrates a refusal to recognize ‘mothering’ as a form of work. This may help to explain why the women in this study were so eager to differentiate themselves from the stereotypes that not only attack their mothering and caring abilities but also calls into question elements of their moral character.

To help distinguish themselves from negative images of mothers, female participants invest in what McDermott and Graham (2005) refer to as the ‘good’ mother identity. They want it recorded that they put their children’s comfort and needs ahead of their own. This includes doing without material goods and personal entertainment and recreation. One mother who believes she could have an easier life living off the island says will not leave because of her children’s attachment to extended family. She is also adamant that her children come before her romantic relationships. She states:

No matter what, anything, my children come first. I don’t know how many guys I got rid of now because... My last boyfriend, he threw a little tantrum there because my ex called. And the kids were in bed but he still opened his mouth when he shouldn’t have so I got rid of him. I said, “I told you when you walked in this door my kids come above anybody else. You open your mouth and say anything? You got one chance and then you’re gone”. And he’s gone. I’d rather raise my kids on my own than to listen to someone go on like that.

Another woman claims that she will not consider having children until she believes she is able to be a good mother. She says: “I don’t want my kids to go through what I did and that’s why I’m gonna work hard to get to some place that’s not just good for me but good for who ever I’m with and, you know, so everybody’s happy”. It can be
argued this young woman is demonstrating responsibility by waiting to have children until she is socially, economically, and emotionally in a 'good place'. At the same time, based on many discussions with this young woman, the standards by which she measures whether or not she is in a 'good' place, are in keeping with a middle class system of values. She will need significant social, psychological, and economic capital to get to a 'good' place and Canada's current social welfare system simply does not provide it. The symbolic violence exercised upon and through this woman is evidenced by her misrecognition of middle class parenting values as the values to which she must aspire.

Although the women quoted above have acknowledged that they are economically disadvantaged and they deserve more support, they hold themselves to the same parenting standards as mothers who have well-established social, cultural, and economic capital. This may be partially a consequence of a public perception of 'mothering' as a classless activity (Duncan, 2005). Regardless of available resources the implicit, and often explicit message, is that mothers are 'expected' to mother to perfection, under all circumstances, as it is a 'natural' dimension of a certain form of femininity; naturalized, of course, through history, as the arbitrary value attached to a particular form of mothering became 'normal' and 'natural'.

Women's struggle of differentiation from negative parenting stigmas and their attempts to attach themselves to more 'favourable' and symbolically acceptable values of mothering reinforce stereotypes and dominant notions of parenting at stake in the social field, demonstrating agents' complicity (Bourdieu, 2001) in symbolic domination.
‘Complicity’ implies, then, that the person who is confronted by acts of symbolic violence is disposed to perceive the violence in these acts, to decode the relevant signals, and to understand their veiled social meaning, but without recognizing them consciously as what they are—namely, as words, gestures, movements, and intonations of domination. In other words, she (because it is a ‘she’ in the case concerned here) has to be endowed with a habitus providing her with the sens pratique to react and act accordingly (Krais, 1993, p.172).

Mothering expectations are further complicated by issues of respectability. As the male identity of some male participants is inextricably linked to the breadwinner image, the female identity is tied to mothering and perhaps more broadly, to ‘taking care’. As noted earlier, women in Cape Breton working class communities have traditionally ‘taken care’ of children, spouses, parents, and households. Moreover, they have done so with limited social and economic resources. Their ability to ‘take care’ under such circumstances, earned them respectability in the public spaces and social fields they occupied. Skeggs (1997) contends that: “To be a caring person involves having to display responsibility by taking on personality traits such as unselfishness” (p. 56).

Historically, respectability was also somewhat dependent on a woman’s emotional strength as a caregiver. As depicted in song lyrics quoted in chapter four, a respectable wife is “a good strong wife”. Women were expected to be emotionally invincible. I recall conversations with older women in my family and community that included phrases such as; “It must be nice to have the time to be depressed”. Displays of emotional fractures were often perceived as signs of weakness.
Some female participants display 'caring in the face of adversity' as a way to earn respect. They eagerly recount situations in which they endure extreme hardship and still ensure their children's care. Those without children are adamant that they will protect their children from all dangers. And when they speak of their children and the children they will have some day they speak with strong vocal tones and with unwavering resolve. Noteworthy, these women are striving to uphold a traditional notion of mothering and caring under non-traditional conditions. For example, many single mothers are caregivers and providers of the main source of income for their household. Even within more 'traditional' family units, women's responsibilities overlap with those of their partners', despite the prevalence of the male breadwinner persona. Such extenuating circumstances place women under heavy emotional burdens. And yet, acting through their historically gendered habitus in social fields that value the emotionally 'strong' female, the women speak little of the emotional cost of mothering and caring in their socio-economic reality.

Comparatively, the young men often describe the emotional toll social and economic deprivation has on them. Inability to fulfill breadwinner expectations seems to warrant an emotional response. At the same time, challenges associated with fulfilling 'care giving' responsibilities appear less 'worthy' of emotional displays and, in fact, a female's respectability is threatened if she does display her feelings. These accepted 'norms' in the social fields occupied by study participants attest to the existence of gendered symbolic domination in which dominant notions of masculinity have the greatest symbolic value. As Paechter (2006) writes:

This is because masculinity and femininity are not just constructed in relation
to each other; their relation is dualistic. A dualistic relation is one in which the subordinate term is negated, rather than the two sides being in equal balance. Femininity is, thus, defined as a lack, an absence of masculinity (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). There can be no hegemonic femininity, because being in a hegemonic position is also about being in a position of power; it is about being able to construct the world for oneself and others so that one’s power is unchallenged and taken (more or less) for granted as part of the order of things (p. 256).

While notions of respectable feminine identities were linked with mothering and caring, findings from this research suggest they were also tied to education and social upward mobility. And in some cases this conflicted with their notions of parenting. These issues are explored next.

**Respect and education**

In a study conducted in Northern European countries, Hammer (2003) found that unemployed women in most of the countries were more likely to re-enter formal schooling than unemployed men. As indicated in the previous section, the women in this study were more likely than the men to discuss educational plans as a part of their future. And in most cases, the desire for education was tied to respectability and mothering. The mothers in this study demonstrated great concern over their children’s academic success. Their decisions to go back to school were further examples of their attempt to help their children. Unlike the men who see work as a means to achieving economic comfort and security, the women appeared to think about education and work as a form of cultural capital they could pass on to their children. It may be that the women recognize that in current economic conditions their children’s future success is
directly tied to the children's ability to succeed in school. In other words, upward social mobility is dependent upon educational success. The mothers seem ready to position themselves as facilitators of that success. And to do so, they believe they must go back to school.

The young mothers in the study state that they wanted their children to see them go to school. It appears that they see their own education as a way to earn their children's respect. Here again, the women attempted to differentiate themselves from the stigma attached to economic disadvantage. One young woman discussed why it was important to her that she return to school and then find meaningful work:

I heard a girl this weekend say, 'Why you even botherin' workin'? Why don't you just sit home on welfare. You'd make basically the same. I said, 'You know what, I'd rather be out workin' and tellin' my kids that mommy's actually out doin' something instead of sittin' home'. And when they get to school and the kids are goin' around talkin' sayin', 'What's your mommy do?' "Oh, she sits home on the couch". I don't want them to be like that (Participant).

The mothers suggest that if their children have mothers as educational role models the children's chances for educational success and upward mobility would be improved.

And yet, as discussed earlier, the women's attempts to return to school are often sabotaged by systemic barriers, such as inadequate funding, childcare, transportation and educational support, making it difficult for them to succeed. And while the women were very quick to note there are definitely some forms of support, it clearly is not enough.
Further, the women's notions of 'good' parenting often collide with their educational goals. The young women are often reluctant to leave their children and go to schools that are sometimes a two hour commute outside their community. And as noted earlier, they place their children's educational needs ahead of their own and as a result their own schooling suffers. One of the only times the female participants expressed extreme emotional distress was when they described their attempts to balance parenting and educational and work goals. And in some instances, they question their ability to tackle the difficulties they experience. This is another example of the women's struggle to attain the symbolic recognition attached to 'good' mothering regardless of the amount of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital they possess. In western society, a prevalent discourse is that women can be 'good' mothers and have a meaningful career. Such a discourse tends to ignore the social, economic and psychological barriers and costs associated with such a lifestyle.

As indicated in chapter six, women's attitudes regarding education depict a form of symbolic domination (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). They have accepted (not to suggest they had much choice in the matter) the symbolic value and respect attached to formal education and they attempt to earn capital within the field. However, the adult education system these women must navigate, similar to the kindergarten to grade twelve public education system they left years earlier, is not designed to help them succeed. And yet the women often accept the failure as, in part, reflective of their intellectual ability and capacity to 'emotionally handle' the challenges they encounter. Consequently, the system continues to serve the dominant members of society and the inequalities embedded within the model remain intact.
Femininities and perceptions of men and feminism

When asked if they perceived gender differences in how social and economic health was experienced by men and women, female participants suggest the differences are minimal and in most cases the challenges balance out. Still, their perceptions uphold 'traditional' gender notions. For example, one woman purports:

Well, take my boyfriend. Me and him have the same problems but then there’s problems that he would have that I wouldn’t have and problems I would have that he wouldn’t have from being a woman and a man, right? Like a problem for me is I can’t do a lot of labour work. I can’t be crawlin’ up and down hills with two by fours on my back. That’s a problem for me. Now him, for men, it’s a little bit easier than women and it always has been and I’m not being judgmental. I know tons of guys that will agree. There’s always more jobs for them out there. I mean, I know if you put your mind to it you can do anything...whatever! But when it comes to livin’ in a place like this and it’s so small and everything and you have to go away to work, I mean all women have is housekeeping, hotel cleaning and all that when you go away, right?... So that’s why we have to go to school and get really smart. You know what I’m sayin? Because there’s always jobs for guys out there. There’s always gonna be.

The woman resigns herself to the fact that if she wants access to as many jobs as men that it is her responsibility to go to school and it is a man’s responsibility to go and find one of the ‘many’ jobs out there. Given the shifting economy and the limited resources available to both economically disadvantage men and women, results from this research suggest that gendered paths to success are seldom as clear cut as this
participant suggests. Hence, her viewpoint emphasizes how deeply historical notions of gendered identities are implanted in agents' habitus and are difficult to dislodge.

The women in this research express a significant degree of allegiance with men, or at least with particular men. They acknowledge some men disrespect women but are eager to differentiate the men in their lives from 'those men'. For example, one woman notes:

My [partner] is a very rare male in the aspect that... (pause) He's got a temper to him but he's not one of those ones who will just sit there and babe watch. And say "Oh I'd like to give it to her" and stuff like that. He's not like that. But I'm not saying he doesn't look but he's not one of those ones who will sit there and make comments and google and everything like that. And he gets a lot of grief about that. Because he's sittin' there with a pack of guys and they're all goin' on like idiots, he's sittin' back being quiet.

I suggest this woman's attempt to present her partner as different from 'other men' serves at least three purposes -- all connected to respectability. First, she suggests her partner is different from other men by arguing he is a 'respectable' man who behaves respectfully even when in the company of those who are not respectful. Second, she portrays her relationship as one based on respect by pointing out that her partner would never 'disrespect' their relationship. Third, she differentiates herself from women who may be with the 'other men' because she has a partner who sees her worthy of respect. In a sense, the woman's own respectability is displayed through her partner's respectable behaviour.
Loyalty to men also appears linked to perceptions of feminism. Some of the women in this study expressed a discomfort with what they considered ‘feminism’. One woman states:

There’s one thing I would like to add that I’ve noticed about the island that drives me crazy. Some of women are very, very feminist. Like why can’t ...like [women] can do anything...I agree we can do anything but I believe in [women] being equal as opposed to being higher above [men]. Do you know what I mean?

This young woman perceives a feminist as someone who thinks women are superior to men, a notion that makes her uncomfortable. Further, she imagines that a ‘feminist’ cannot recognize the good in men. She feels that by speaking positively about her male partner she is at odds with those who she perceives as ‘feminists’. She feels that her views about her partner are dismissed by feminists:

And that kind of bothers me because [my partner] tries his hardest to do everything that he can. And when I try to pipe up and say “Well, [my partner’s] great! He does this”, a lot of them think, “Well he’s [your partner] you’re gonna stick up for him anyway”. And that really bothers me...

Skeggs (1997) notes a similar response by working class women to notions of feminism. She contends this may be explained in part by working class women’s sense that they are being judged by women they perceive as feminists. She explains that the participants in her study felt as though they were already socially judged on multiple levels: “The last thing they want to do is embrace another position of moral authoritarianism. They do not want to be judged by other women” (p. 152). This position may hold true for the participant in this study who expressed her discomfort with
and economic landscape these gendered expectations are becoming almost impossible to fulfill, particularly when operating from a position of economic disadvantage.

**Conclusion**

Historically, many Cape Breton working class women and men adopted relatively well-defined positions in their communities. But as the economic terrain of the region shifts, those positions become less clear cut and realistic. Still, gender relations are historically embedded in the collective and individual habitus of the young males and females who participated in this research. As pointed out here, the men in this study tend to hold tight to the breadwinner persona. They feel internal and external pressure to fulfill the expectations attached to the notion of breadwinner even though they do not possess the material and cultural capital required to do so. At the same time the women are struggling to fulfill their responsibilities as household managers and 'good' mothers and caregivers. However, in the 'new economy' they are doing so while trying to go back to school and, in many cases, while trying to financially support their families. Yet more is at stake than economic security. Participants are struggling to attain and maintain gendered respectability. The psycho-social costs of the clash between the expectations the women and men place upon themselves and they feel placed upon them from the outside are significant. Their situations expose the troublesome nature of symbolic domination.

This research suggests that shifting gender relations and notions of masculinities and femininities is an inevitable elements of global economic change. What is also evident is that class-based capital plays a significant role in how these changes are
experienced by individuals and communities. Unfortunately the 're-invention of the self' approach to the new economy conveniently shifts attention away from issues of class and gender disadvantage while establishing a successful industry of self-care and betterment for those who can afford to ‘buy’ into it. In the mean time, the social, economic, and psychological expenses for individuals attempting to survive leaves them with little time and energy to critically trouble the systemic social and economic conditions that enable class-based gender inequalities to thrive.
CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS

“When all is said and done, it is hardly all said and never all done” (Fieldnotes, March 2007). The word, ‘research’, tells a great deal about its very nature. The process of ‘searching’ for answers is seldom finite. Quite often, the research process is such that researchers go back again and again as each quest uncovers as many questions as answers. In some cases, others follow the same or similar paths and ‘re’ search for clearer answers and even deeper understandings. This search is no different. For now, this is an appropriate place to stop -- a resting spot, so to speak. Answers to the questions posed are beginning to emerge and they can inform recommendations, based on this work, to help address issues of social and economic health inequalities for young adults in semi-rural post-industrial communities. Still, the search is far complete, and accordingly where to go from here must be considered. Hence, in this final chapter, I 1) offer a summary of the key findings, 2) present reflections from the research field, 3) propose recommendations for policy, education, and research, and 4) note study limitations and potential directions for future research.

Summary of Key Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the following questions:

- What are the day to day social and economic health experiences and perceptions of participants? What do they tell us about their positioning in the relational physical place and social spaces (fields) (Bourdieu, 1999a) they occupy?
• How do they speak about family and economic security? How do these accounts reflect interplay between their habitus and the social fields they inhabit?
• What are some of the psycho-social and emotional dimensions of their struggles for social and economic health?
• How do these young adults articulate their gendered identities? How do these gendered identities ascribed through historically-rooted habitus and contemporary social fields, play out in their experiences and perceptions of social and economic health? How do forms of masculinities, femininities, and inequalities interplay in struggles to secure social and economic health?
• From the perspective of participants, what role do social structures play in achieving a socially and economically healthy community?

For the purposes of this study, social and economic health has been conceptualized as people's sense of comfort, security, and certainty that their social and economic needs are and will continue to be met in their community. Participants' experiences and perceptions of social and economic health were used to better understand the physical spaces and social fields they inhabit. Inadequate housing and neighborhoods, green space, and transportation were markers of participants' physical space. The drug culture, in the form of 'drug houses' and streets and playgrounds littered with needles and broken bottles, was also a visible element of their physical space. As Bourdieu (1999a) contends, agents' location in physical space depicts their positioning in social space. Where participants are situated in physical space suggests that they have limited access to the capital needed to secure positions of symbolic status and power that may help to facilitate their struggles for social and economic
health. Despite the challenges, they manage to navigate the economic, cultural, and social fields with a particular awareness of their social positioning and the need for them to 'work' the field, so to speak, to figure ways to secure enough capital to 'get by'. At the same time, their struggles point out the heinous nature of symbolic domination and its impact on dominated agents in various fields.

To better understand these struggles for social and economic health, participants' day to day experiences, perceptions, and practices were considered in relation to the various fields they occupy. The economic field is the site from within which agents' attempt to secure capital that has material and monetary exchange value (Bourdieu, 1992). ‘Jobs’ and economic comfort have significant value for participants. However, their limited cultural and social capital and their physical positioning in space make it difficult for them to secure these forms of economic capital. Further, their struggle can be interpreted as a mode of symbolic domination as they have little choice but to accept the symbolic value attached to capital that is, at present, outside their reach.

In cultural fields where knowledge and skills have symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1992), participants' experiences were examined, particularly in relation to education and lifestyle (namely, recreation, entertainment, and sport). Here again, the struggles are a challenge for participants given their physical space and their limited capital. Attempts to pour resources, albeit limited, into oppressed spaces are sometimes rejected by agents as was noted in this research when participants discussed vandalism and disregard for new recreational facilities. Bourdieu (1999a) contends that a stigmatized area degrades its inhabitants and, in turn, those inhabitants degrade the space.
Random and inconsistent consideration of the needs of those with little status and power is not enough to dislodge the sense of degradation they come to embody over time.

In social fields, agents attempt to secure the capital attained through association and affiliation with those agents and institutions that hold power (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Participants’ affiliations with informal and family networks are complicated. In some instances, such associations were more detrimental to participants’ long term mobility struggles than beneficial and still, in some cases, they were necessary for day to day survival. Attachments to formal institutions were challenging and participants had to learn how to navigate systems that were often less than tuned in to their needs.

The complicated nature of family relations and struggles for economic security were examined to better understand the relationship between historically rooted habitus and social fields. The historical dimension of class inequalities as experienced by the young women and men in this study was particularly apparent. This may be attributed, in part, to the recent collapse of their community’s natural resource-based economy and the global shift in the economic psyche to self-driven preservation and sustainability. Accordingly, in a climate of self-reinvention, personal transformation, and de-traditionalization, participants’ ties to traditional roles and value systems are strikingly noticeable and often collide with individualized and neoliberal perceptions of social and economic success. Participants’ perceptions of family and security are deeply rooted in the historical dimensions of their habitus and accordingly are often at odds with their daily practices as experienced in the social fields they occupy. The tensions
experienced by participants may symbolize small shifts in their habitus. Still, the clashes can manifest in conflict in interpersonal relationships and daily encounters with structures and institutions. Hence, attempts at upward mobility often include efforts to exit the physical spaces participants inhabit.

Bourdieu (1999a) points out, however, that exiting a physical space can be almost impossible given limited resources disadvantaged agents possess. Leaving as families is unfeasible for most economically disadvantaged young adults. The costs associated with relocation are simply out of their reach. Subsequently, in most instances, male partners consider moving (typically to Alberta) and mothers and children stay on the island. As one young man noted: "That's a hell of a commute to see your kids!"

Agents embody their physical space which is tied up with their social place (Bourdieu, 1999a). Consequently, even when participants do uproot and leave a community, it does not necessarily mean they will successfully orchestrate a mobility shift in the various social fields. Still, their attempts may be further evidence of their slightly shifting habitus.

The tensions and complications in relationships and attempts to gain economic security, made more difficult by limited economic, cultural, and social capital, exact a significant psycho-social and emotional cost. Participants' emotional responses to disadvantage are often intense and, in some ways, differ along gender lines. On one level their emotional response appears to be connected to a moral dimension of their habitus. They recognize, frequently through anger, that how they are treated because of their disadvantage is wrong. Moreover, they suggest that the emotional dimensions of
economic disadvantage often manifest in destructive behaviours such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and gambling.

Participants' expressions of their emotional response to their situations suggest their awareness of their domination and perhaps offer a place from which modes of agency may be possible. The importance of attending to the emotional scope of the participants' experiences is supported by Sayer (2005b) who writes:

People experience class in relation to others partly via moral and immoral sentiments or emotions such as benevolence, respect, compassion, pride, and envy, contempt and shame. Such emotions should not be seen as counterposed to reason: as many philosophers have argued, they are about something; they are embodied evaluative judgments of matters influencing people's well-being and that of others (p. 3).

At the same time, how agents' emotions manifest can place them under deeper scrutiny by more dominant agents in the social fields who have the power to judge behaviours and actions and use them to justify domination and the limited status and power of the dominated (Bourdieu, 2001).

The concepts of habitus and fields were particularly useful when examining how participants negotiate their gendered identities that are embedded in their historically bound habitus and are being challenged in the conditions of the current social fields they inhabit. Dimensions of their male and female habitus suggest that they are struggling to fulfill responsibilities and expectations they believe are 'natural' elements of their gender identities, unaware that they are misrecognizing arbitrary practices and beliefs as 'legitimate' and symbolically valuable.
Still, their daily practices suggest that their perceptions of their masculinity and femininity are shifting somewhat and this is reflective of the generative nature of habitus. For example, while providing economic comfort was important to working class men in the early twentieth century and still is today, what constitutes economic comfort for young men today is somewhat different than what was considered economic comfort by their historical counterparts. This may be, in part, reflective of an era of heightened consumption practices that participants can witness through numerous media forms everyday. As for young women, while they still place a tremendous degree of value on their ability to provide ‘excellent’ care for their families, they now imagine that to do so they must be prepared to go to school and have a career that will enable them to endow their children with the capital that they need to succeed. Their shifting attitudes suggest the impact of public and social neoliberal discourses of individualization and self-betterment. Changing attitudes suggest that generative shifts in characteristics of the social field inform the habitus of agents as illustrated through their practices and attitudes which in turn reinforce the shifts in the field. Nevertheless, participants’ emotional responses to the tensions between the historical and contemporary dimensions of their habitus demonstrate the durable nature of habitus and that change is far from pain-free.

Despite what has been noted as a limited amount of social theorizing of class in recent years (Walkerdine, 2003; Skeggs, 1997), in a semi-rural, post-industrial community steeped in a vibrant working class history, class is entirely relevant.

Class matters to us not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but also because it affects our access to things, relationships,
experiences and practices which we have reason to value and hence our chances of living a fulfilling life. At the same time it affects how others value us and respond to us, which in turn, affects our sense of self-worth (Sayer, 2005b, p. 1).

Still, participants continue to make attempts at upward mobility and social and economic shifts, with women and men often seeking different paths to success via education or work based routes. Their attempts reflect some changes in their habitus, perhaps in response to a shifting social and economic landscape. Yet, the complications revealed through young adult participants’ narratives suggest that transitions to new economies, particularly for economically disadvantaged young adults in an economically depressed region of Canada, are riddled with barriers and are difficult to sustain. Further, the retreat of federal, provincial, and municipal governments means that policies and practice are not designed to provide and fairly distribute critical material, social, and psychological resources to people and communities.

On another level, participants carry an unfair portion of the responsibility for their own and their families’ social and economic health. They imagine their self-worth and respectability to be tied to gendered images such as the ‘breadwinner’ for males and the ‘perfect’ parent or caregiver for females. They further align themselves with these identities by differentiating themselves from stigmas attached to economically disadvantaged young adults and, in particular, low income women; an approach that fails to disrupt negative class and gender stereotypes. Regardless of the structural restraints that restrict their abilities, young women and men in this research continue to link their personal success with their ability to fulfill the ‘respectable’ expectations that
they see coupled with their understandings of forms of masculinities and femininities

Study participants have an intimate understanding of aspects of their disadvantage as a result of class and their regional location. Still, other dimensions of their historical and gendered habitus that account for the misrecognition of arbitrary objects and dispositions as 'natural' and 'legitimate', lay beneath their conscious awareness. "Class lacks a moral justification, but people of different classes are likely to feel obliged to justify their difference" (Sayer, 2005b, p.4). The inequality experienced by the participants in this study is undeserved. They are not victims with some inherent weakness. They do not require 'fixing'. Their disadvantage is not linked to their moral fiber. They are strong, courageous individuals who, like everyone, need particular resources to secure social and economic health.

The experiences and perceptions shared by the women and men who participated in this study begin to create a deeper understanding of how social and economic health is experienced through habitus and social fields. Further, they expose a relational dynamic that exists between modes of agency and symbolic domination as exercised through participants' daily practices, attitudes, and belief systems.

We’re Here, You Just Don’t Know How to Reach Us: Reflections from the Research Field

Reflexivity in research practices goes beyond researchers situating themselves in their work. Researchers must interrogate the scientific field itself (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As with theories, embedded in research practices are assumptions that shape the work and, ultimately, the conclusions that emerge through inquiry. In this section, underlying assumptions in research practices that may have inadvertently
reproduced some of the inequalities this research aimed to expose are considered in relation to the methodological challenges that surfaced. I address participant recruitment issues faced by researchers who work with difficult-to-reach citizens and who must adhere to ethics boards and regulations, particularly as they relate to initial contact, informed consent and information sessions. Next, retention concerns and ways researchers may help participants stay involved in research by considering reciprocity, flexibility, and culturally relevant research methods are discussed.

Recruitment

The intent to conduct research with a disadvantaged population does not automatically translate into willing participants. Many of the typical processes of participant recruitment laid out by ethical regulating bodies are designed to protect participants. For example, it is in potential participants’ best interest that recruitment strategies emphasize voluntary participation and that approaches that may be interpreted as coercive are avoided. Further, informed consent can ensure that participants are aware of factors that may influence their decision to participate such as confidentiality, privacy, and their right to withdraw from the research. Still, informed consent processes can create significant barriers to participation for less dominant members of society (Jansson and Benoit, 2006). Leadbeater and Glass (2006) warn:

Hence, while federal regulations and professional and institutional ethics guidelines for research with human subjects have expanded, compliance with these guidelines does not necessarily lead to ethical research practices for community-based research with individuals marginalized by social status,
ethnicity or race, culture, stigmas, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, mental status, or sexual orientation (p.250).

Moreover, they contend, exclusion can: "[C]reate serious gaps in our understanding of the factors that influence disparities in the health status of vulnerable groups" (p. 250).

Research with economically disadvantaged young adults living in a semi-rural, post-industrial community presented unique challenges that were often exacerbated by ethics policies. For example, a typical first step of recruitment recommends that researchers post recruitment flyers that briefly describe their research study and invite those interested to call, email, or attend a meeting for additional information. Typically, such flyers can be physically posted in locales frequented by potential participants. Another option is to electronically post flyers in cyber communities likely to be visited by those interested in the research. Such an approach assumes a degree of homogeneity within the target population that makes it relatively easy to determine where posters should be placed. However, as with other marginalized groups (Shaver, 2005), economically disadvantaged young adults are not necessarily part of a homogeneous group or members of visible organizations in the community. Moreover, some of the characteristics they may have in common do not make them easy to locate. As indicated by young adults and youth workers who participated in this study, many economically disadvantaged young adults move quite often and do not have regular phone and internet access. With little attachment to formal labour markets and education systems, they do not have 'typical' jobs or schooling practices that bring a particular structure to their days and require them to be in certain places at certain times. Low income and inadequate access to transportation means their visits to the
few local restaurants, shops, and entertainment and sporting venues are limited. Consequently, determining the best places to post flyers was an initial concern.

Posting flyers also presented a literacy issue. Youth workers interviewed for this study suggested that for many socially and economically disadvantaged young adults, literacy barriers are commonplace. A number of the young adults I met throughout this study avoided written material and appeared particularly uncomfortable reading in public spaces. Hence, I had reason to question whether or not potential participants would stop and read a flyer posted in a public venue.

Motivation to participate was an additional concern. In accordance with ethics board criteria, the flyer must display the researcher's university logo -- in this case, the University of British Columbia. As is evident through this research, many young adults have troublesome relationships with institutions (particularly, 'schools'). Further, participants suggest that Cape Breton is often misrepresented and stigmatized by the rest of the country. Consequently, there was concern that skepticism may decrease potential participants' desire to take part in research being conducted through a large urban university on the other side of the country.

Similar challenges surfaced around the issue of informed consent. Leadbeater and Glass (2006) note that most institutional ethics review boards create specific procedures and forms that all potential researchers must complete before their research is considered for ethics approval and they contend that procedures have become increasingly rigid and restrictive. They claim:

One common result of all this is that consent forms are growing longer. Most review boards protocol include statements of what must be contained in consent
forms, which typically have to be adapted for individual research projects. These requirements aim to ensure that research participants are aware of their rights (such as the right to understand the nature of the research) and risks (such as those associated with the requirement to report to the appropriate authorities if there is evidence of abuse). However, fulfilling these requirements can result in documents that are several pages long. These can understate benefits, overstate minimal risks, obscure what the research is about, and even intimidate or overwhelm potential research participants (p. 254).

Once all required material was included in the informed consent form for this study it was four complete pages; a likely deterrent to any potential participant with literacy barriers. In addition to issues related to literacy, particular information included in the form was problematic. For example, according to University of British Columbia research protocol, graduate students are required to name their program supervisor as the principal investigator. The student's name follows as a co-investigator. Furthermore, the supervisor is listed as one of the names to contact for further information about the study and issues of concern about the rights of research subjects are to be directed to the Office of Research Services. Both my supervisor and the Office of Research Services are in British Columbia. I doubted whether or not participants would make long distance calls to strangers on the other side of the country and emailing posed literacy and computer access concerns. Instead of creating a sense of assurance that they would be 'protected from harm' some potential participants questioned the 'local' nature of the research. One potential participant asked how someone who he would never meet could 'investigate' him.
Issues related to the recruitment flyer and informed consent forms were symptoms of a larger problem; they impeded the establishment of trust. Prior to and during the recruitment phase youth workers indicated that strangers, particularly those connected to formal institutions, must earn the trust of socially and economically disadvantaged young adults.

Accordingly, months prior to the 'official' research start I became involved in the youth community where I intended to conduct my research; meeting people who worked with disadvantaged young adults, volunteering as a communication workshop instructor for young adults, and taking a seat on the board of directors for a local youth outreach centre. I also met with the young adults and solicited their advice about recruiting participants.

The feedback provided by the young people and the youth workers further indicated trust must be established with potential participants. Hence, I enlisted the support of local community agencies and workers whom young people trusted. Most agencies were unwilling to allow recruitment posters to be hung up randomly. However, many coordinators and their staff were willing to meet with me. Once they were comfortable with the work I was proposing, they allowed me to post flyers and certain youth workers offered to distribute an initial contact letter to potential participants and to share additional information upon request. From there, interested parties were invited to attend information sessions.

Information sessions posed another set of challenges. Transportation and childcare created barriers that often prevented those interested from attending sessions. Thus, I offered both services. Lunch and snacks were also provided.
Attendance at the information sessions was irregular and unpredictable. Because I did not receive any telephone calls or emails from interested young adults my only indication that someone would attend a session came from youth workers who informed me of potential participants' expressions of interest. Still, an intention to come did not guarantee attendance at a meeting. On one occasion I had been told that nine potential participants wanted to come to an information session. One actually arrived.

Some young adults decided to participate in the study relatively quickly after the sessions, others waited a month or more to decide to get involved. Others who I met did not become involved in the research but kept in touch and they were often eager to chat. During sessions, I would discuss the research and my interests, go over the informed consent form orally, and answer any questions. Interested parties were invited to take a form with them so they felt no pressure to sign immediately. As it turned out many potential participants had little difficulty saying no to participation. Some said they did not want to participate but would like to come to information sessions because they were enjoyable.

Retention

Once they decided to participate, efforts had to be made to enable participants to remain involved in the research for the duration of the study. Attempts were made to facilitate a positive experience for participants and to ensure that they felt their contributions were valued and respected. Hence, I attended to issues of reciprocity and flexibility, and used culturally relevant research methods.
Reciprocity

Critical ethnography often encompasses a notion of reciprocity in which researchers attempt to disrupt the power dynamics of the research relationship that privilege researchers and their own agendas. Harrison et al. (2001) describe reciprocity as the give and take in research relationships. Reciprocity is a commonly held tenet of critical and feminist research (Harrison et al., 2001). Pidgeon and Hardy Cox (2002) speak of the role of reciprocity in indigenous research processes. Pidgeon contends that adopting a principle of reciprocity is appropriate in research settings with aboriginal and non-aboriginal participants (personal communication, August, 2005).

Goals of reciprocity often include gaining access to research communities and gathering rich data to enable deeper understanding between researchers and participants. Reciprocity is also seen as a way to respect research participants and the knowledge they share, to give back to them and their community, and to collaborate with them to induce positive social change.

I gave considerable thought to how I might I earn the respect of the participants and demonstrate my respect for them. As indicated in chapter three, I also contemplated how I might be able to lend my own expertise and knowledge, particularly in the areas of public and interpersonal communication, to the people with whom I worked without assuming I knew what they needed.

The most appropriate way to determine how best to 'give back' to the participants was to spend time with them and let them tell me if there was anything I could do or for me to identify ways I may be able to help. I also spent a significant amount of time with youth workers at the youth centre that became a central site for the study and they were
comfortable asking me to get involved in projects and activities. Therefore, throughout the research process, I offered communication training in group sessions, worked one-on-one with participants who were preparing for interviews or presentations, and offered tips and ideas on public and interpersonal communication related matters when asked. I also helped out in practical ways. For example, when it was requested, I provided transportation to and from different locations in the community and ran small errands. I also helped out with creative projects at participants’ requests. The participants also reciprocated with kind gestures such as invitations to social gatherings at the youth centre.

**Flexibility**

When scheduling focus group sessions and one-on-one interviews, every attempt was made to accommodate participants. Some interviews were conducted in cars, on walks, and sitting outside. One interview was conducted while playing one-on-one floor hockey. I always provided lunch and snacks and the comfortable conversations we would have before and after the actual interviews helped to create a climate of comfort and trust.

**Culturally relevant research methods**

As noted in chapter three, considerable thought was given to the kinds of research methods that would be used throughout this research. I was aware that how I posed the research questions, and in what context, would have an impact on how participants responded. Thus, as described in chapter three, I chose inquiry methods that were culturally relevant for participants in an effort to somewhat disturb the typical researcher-research participant dynamic and allow them to contemplate their
experiences and perceptions of social and economic health in creative ways in addition to traditional formal interview formats.

All participants responded positively to the use of music and photography as ways to articulate their positions. They often asked me to play songs more than once and were eager to recommend their own selections. Although some were apprehensive about taking photographs, once they became involved, many asked for additional cameras to take more photographs. In both the critical dialogue and photovoice sessions, participants articulated a sense of ownership of the discussion. For example, many long interactions between participants transpired without any comments from me. They expressed their comfort with the format and indicated the music and cameras made the experience interesting and exciting.

The combination of individual and focus group interviews was also effective. Participants were comfortable with one another and stated they enjoyed the atmosphere in the group setting. At the same time, the one-on-one sessions gave them individual time to express themselves and to speak candidly about issues and views they did not want to share in the group.

The success of the methods of data collection may also be reflective of the amount of time taken to foster relationships with the participants in this study. For three months I engaged with participants a number of times a week. For the following six months I continued to visit with them on a more irregular basis. Having the opportunity to interact outside of the data collection sessions allowed further opportunity to foster a climate of trust. It is my sense that this helped us to redefine, ever so slightly, the more traditional researcher-research participant relationships
I am aware that while my actions were taken with the best of intentions of engaging in ethically motivated research, a decision to attend to issues such as those described here far from ensures these goals will be met. For example, recruitment strategies discussed may have excluded potential participants such as those without connections to the formal networks or the young adults who utilize those services. Further, attention to issues of reciprocity such as efforts to offer my own skills may not always be the support required or wanted by participants. Finally, as noted in chapter three, power relations can seldom, if ever, be completely dissolved in research. For example, participants may not have the capability or desire to take on a high degree of responsibility for the research (Maguire, 1993; Reid, 2004). This was apparent, for example, with the photovoice activities. Initially, participants worried about taking the 'right' photos and some wanted me to tell them what would make a 'good' photo. One was concerned about having to look after the camera. However, by consistently reflecting on my motives and actions I aimed to identify ways in which I could reach potential participants who may not otherwise get involved and help them to stay involved throughout the research process. Similarly, I attempted to recognize and acknowledge when I might be inadvertently contributing to inequalities that already exist.

Reflections from the research field indicate that barriers to participation in research created by ethics protocols, traditional research relationships, and social and economic disadvantage may not be insurmountable. Still, researchers must engage in on-going reflexive interrogation of the scientific field, including their research practices and acknowledge potentials and limitations of research as a catalyst for social change.
Further Reflections and Considerations For Future Directions

As is noted in the later discussion on limitations, I recognize that the findings of my study reflect the experiences (and my interpretations of those experiences) of a relatively small and a very specific group of young adults. Generalizing from their lived experiences must be done with caution and humility; clearly more research that captures the experiences of a more diverse and larger group of constituents is needed. That said, the time spent in the field and diversity of methods used has generated a rich source of data from which can be made suggestions for changes to policy, education and research. Based on the findings of this study, along with my own experiences and continued commitment to research and community engagement on Cape Breton Island, I suggest three interconnected avenues through which to contemplate future modes of action. I have organized these areas into social policy, community-based education, and future research, mindful of Fraser's (1997) argument that "...neither redistribution alone nor recognition alone can suffice for remedying injustices in today's world" (p. 6). While these are discussed separately, in reality, they are all interrelated. For example, changes to social policy need to support and be informed by community-based economic and educational interventions that are grounded in research that reveals the historical and social realities of local communities.

Taking action in these three areas must be informed by an awareness that the disadvantage experienced by individuals and communities such as the one highlighted in this study are unjust. As Bourdieu (2001) notes, however, an awareness of domination is not enough to propel long-lasting social change. True change requires the disruption of deeply seated structures embedded in agents and fields. Therefore, an
overarching concern that informs all of these areas and my commitment to my community is an emphasis on the need for structural change and an understanding that such change comes about through the dynamic interaction of structure and agency.

1. Social Policy Interventions

Recognition of oppression and attempts at change through the social policies and practices that govern societies can begin to address inequalities. In Canada, social and economic health disparities exist between people and communities and there is no justification for such inequality. Without adequate material and cultural resources people's and communities' access to social and economic health, as defined in this research, is significantly reduced. Globalization, centralization, and regionalization have severely crippled many semi-rural communities' local economies. Moreover, given the working class history in many of these communities, regional disparities are further complicated by class disadvantage experienced by high proportions of local populations. Banting (2005) notes that the dominant social policy paradigm in Canada has shifted from postwar income distribution within the framework of a strong social welfare system, to investment in capital through education and training. He writes:

In contemporary policy circles, security no longer means protection from market disruption. Such security as is available in the contemporary world is seen as flowing from the capacity to adapt to a changing global economy. At the level of ideas, the transition is from security as protection from change, to security as the capacity to change; and at the level of policy design, the emphasis has shifted from income transfers to investment in the knowledge and skills required to prosper in a knowledge-based, global economy (p. 422).
Yet, as evident through this research, an investment in a human capital model of social policy is incapable of securing social and economic health for all citizens without admission that inequalities exist and adequate attention being paid to the distribution of material resources.

1.1 Recognition and acknowledgement of regional and class social and economic disadvantage

As pointed out in this study, discourses of individualization underlying many current policy movements' attempt to mask the structural injustice of social and economic health disparities. One point of consideration that emerges from this research is that social and economic disadvantage across geographic space must be recognized and acknowledged in public social policies and practices. Policy and legislation must become tools that disturb, not reproduce, inequities. Language must clearly state that regional disadvantage, as well as class disadvantage, has no moral, intellectual, or character justification. Middle class values embedded in paradigms of current social policy such as the investment in children paradigm described in chapter six, or as referred to by Banting (2005) the investment in capital model, must be expanded to include redistribution of resources.

Regional and class marginalization leads to social and economic disadvantage. This reality must be acknowledged and addressed. Policies and regulations that discriminate against and stigmatize socially and economically disadvantaged citizens and promote negative gendered stereotypes must be redressed. Access to income assistance should not require 'begging' as a number of participants in this study noted they have to do on a regular basis. Regulations that enable income programs to be
delayed and cancelled with little or no warning to program providers and participants must be addressed and rectified and mechanisms put in place that ensure that if such actions occur they are investigated, responsibility is accepted, and compensation is provided to citizens immediately.

Regulatory changes within social services systems and agencies must include critical examination of relationships between those who work within the systems and the clients who attempt to access the services. While acknowledging positive experiences with some social service workers, participants' noted the challenges that they often encountered when interacting with people who work with social services. One step towards addressing this problem may be to better support those who work within the services and agencies that make up social and economically disadvantaged citizens' formal social networks. Social service workers must be provided with adequate tools to do their jobs effectively. Internal and external communication systems must be analyzed and improved upon and extensive interpersonal communication training for all employees at all levels of organizations, not just those who interact with clients, must be provided on an on-going basis. Channels of decision-making power must be more transparent, and front line workers need to be adequately compensated for their work. Moreover, they need to be given meaningful ways to provide feedback based on their experiences with those who are socially and economically disadvantaged in their communities. Most importantly, their insights and the insights of the clients with whom they work must be listened to and used to influence positive social policy and practice change reflective of their communities' unique needs.
1.2 Redistribution of material resources

Recognition of inequality as discussed above must be coupled with a redistribution of material resources (Fraser, 1997). Based on this study, any concerted effort to reduce social and economic inequality in Eastern Cape Breton must include extensive investment in infrastructure. The construction and development of adequate and affordable housing must be a priority and the necessary resources provided to ensure all local citizens have access to a suitable residence in a safe, clean setting.

Economic support is also needed to ensure an adequate and regularly scheduled public transportation system in this semi-rural community where residents must travel in order to access services. Further, recreational programming, facilities, and equipment must be made available in communities and neighborhoods where such resources are presently non-existent.

Until the current lack of adequate transportation and local community services is addressed, income assistance has to more accurately reflect the required economic needs of young families living in semi-rural communities that are geographically 'spread out'. For example, transportation costs must reflect the cost of private taxi cab services in the absence of adequate public transit. Spending allowances for necessities may need to be increased given that comparative shopping for basics such as food and clothing is not an option in communities that lack affordable shopping facilities. Residents who do not have the means to easily move in and out of their community often pay more for services and products. Without attention to the material deprivation associated with the lack of affordable housing, transportation, and recreation facilities and the geographic and economic make-up of their communities, the basic needs of
economically disadvantaged young adults, such as those who participated in this study and their families, are not being met.

Material and human resources also need to be allocated to address participants' concern regarding drug addiction and dealing in their neighborhoods. While examining and addressing the root causes of drug abuse is critical, immediate attention to the impact on the lives of all people living in neighborhoods where drug abuse is prevalent needs equal consideration.

Current initiatives in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality are attempting to address the issue of illegal drug use,33 and more can be done. For example, an increase in resources may enable addiction service agencies to place more support people and services directly in the communities and neighborhoods most in need.

One participant suggests that an increase in police presence in low-income neighborhoods -- in the form of store front 'Cop Shops' as she referred to them -- is worthy of consideration. Some schools in the municipality have a police officer on site who serves as a liaison between students and local services for youth, a source of information, and an official young people feel they can trust. A similar relationship between officers in a store front shop and citizens in individual neighborhoods may be a useful tool in the municipality's continuing efforts to understand and tackle the illegal drug issues in the community.

1. 3 Attention to gendered relations and inequalities

Results from this research indicate that gendered constraints are a significant issue for the females and males who are attempting to negotiate traditional gender

33 An example of such an initiative is the establishment of a community partnership including, among others, the police department, the district health authority, the local university and school board, and the Department of Community Services that aims to address prescription drug abuse in the municipality.
identities within their current lived situations. For those tied to the social welfare system, their gendered identities and some of their notions of family are under siege. For example, participants note that when two adults identify as each other’s spouse and live together their income benefits are reduced. Hence, in many instances, families cannot ‘afford’ to live together even when that is what they want. One participant wants to marry his children’s mother, but they cannot afford the loss in income. Social policy needs to be re-examined to determine the long term impact of such regulations on family units, the distribution of economic and social family responsibility it forces upon women and men, and no less importantly, the psycho-social impact on gendered self-identity and self-worth.

Further, given the dramatic shift in gender relations in post-industrial communities, policy needs to be developed that acknowledges the enormity of the shift and its impact on women and men in local labour markets and public education systems. Issues specific to regional communities must be acknowledged at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. For example, policies and legislation need to support families straddled across the country because one spouse’s employment is outside the province. Finally, policies that have an impact on areas such as childcare, housing, taxation, health, education, and recreation can be critiqued for gender equity balance and inequalities must be addressed.

2. Investment in Long Term Community-Based Education

Participants in this study indicate that they want to improve their social and economic health and want to improve their life chances and those of their children.
Education plays a role in their ability to gain the cultural and social resources that they need to orchestrate an upward mobility shift; just as it serves as a site in which the inequalities that already exist are reproduced (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Participants do not feel adequate educational opportunities are available to them in their own communities. Hence, in many instances they are trying to 'fit' with programs that do not meet their needs. The policy interventions introduced in the previous section can be considered together with attention to the role long term community-based education can play in addressing and responding to social and economic health needs of local citizens and their community.

2.1 Support for community-based education programs to facilitate social economic comfort and security

Participants in this study note that they would welcome educational opportunities that not only improve their life chances, but also enhance the social and economic health of their community so they can have the option to stay if that is what they choose. In other words they would like an opportunity to transform the physical place and social spaces they inhabit. At the same time, some of the young men, in particular, were focused on employment as their path to social and economic health. Some youth workers who participated in this study argue education can be designed to tackle not only individual disadvantage, by offering academic upgrading and work experience, but also the community crisis by building in a community development dimension. Within one long term program, participants can engage in academic upgrading, career training and experience, and community development. Some of the youth workers who shared their insights throughout this study believe a potential model of education exists in a
program entitled, YouthBuild. The program grew out of an initiative in East Harlem in the 1970's in which young people were asked what they would do in their community if they had adult support (Stoneman, 2002).

In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16–24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. Strong emphasis is placed on leadership development and community service. All YouthBuild students are poor and many have had experience with foster care, juvenile justice, welfare, and homelessness. Participants spend 6 to 24 months in the full-time program, dividing their time between the construction site and the YouthBuild alternative school (YouthBuild USA, About Youthbuild section, para. 1, retrieved April 17, 2007 from http://www.youthbuild.org/site/c.htIRl3PIKoG/b.1223921/k.BD3C/Home.htm).

A community development education program that is similar to a YouthBuild model and that is adapted to attend to the needs of people in semi-rural and rural communities deserves further consideration in Cape Breton’s Northside community. One local organization has already used YouthBuild as a model upon which to begin to develop a similar kind of program designed to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged young adults who experience significant barriers to education and work. Support of such efforts and other educational programs that reflect the social reality of the citizens and community’s they aim to serve may have some success in disrupting current disparities in social and economic health across geographic boundaries.
A number of participants noted that the modes of adult education they have encountered pose additional challenges for young adults with learning disabilities. Hence, it is essential that community based education reflect the diverse needs of learners. While technological educational tools can be helpful, participants may have more success with a certain amount of one-on-one, face-to-face contact with educators and tutors, who are willing and able to adapt their teaching practices to meet individual students' needs.

2.2 Ensuring educational opportunities are located in disadvantaged communities

Agents are tied to their physical space, which, in turn, is reflected in their positioning in social space (Bourdieu, 1999a). Proximity to goods and services also reflect the social place of agents. Study participants note the lack of appropriate learning opportunities in the vicinity of where they live. Moreover, they describe the difficulties they encounter when trying to commute outside their space to attend education programs. In semi-rural communities, ensuring that young adults have the opportunity to learn close to home helps to facilitate their chances to secure cultural and social capital.

2.3 Attention to psycho-social support attached to educational programs

As indicated throughout this research, there are psychological and emotional costs to social and economic disadvantage. It is critical that education program participants have access to services such as addictions rehabilitation and social counselling that can help address the psycho-social costs they have already incurred in their lives as a result of their disadvantage and those that may emerge as a result of
their attempts to shift their lives. Community-based education must be premised on the understanding that because habitus is so firmly entrenched in agents, life transitions are complicated and sometimes painful. Hence, psychological and emotional support is essential.

2.4 Implementation of a collaborative approach to community-based education

Participants in this study indicated their social and economic health is dependent, in part, on social networks. In other words, social capital has significant value in the fields that participants inhabit. Community-based education programs can help agents acquire social capital. Hence, extended community support is another intricate element of education designed to support socially and economically disadvantaged young adults. Connection with established institutions such as the local university, community and private colleges, and community development organizations can be forged so that community education can draw upon local resources; such as student, faculty, and professional expertise, networks of business and entrepreneurial support, and community development experience. Such collaborations can benefit all parties.

For example, many universities and colleges have programs with paid and volunteer internship components. Students across all disciplines and with a wide variety of skills sets and expertise can enhance their own education by working with those involved in community-based education initiatives. Faculty and community researchers can pool resources with those involved in community education. Together they may be able to secure research funding and develop sound and on-going program assessments.
Community support can also include the involvement of local businesses, professionals, and entrepreneurs. Material resources such as financial contributions and facilities and project equipment and supplies may be obtained by those who recognize the long term benefits of their investment in local youth and the community. Human resources could also be provided. For example, community education programs could include a mentorship element in which participants can connect with local citizens who have expertise and insights to share.

Community partners can collaborate with young adults to develop their capacity to articulate, document, and advocate for the resources they need to engage in their community in ways that are meaningful to them. Attention to means of learning and teaching that are relevant to local citizens can be considered, researched, and critiqued and if deemed useful, adopted in learning contexts. Supported by their community, youth citizens can learn how to lobby municipal, provincial, and federal governments to address and reverse the decline in social welfare for youth and economically disadvantaged communities.

2.5 Commitment to long term community-based education

Habitus, embodied in agents and inherited through time, is difficult to change (Bourdieu, 1990). The social and economic inequalities experienced by young adults in this study on individual and community planes did not occur overnight. This community has been disadvantaged for a long time just as many of these young adults have experienced social and economic inequality most of their lives. A social welfare system unwilling to commit in any long term way to economically disadvantaged young people who are disengaged from formal education and employment networks sets them up to
fail. The length of community-based education programs must reflect the long term needs of socially and economically disadvantaged young adults. Participants need time to work their way through educational development. Moreover, they will need access to program supports even upon ‘official completion’ so that they may successfully make the transition to the next phase of their lives.

2.6 Commitment of multi-government support for community education

Community education requires the commitment of all three levels of government. Material support and willingness to re-examine procedures, protocols, and regulations in terms of how education is provided, how social welfare is delivered, and how governing bodies, that serve all citizens, can work together is essential to the success of community-based education designed to foster social and economic health. The participants in this research indicate that current models of education and social welfare are not enabling them to secure social and economic health. Hence, change is necessary. Here it is useful to recall how investment in ‘human’ capital must go hand in hand with the fair distribution of material, social, and cultural resources if there is any hope to trouble social and economic inequality in Canada. As Banting (2005) emphasizes:

...effective action to reduce the socio-economic gradient in educational attainment will require a wider range of policy instruments than purely educational ones. The cross-national relationship between economic inequality and educational inequality suggests that a successful strategy of investing in human capital cannot be divorced from a continuing concern about inequality and poverty (Banting, 2005, p.428).
3. Attention to Research Agendas and Procedures

The development and implementation of the suggestions outlined above must be tied with in-depth, local research grounded in the social realities of the communities in which it is undertaken if the hope is to disturb the reproduction of social and economic inequalities. As Bourdieu (with Wacquant, 1992) insists, such efforts require a reflexive examination of research that is undertaken, the theories and disciplines informing the research, and the regulations and criteria guiding the work. A central point that emerged out of reflexive examination of the research process undertaken in this study is a need to consider ways to enable the participation of hard to reach populations in research.

The process of establishing trust and creating a climate of reciprocity with difficult to reach populations requires a significant time commitment before research even begins. Moreover, costs associated with providing food, childcare, and transportation, not to mention travel costs incurred by researchers, in this case throughout a geographically large semi-rural community, are a financial burden to researchers, particularly those whose work is not funded. Consequently, some researchers may regrettably opt not to conduct research with difficult to reach populations -- leading to, as Leadbeater and Glass (2006) point out, gaps in who is represented and not represented in research.

Therefore, while it is important that researchers tackle the barriers, ethic boards and funding bodies can address the issues as well. For example, university and professional ethics board may need a wider spectrum of representation from local communities (Leadbeater & Glass, 2006), in particular segments of the population that tend to be underrepresented in research. Review boards must ensure the establishment
and implementation of mechanism to solicit feedback and recommendations from university and community researchers who work with difficult to reach populations and from the people with whom they work. Regular reviews of procedures and protocols should ensure that new culturally relevant research methods can be effectively critiqued for ethical soundness in ways that reflect the needs of diverse populations of research participants and their local communities. In other words, there needs to be a degree of flexibility within guidelines without compromising the welfare of potential participants.

Funding bodies can increase their commitment to research with difficult to reach populations. Funding can better reflect the length of time it takes to enter a research field and to establish the climate of trust necessary to conduct sound, rigorous research. Further, funding could better cover costs associated with enabling those who otherwise could not participate, due to issues such as childcare and transportation, to participate.

In the case of graduate students with minimal or no funding, universities can better ensure graduate students have information regarding all possible avenues of financial support that they can access to cover costs associated with participants, including any tax information regarding what can be claimed as research expenses and assistance in preparing such claims. This information is not always readily available to students and some may not be aware of what is considered eligible research expenses.

Universities can establish small grants that students can apply for on a needs basis to cover participant participation related expenses. Even one time grants of one hundred dollars could go a long way to help graduate students engage in meaningful research with groups of people who without support such as childcare, transportation and meals, may not be able to participate.
Bourdieu notes that violence inherent in symbolic domination lies in agents' complicity (Bourdieu, 2001). The points of consideration presented here aim to expose and redress the misrecognition of certain held dispositions that 'legitimatize' classed, gendered, and regional inequalities. At the same time, agents embody the social fields (Bourdieu, 1992) they occupy. Thus, these reflections are imagined from within various social fields and they will not unhinge the symbolic value attached to all forms of capital required to secure social and economic health in those fields. Consequently, the suggestions for further contemplation themselves are evidence of how agents embody the fields they inhabit. Attempts to more evenly distribute the capital at stake in a field are simultaneously reinforcing the symbolic value of that capital and the structures of the field. This is not to suggest 'nothing can be changed' for, I argue, mindfulness of the constraints from which agency occurs is in itself, 'empowering' and can offer new perspectives from which to consider change.

**Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

"With every answer uncovered, three more questions appear" (Fieldnotes, November, 2006). As with all research, this study creates as many questions as it attempts to answer. Some of these questions arise from limitations attached to the current project and others are the necessary questions that ensure that research is never assumed to be finished. Here, I speak to both study limitations and suggestions for future research work.
Research with a Racially Diverse Group

One study limitation is connected directly to the challenges surrounding issues of recruitment. This study is not representative of a racial cross-section of the Northside of Cape Breton population. Given the issues surrounding recruitment, all participants who indicated interest in participating in the study were invited to partake. Additional time and material resources to engage in a longer recruiting process may have helped to secure a more racially diverse group of participants. Hence, the results of this study are representative of the group of participants involved and racial factors may significantly influence expressed social and economic health experiences and perceptions. Research with a more diverse population is recommended and comparative studies between groups may help shed further light on how social and economic health inequality is experienced and perceived across racial and cultural lines.

Comparative Research with Other Age Populations

This study focuses on the experience of economically and socially disadvantaged young adults. Similar studies with, for example, children and older adults could help to provide a more comprehensive perspective of how social and economic health is experienced and perceived in the community. Furthermore, it could help to identify potential ways different populations interact together in their lived social and economic health experiences.

Similar, Larger Scale Adaptations of the Study

The small number of participants in this research allowed for in-depth research
relationships to be developed with the participants and the garnering of a significant amount of descriptive, detailed data. Still, given the size of the sample, these results can not be generalized to entire populations of economically disadvantaged young adults in the community and other communities. Further, interaction with participants took place within one social context of their lives -- a community youth centre. Although they spoke about many other aspects of their lives, observations and encounters outside of the centre may have added other dimensions to the data gathered.

Hence, following on the heels of this study, a larger project with appropriate material and human resources could build on this work. Such research may provide additional and perhaps conflicting ways of understanding social and economic health as it is experienced in the community and potentially uncover new ways social and economic health inequalities can be addressed.

**Further Research Connecting Social and Economic Health to Other Elements of Health and Community Health**

The intent of this research was to investigate the experiences and perceptions of participants from a very particular health perspective; namely social and economic health. Further research can begin to explore more deeply how social and economic health interplays with other dimensions of health including physiological, psychological, and spiritual health in semi-rural, economically disadvantaged communities.
Further In-Depth Gendered Examinations of Social and Economic Health

As gender emerged as a key factor in how social and economic health is experienced, further research with women and men could probe these findings. For example, a comparative study between young women and men from semi-rural and urban communities may provide interesting insights into the role ‘physical place’ plays in how gender relations are defined and how self-worth is evaluated. Further investigation into males and females’ response to education as a pathway to upward mobility may uncover gender-appropriate ways to meet their needs through educational design and delivery. Further research that examines and troubles dominant heterosexual forms of masculinities and femininities and how they play out in semi-rural and rural communities that are still closely tied to historically, traditional ways of life is needed. The impact such dominant gendered discourses have on people’s social and economic health in small communities is worthy of inquiry.

Research on Notions of Citizenship

This research raises questions surrounding notions of citizenship and community participation. I contend that the participants in this study are actively involved in their community and engaged in citizenship, in part, through attempts to access and secure social and economic health for themselves and their families. And yet their actions and practices do not necessarily reflect some of the dominant discourses of citizenship which embrace middle class values and beliefs. For example, participants may not sit on community boards and they may not be visible volunteers with well-known organizations. Subsequently, I suggest that socially and economically disadvantaged
young adults who are not engaged in a particular form of ‘citizenship’ are further stigmatized and stereotyped as contributing ‘nothing’ to society. I suggest research that disturbs notions of citizenship that reproduce the value systems of dominant members of society is warranted. Further examinations of discourses of citizenship embedded in school and training curriculum, community development practices, and popular political rhetoric can expose some of the assumption upon which notions of citizenship are premised. Moreover, research with socially and economically disadvantaged citizens, particularly using culturally relevant modes of research (see Amsden, 2007), may help to unearth multiple ways to conceptualize citizenship and community participations.

In-Depth Policy Analysis

Results from this study suggest that social policy has an enormous impact on how disadvantaged young adults experience social and economic health. In-depth analyses of individual policies regarding, for example, economic welfare benefits, education, and regional distribution of wealth can help to expose the assumptions that underlie such policies and further expose how they enable inequalities. Further, research that recognizes and analyzes the inter-relationship of various social policies and what they reveal about dominant policy paradigms can play a significant role in the work of educators, researchers, and all citizens who advocate disenabling social and economic health inequality.
Assessment and Further Development of Culturally-Relevant Research Methods

An intent of this research was to engage in what may be deemed as culturally relevant research methods that attempt to broaden the forms of interaction that occur in research spaces. Participants responded favorably to the use of photography and music as ways to stimulate thought and discussion and to articulate their experiences and perceptions of social and economic health. Still, as discussed in chapter three, limitations are inherent in all methods. Research centred on further, on-going assessment and development of techniques such as photovoice and critical dialogue will prove useful in strengthening culturally-relevant research methods.

Conclusion

Social and economic health is complicated, ever-changing, and extremely difficult to attain if one experiences classed, gendered, and regional disadvantage. Still, it is a critical dimension of our overall health (Public Health Agency of Canada, The Social Determinants of Health: An Overview of the Implications for Policy and the Role of the Health Sector, retrieved February 26, 2007 from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/phdd/overview_implications/01_overview.html). Canadian political rhetoric claims a commitment to improve the health of all Canadians (Health Canada, About Health Canada retrieved February 26, 2007 from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/activit/about-apropos/index_e.html#objectives). This study indicates that attempts to improve health are not reaching all Canadians. Material and cultural deprivation are significant factors that contribute to social and economic health disparities in this country. Moreover, where we live has further implications upon our health. Under current social policy
paradigms, education and economic equality gaps continue to expand (Banting, 2005) and regional disparities grow wider (MacDonald, 1998). Bourdieu’s (2000) concepts of habitus, field, and symbolic domination help us to better understand how mechanisms of power that enable inequalities are embodied in people, places, and social and historical existences, and as such why they are so difficult to dislodge.

Many dominant public discourses enable Canadians and public officials to ‘explain’, and even attempt to justify the inequities. Accepting the assumptions that disadvantage is a flaw and that we are free to ‘choose’ our life paths may help to clear our conscience. But Sayer (2004) points out that we can ‘feel’ what is acceptable and what is not. It is critical we attend to this ‘feeling’.

To understand how inequalities are lived we have to come to terms with actors’ ambivalent responses of compliance, resignation, rationalization, resistance, and longing. Unless we take emotion seriously, and our capacity for suffering and happiness, and for discrimination and evaluation, we cannot understand why any circumstances should prompt resistance or critical reflection (Sayer, 2005b, p. 38).

Hence, while our habitus may predispose us to a particular pattern of actions (Bourdieu, 1990b) and while we may never have complete ‘free choice’, we are capable of acting from the ethical and moral dimension of our habitus. The young adult participants in this study recognize that social and economic health inequalities are unjustifiable; they experience it and they feel it. The people who work with them feel it and recognize it. There are undeniable restraints in their and our capacity to act. But we can still attempt to act. Communities like the Northside in Cape Breton, and the
young adults who live there, are a vibrant and intricate part of Canada. They are not 'waiting for an illusionary Godot'. As demonstrated throughout this study, they are seeking social and economic health, for themselves, their families, and their community. They are acting. With meaningful economic, cultural, and social capital, local citizens may be better positioned to find ways to act that begin to disrupt, even slightly, the social and economic health inequalities that exist in their community. I feel the need to act with them. It's time we, as a country, through our social policy, practices, and actions, do the same.
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Appendix 1: Recruitment Flyer

WHAT DOES A HEALTHY COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

My name is Tanya Brann-Barrett and I am a PhD student from Sydney, Nova Scotia who is studying through the University of British Columbia. I also teach at Cape Breton University. I want to talk to young adults (ages 19-30) who live in Sydney Mines and the surrounding areas about their experiences and ideas about a healthy community. By healthy community I mean a place where you feel comfortable, safe, secure, and financially stable.

By talking in small groups with other young people, one-on-one interviews with me, listening to music and relating it to your life, and taking photographs of your community, you will be asked to share your ideas with me. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a public presentation of some of your photographs if you choose.

If this sounds interesting to you and/or you know other young people who might be interested I would love to talk with you! The entire project will run about nine months and [name of centre deleted] in Sydney Mines has offered a room for us to engage in the activities. Each activity will take between 2 to 6 hours. You may choose to partake in some activities and not others. If you choose to take part in all activities the project will require about 35 hours of your time over the nine months at times convenient for you and the other participants. Your identity will be kept confidential.

For further information about this study and the procedures, please contact Tanya at 563-1322 or via email: tanya_barrett@capebretonu.c
Appendix 2: Initial Contact Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

WHAT DOES A HEALTHY COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

My name is Tanya Brann-Barrett and I am a PhD student from Sydney, Nova Scotia who is studying through the University of British Columbia (UBC). I teach at Cape Breton University (CBU).

For my doctoral dissertation I am conducting a research project in which I aim to better understand how young people from Sydney Mines and the surrounding area imagine a healthy community where they feel comfortable, safe, secure, and financially stable.

The study is entitled: The Way We See It: Young Women’s and Men’s Perceptions of a Healthy Community. My supervisor at UBC, Dr. Shauna Butterwick, is called the primary investigator for this study and she will oversee my work.

By talking in small groups with other young people, one-on-one interviews with me, listening to music and relating it to your life, and taking photographs of your community, you will be asked to share your ideas with me. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a public presentation of some of your photographs if you choose.

The entire project will run about nine months and [name of centre deleted] has offered a room for us to engage in the activities. One-on-one activities can take place at a time and location convenient for you. Each activity will take between 2 to 6 hours. You may choose to partake in some activities and not others. If you choose to take part in all activities the project will require about 35 hours of your time over the nine months at times convenient for you and the other participants. Your identity will be kept confidential.

Participants in this study must:

- Be between the ages of 19-30.

- Live in Sydney Mines or the surrounding area and have lived here since they were 14 years old. Participants who may have moved outside of the community for a period of time may participate on the conditions that they have lived in the community more time than outside of it and that they consider the community their home base.
If you are interested in learning more about this project please contact me by phone or email. Calling me in no way obligates you to participate.

YOU CAN REACH ME AT:

563-1322 OR tanya_barrett@capebretonu.ca

Thank you for your consideration

_________________________________________

M. Tanya Brann-Barrett
Appendix 3: Young Adult Participants' Informed Consent

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

CONSENT FORM

[The Way We See It: Young Women’s and Men’s Perceptions of a Healthy Community]

Principal Investigator: Dr. Shauna Butterwick, Department of Educational Studies. PHONE: (604)822-3897, EMAIL: shauna.butterwick@ubc.ca
Co-Investigator: Tanya Brann-Barrett, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia. PHONE: (902) 563-1322, EMAIL: Tanya_barrett@capebretonu.ca

Introduction
My name is Tanya Brann-Barrett and I am a PhD student from Sydney, Nova Scotia who is studying through the University of British Columbia (UBC). I also teach at Cape Breton University (CBU).

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to better understand how young people from Sydney Mines and the surrounding area imagine a healthy community. By healthy community I mean a place where you feel comfortable, safe, secure, and financially stable. Sydney Mines, similar to other small Cape Breton and Canadian communities, experiences economic and other hardship and at the same time there are many positive things happening. Your ideas about living and being involved in your community, what does and does not make you feel comfortable and secure, and what needs to change and/or stay the same for you to feel comfortable and secure, play a valuable and important part in imagining the future development of Sydney Mines and the surrounding areas. That is why you are invited to take part in this study and share your ideas. The study will serve as the basis for my PhD dissertation. I may also refer to the information gathered and elements of my dissertation in publications and conference presentations. I will conduct this research and my supervisor at UBC, Dr. Shauna Butterwick, is called the primary investigator for this study and she will oversee my work.

Study Procedures
If you choose to participate in this study you will be asked to take part in a variety of activities in which you can share your experiences and your ideas about life in your community. The entire project will run about nine months and
[name of centre deleted] has offered a room for us to engage in the activities. Each activity will take between 2 to 6 hours. You do have the choice to participate in some activities and not others. If you choose to take part in all activities, the project will require about 35 hours of your time over the nine months. Individual activities will be scheduled at times and in places convenient for you. All group members will determine the most convenient times to meet for group activities. Depending on the activities, your personal schedules, and holiday seasons there will be weeks you are not required to dedicate any time. Your identity will be kept confidential. I will provide you with a list of resource services that are available in your community in case at any time you find it stressful talking about social and economic conditions in your life.

**Individual Interview/Initial Meeting Between you and Tanya**

First you will be asked to meet with me so I can tell you more about the study, what I mean by social and economical health, and answer any questions or concerns you may have. I will also ask you to share some of your own personal information such as how long you have lived in the community, your educational background, and how you make a living. You are welcome to review any transcripts of information you share in our individual meetings and revise your comments.

**Focus Group**

Another time, you will meet with 4 or 5 other young adults who are also taking part in the study and respond to a piece of media that relates to life in a community. For example, you may listen to two or three songs that talk about life in small town. You will be asked to think about the stories in the song and how similar they are to your experience in your community. You will be invited to share your thoughts. The intent is to use the songs as a way to begin to think about your life in your community and help you recall some of your own stories and experiences. You will be invited to share your stories with the small group if you want. We may also use film clips, stories, slideshows, artwork, and photographs to start our discussion.

This activity is called a focus group.

**Photovoice**

For the next activity, you will be given a disposable camera and asked to go out in your community and take photos of what you perceive as healthy, not healthy, and maybe both. Before you do this we will meet with the other young adults in the study to discuss photography. We will talk about issues such as taking photos of your everyday surroundings and places that you may want to avoid taking pictures for safety reasons. We will also go over basic photography techniques. To respect others' privacy you will not take pictures of people. You will then be given a disposable camera and asked to go out and take your pictures. After a week, you will return the camera to me and I will have the
photos developed. You can then choose two or three of your photos that you would like to share with a small group of other young adults who are also participating in the study. You may write and/or talk about your photos during this small group discussion. This activity is called photovoice. The two or three photos you choose may appear in my dissertation and future articles and presentations.

Group Presentation
The next activity will involve you and the group of young adults. You will be invited to create a presentation with your photos that you will share with the staff at [name of centre deleted] and possibly some of the staff at the community development organization,[name of organization deleted]. How you choose to participate is entirely up to you. You will not have to do anything you do not choose. With the group you can also choose a form for presenting the photos, such as a collage, an art exhibit, or a slideshow. I will be available to help you if you choose. At this point I will still watch you and your group working together and learn more about your ideas of your community. I will record what I observe in a journal and you will not be identified in the notes that I record. If you request I not record something, I will respect your wishes.

Individual Interview
Near the end of the project you and I will meet one-on-one for an interview. I will ask you to share any stories, experiences, and ideas that you may or may not have had a chance to share with me yet about your experiences in your community and your ideas about your community’s future. You are welcome to review any transcripts of information you share in your individual interview and revise your comments if you wish.

Informal Meetings and Conversations
Throughout the entire study I will be available at certain times during the week at Community Cares to chat or answer questions. I will still be a researcher when we meet and will record observations that I make in my journal but I will not identify you with any comments I write. If you ask me not to record particular comments or observations during our informal chats I will respect your request and not write about that particular meeting.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality is an important part of this research study. The individual meetings, focus groups, photovoice small group sessions, and interviews will be audiotaped in order that I can accurately refer to the discussion. I will also write down my own reflections to help me remember things you share. You may choose not to answer any individual questions and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The tapes and any written documents from these sessions will be kept in a locked cabinet. If I save any information on my computer it will be
password protected. My research committee at the University of British Columbia (the people helping me with my research) and I will be the only people with access to the information. I will not use your name or identity when I refer to information from this study in my dissertation or any other writings or presentations. Instead I will refer to you by a pseudonym—which is a name I will make up. It must be noted that I am obligated to report any reports or allegations of abuse to the proper authorities.

Because some of our discussions will be with others in a group I cannot guarantee complete confidentiality in those settings. However, I will take all possible measures to ensure confidentiality including asking all participants to respect each others privacy and not repeat outside of the group what is said during the discussions.

**Contact for Information about the Study**
If you have any questions or require further information about this study, you may contact me at 563-1322 or Dr. Shauna Butterwick or one of her associates at 1-604-822-3897.

**Contact for Concerns about the Rights of Research Subjects**
If you have any concerns about your treatment and rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subjects Information Line in the University of British Columbia Office of Research Service at 1-604-822-8598.

**Consent**
Your participation in this study is *entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.*

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. In the case that this consent has been read orally to you, you will receive an audio copy of that reading.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Subject Signature       Date

Printed name of Subject signing above
Appendix 4: Song Lyrics

Photograph

Look at this photograph/ Every time I do it makes me laugh
How did our eyes get so red/ And what the hell is on Joey's head

And this is where I grew up/ I think the present owner fixed it up
I never knew we'd ever went without/ The second floor is hard for sneaking out

And this is where I went to school/ Most of the time had better things to do
Criminal record says I broke in twice/ I must have done it half a dozen times

I wonder if it's too late/ Should I go back and try to graduate
Life's better now then it was back then/ If I was them I wouldn't let me in/ Oh oh oh/
Oh god I

Every memory of looking out the back door/ I had the photo album spread out on my bedroom floor
It's hard to say it, time to say it/ Goodbye, goodbye

Every memory of walking out the front door/ I found the photo of the friend that I was looking for
It's hard to say it, time to say it/ Goodbye, goodbye

Remember the old arcade/ Blew every dollar that we ever made
The cops hated us hangin' out/ They say somebody went and burned it down

We used to listen to the radio/ And sing along with every song we know
We said someday we'd find out how it feels/ To sing to more than just the steering wheel

Kim's the first girl I kissed/ I was so nervous that I nearly missed
She's had a couple of kids since then/ I haven't seen her since god knows when/ Oh oh oh/ Oh god I

Every memory of looking out the back door/ I had the photo album spread out on my bedroom floor
It's hard to say it, time to say it/ Goodbye, goodbye

Every memory of walking out the front door/ I found the photo of the friend that I was looking for

It's hard to say it, time to say it/ Goodbye, goodbye

I miss that town/ I miss the faces/ You can't erase
You can't replace it/ I miss it now/ I can't believe it

So hard to stay/ Too hard to leave it

If I could I relive those days/ I know the one thing that would never change

Every memory of looking out the back door/ I had the photo album spread out on my bedroom floor

It's hard to say it, time to say it/ Goodbye, goodbye

Every memory of walking out the front door/ I found the photo of the friend that I was looking for

It's hard to say it, time to say it/ Goodbye, goodbye

Look at this photograph/ Every time I do it makes me laugh/ Every time I do it makes me

(Nickelback, 2005)
Appendix 5: Critical Dialogue Reflection Handout

1) Elements of the song with which you can identify

2) Elements with which you don’t identify

3) What seems to be the underlying message in the song and does it hold true in your life in a small community
4) How you might change, adapt or leave the same, messages in the songs that help describe your experience of social and economic health in their community

5) Can you share examples from your own life that might help to explain your responses?
Appendix 6: Critical Dialogue Focus Group Outline

In small groups of three to five, participants will be asked to focus on a piece of media that will help them to focus their attention on social and economic health in their community. Participants will be given a copy of the lyrics as they listen to the songs, Allentown by Billy Joel, Small Town by John Cougar Mellencamp, and Photograph by Nickelback. All offer somewhat different views of life in a small town.

If requested the song will be played more than once.

Participants will be asked to reflect on each song and consider:

- elements of the song with which they can identify,
- elements with which they don’t identify
- what seems to be the underlying message in the song and whether it holds true in their life in a small community
- how they might change, adapt or leave the same, messages in the songs that articulate their experience of social and economic health in their community
- examples from their own lives that might help to explain their responses.

After 10-15 minutes of private reflection in which participants may write down their thoughts, an open discussion will ensue around the reflective points provided above.
Appendix 7: Preliminary Individual Interview Question Schedule: Initial Meeting at the Beginning of the Study

Preamble:
First, I want to thank you for taking part in this study. I am looking forward to getting to know you and learning about your experiences and ideas about your life in your community and your ideas about a healthy community.

The reason I wanted to meet today is to answer any questions you may have about this study and your participation in the study. I also wanted to get contact information so I can get in touch with you. I would also like to ask you a little bit about your background—such as where you live, your family background, what you do for a living, and your educational background. This is not an in-depth interview. This meeting will be approximately 40 minutes to an hour.

I will remind you that you only have to answer the questions you want to answer. If at any time you want to stop the interview we can do so immediately. Once I have prepared a transcript of this interview you can ask me to see it in case you want to review it or make any revisions or clarifications. I am going to audiotape this session to help me remember what we discuss and I will jot down notes as we are talking. It must be noted that I am obligated to report any reports or allegations of abuse to the proper authorities.

(At this meeting I will also provide participants with a list of resources and counseling services available to them should they experience increased emotional stress as a result of discussing their social and economic circumstances).

I will go over information such as the purpose of the study, some of the terms I am using such as social and economic health, and the procedures to be used. I will answer any questions and address any concerns raised. I will make offer ample opportunity for participants’ questions at the beginning and the end.

Potential Questions:
Name: (first name is acceptable)
Contact Information:
Area Where You Live:
Family Background: (if applicable, what parents and/or guardians do/did for a living):
What you do for a living:
What is your highest grade level of formal public education (K-12)?
Is there other formal education you have obtained (such as university vocational training, skills courses, employment preparation workshops?)
Appendix 8: Participant Data Sheet

Name: (first name is acceptable): ____________________________

Pseudonym: ____________________________

Age: ______

Cultural Background: ____________________________

Contact Information:

________________________________________

________________________________________

Area Where You Live and How Long: ____________________________

________________________________________

Family Background: (if applicable, what parents/guardians do/did for a living):

________________________________________

________________________________________

What you do for a living:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

What is your highest grade level of formal public education (K-12)? ______

Is there other formal education you have obtained (such as university vocational training, skills courses, employment preparation workshops)?

________________________________________

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Appendix 9: Preliminary Individual Interview Question Schedule: 3 Months into the Study

PREAMBLE:
I would like to understand better what it is like for you to live in this community. I want to know what if anything about being here makes you feel content, comfortable, safe and secure. And I want to know what if anything about the community is difficult and makes it hard to feel comfortable and secure. This interview will probably take about an hour and a half to two hours.

You have taken part in focus groups where we listened to music and you related it to your life in this community. You have also taken photographs to show what you feel is healthy, not healthy, or some combination of both, in your community. Today, I was hoping we could talk more about your experiences and some of your ideas about the future for you in this community. I'm going to ask you to reflect on some of your own stories of living here and you can feel free to repeat anything that you have already shared in the other sessions and meetings. Also you can add anything new or anything you have changed your mind about. The questions I will ask touch on your life here as a young woman/man, the people and organization that play a part in your life, your role in your community, your economic situation, and if and how you see your future here. I encourage you to use examples and stories to help me better understand your answers. You do not have to answer any questions that you choose not to and if at any time you want to stop we will right away. You may have access to the transcript of this interview to review or clarify anything you say. I am going to audiotape this session and jot down some notes as we talk so I can better recall what we talk about.

These questions will be adapted according to some of the information individual participants have provided prior to the interview and some questions will be collapsed together depending on participants' responses.

QUESTIONS:

SOCIAL HEALTH
If you had to describe Sydney Mines to someone who has never been here what would you tell them?

As a young woman/man in this community what are some of the best and most difficult things about living here? PROBE: Can you tell me about a time that you felt really good about being here and a time you didn’t feel very good about living here?

Would you say you have a network of friends and family here in Sydney Mines?
FOLLOW-UP:
If so, can you tell me a story to help me understand the role your family and friends play in your comfort and security here. If not, can you tell me a bit about how that may or may not have impacted your life here?

Would you say there are organized support systems in this community that impact your comfort and security in this town (school, church, government agency, non-profit agencies, clubs, etc.)? Can you tell me about a time (if any) you called upon an organization or agency for support?

Tell me a bit about your experiences of school. Would you say the schooling has influenced the kind of life you have in Sydney Mines in any ways?

Tell me about the kinds of things you do here do here for enjoyment and recreation if you choose?

Would you consider yourself as someone who is involved in your community? PROBE: If so tell me a bit about your involvement? If not, are they reasons why you are not involved?

ECONOMIC HEALTH:

Would you say you have what you need to be financially comfortable and secure in your community? Probe: Tell me about that.

Tell me about a time when economic or financial factors impacted your own comfort and security here.

If participant suggests they have or do experience economic hardship:

Would you say you have any supports in your community when you experience financial concerns? (for example, government, organizational, familial, etc.).

Can you tell me about a time you had to ask for help and how that felt?

As a young woman/man tell me about your employment prospects if you stay in Sydney Mines? How do you feel about that?

PERCEPTIONS:

If you were going to live in Sydney Mines for the next ten years what would help to make your life comfortable and secure? (For example, things that would have to stay the same or change).
What kind of role do you want to play in your community?

Are you already playing that/those role(s)?

If not, is it possible?

How do you think your comfort and security concerns here in Sydney Mines are similar and different from those of the opposite gender?
## Certificate of Approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butterfly, S.</td>
<td>Educational Studies</td>
<td>B6-0350</td>
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</table>

### Institution(s) Where Research Will Be Carried Out
- Co-investigators:
  - Brann-Barrett, M. Tanya, Educational Studies

### Co-investigators
- Brann-Barrett, M. Tanya, Educational Studies

### Title
- The Way We See: Young Women's and Men's Perceptions of a Socially and Economically Healthy Community

### Approval Date
- JUN 1 2006

### Term (Years)
- 1

### Documents Included in this Approval:
- May 25, 2006, Consent form / Contact letter / Apr. 17, 2006, Advertisement / Questionnaires

### Certification

The application for ethical review of the above-named project has been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approved on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of the following:
- Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair
- Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair
- Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
- Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.