

PRODUCING 'OUT OF SCHOOL' WORKING CLASS GIRLS:
URBAN SPACE, PLACE & VALUE

by

STEPHANIE SKOURTES

B.S., The University of Oregon, 1995
M.A., Michigan State University, 2000

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

July 2012

© Stephanie Skourtes, 2012

Abstract

At a time when individualized narratives have replaced structural explanations like social class to account for inequality, the material conditions of girls who are marginalized economically, politically, and socially are being reproduced through the uneven outcomes of globalization. Young women who are on the fringes of social change are under valued as contributing members to a futuristic individually oriented society, and often not included in academic and mainstream definitions of ‘girl.’ This study addresses these epistemological silences through an empirical investigation of girls between the ages of 16-23 who are in various ways marked as a ‘problem’ by dominant social discourse. This research considers the structural organization of working-class girl subjectivities and seeks to broaden our understanding of contemporary girl culture in the changing nature of the ‘new global city’ (Sassen, 2001).

I conducted an eighteen-month ethnography of working-class, urban female youth who are living on the margins of the post-industrial city of Vancouver, Canada. Utilizing a materialist theoretical framework, which draws heavily from theories of social and cultural space, along with multiple visual ethnographic methods the ethnography took place in a provincially funded drop-in social service center for youth, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Analyses revealed how class as culture operated along with other classification systems like gender, ethnicity, and sexuality to inscribe the girls as ‘abject.’ Utilizing a theoretical intervention to retrieve ‘use-value’ as separate from ‘exchange-value’ I suggest that the girls’ narratives describe alternative value systems that provide collective significance and at times economic value to the girls. I also uncover the affective economies operating as the present expression of the girls’ collective histories to reveal the structures in place and historicity that produce the abject girl.

It is my hope that this study will advance the fields of youth cultural studies, ethnographic approaches, and the sociology of education by deploying materialist accounts of young, female working-class lives. The consideration of use-value (Skeggs, 2004a) and affect (Ahmed, 2004) as a demonstration of structural constraints provides a compelling approach to reposition socially marginalized young people and is key to understanding the processes and effects of urban change.

Preface

Ethics Approval

This study was approved by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board at The University of British Columbia on August 14, 2008 and July 7, 2009. Approval number: H08-01467

Photographs

Photos found throughout the chapters of this dissertation were taken by the research participants; thus, they remain anonymous and untitled.

Photos at the end of each chapter are from the 2011 documentary photography exhibit that accompanied this research titled, *Ab/Ob-jection: Encountering Youth and the City*. These photos are indicated as such by the photographer's name below each image.

Photos on page 93 were not part of the *Ab/Ob-jection* exhibit and are included in the text to provide a visual context for this research.

The photographers granted permission in all instances for reproduction here.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	vii
Dedication	viii
 1. Subjectivity, Space, and Class Among Urban Working-Class Girls.....	1
Theoretical Rationale	5
Research Questions and Theoretical Issues	8
Research Site and Research Group of Interest	10
 2. The Making of Working-Class Girl Subjectivities: Space, Social Class, and Value	13
Working-Class Youth and the ‘New’ Global City	13
The Study of the Girl.....	17
Historical Recountings of the Adolescent and the Teenager.....	18
The Contemporary Field of Girls’ Studies.....	22
The Limits of Modernist Conceptions of Girlhood.....	22
Post-structuralism and Feminism	28
Girls as Cultural Producers	30
Girls and Class Subjectivities.....	39
Moving Forward From Contemporary (Postmodern) Girls’ Cultural Studies	43
Reading the Spatial Landscapes of 21 st Century Girl Culture: Theoretical Concepts	45
The Hidden Dynamics of Class.....	46
Use Value – Rewriting the narrative on girls	48
Theories of Space and the Making of the Urban Girl	51
Spatializing the dialectics	54
Objectives Going Forward.....	56
 3. The Methodological Politics of Power and Representation	58
My Entry Into the Research	58
Insider vs. Outsider	59
Concerns Relating to Epistemology.....	61
The Politics of Representing the ‘Other’	61
Representation and the Ethics of Appropriation	64
Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnography.....	65
Critical Feminist Ethnography	65
Visual Ethnographic Methods	66
A Reflexive, Pragmatic Epistemology.....	68
Methodological Framing.....	70
Auto-driven Photo-elicitation.....	71
In-depth Interviews	73
The ‘Go-Along’	73
Multiple Visual Methods	75
Participant Observation.....	76

The Phenomenologies of Speaking For/With/Of Marginalized Young People	78
Strategies of Knowledge Construction	78
Techniques of Interpretation.....	81
Open coding	81
Across and within-case level analyses.....	82
Analytic strategies.....	83
Methods of Representation	84
 4. Resisting Risk and Individualization: Girls' Doing Divergent Femme(s)	
in Space and Place.....	86
Urban Canadian Landscapes and its Global Manifestations	86
Spacing and Placing	86
Vancouver: New Global City	87
The Local Scene	92
In the Neighborhood(s)	92
East Van	93
The Center	98
Making a 'Home Space' – Friendship and Family.....	102
Spaces of Representation	105
 5. Urban Girls' Struggles for Symbolic Recognition: Redemption, Value,	
and Imagined Futures	110
Reclaiming Value	112
Stories of Self and Imagined Futures: Class, Race, and Gender Distinction	115
Re-Narrating Redemption through the Language of Individualization: Achieving,	
Deliberating, and Trying to 'Be Good'	117
Redemption through Ethnic Distinction: Separation with Pride	121
Redeeming Oneself through Class Distinction: Performing the Good Mother.....	129
Imagining Future Selves	136
 6. Making Abject Social Identities	138
Classifying Structures and Embodiment: Gender, Value, and Youthful Inscriptions	139
Not Performing Normal: Culture, Style, and Challenging Middle-Class	
Femininities	142
Policing the Disadvantaged and Invisible Girls: Social Services, School, and the State ...	152
Social Service Surveillance and Modern Day Child Saving	154
The emergence of the problem girl	156
The erasure of history	159
School as a Disciplining Agent.....	165
Police Encounters in Space	172
The Making of the Abject Girl: Politics and Power Relations	178
 7. See Me Now! Feeling the Past in The Present: Space, Selfhood, and Affect.....	183
Anger as Power, Working-Class Rage, and Challenging Emotive Norms: Practicing	
Girlhood in a Context of Exclusion.....	185
No History, No Affect.....	190
Spatial Affects: Loneliness, Anxiety, and Nostalgia for Home	195
Affect as Transformative Revaluing	203

8. <i>Ab/Ob-jection: Encountering Youth and the City</i>	205
Value Ex Nihilo: Bringing Something From Nothing	207
The Persistent Burdens of Class	209
Reflections, Contributions and (Im)practicalities.....	211
Rewriting the Narrative on Girls: Not ‘can do’ and Not ‘at risk’	211
Considerations on Practice	213
Political Pasts, Presents, and Futures	216
 References	 219
 Appendices	
A Research Participants	235
B Codes	236
C Interview Protocol – Staff.....	237

Acknowledgements

An endeavor like this one, the writing of a dissertation and the completion of a PhD, is not accomplished alone. There are many people whose efforts, talents, wisdom, and guidance have enabled me to accomplish this goal. Thank you goes first to the girls at The Center who trusted me enough to allow my presence in their lives over the course of many months. I hope that my representation of your stories motivates others to SEE you and to walk with you. I am especially grateful to the director of The Center and to all of the staff for allowing me to conduct research in their space and for assisting my access to various programs and events. It was an honor to go to ‘work’ each day at The Center and witness the hard work and dedication that goes towards bettering the lives of young people. I extend particular gratitude to the youth worker ‘Steven.’ He not only provided me with invaluable insight into his profession and the young people at The Center, but also became a mentor and a friend.

I thank Dr. Jo Anne Dillabough, my academic supervisor and intellectual inspirer, for her guidance and support. Your encouragement and trust infused me with a sense of confidence to pursue my vision and to ‘keep going’ despite the intellectual and personal doubts that would sometimes plague my process. My additional committee members, Dr. Mona Gleason and Dr. Deirdre Kelly provided insightful comments and sound direction during the various phases of this study. I am indebted to each of you for encouraging me to engage with my research in a manner that was consistent with my political intentions and theoretical aspirations for this work. I thank too Dr. Dawn Currie for serving on my comprehensive exam committee and for agreeing to supervise a directed study on cultural studies and materialist feminism. Through that experience I was able to explore the theories and concepts that would later form my theoretical framework. I learned a great deal from our discussions and your guidance. I also want to thank Dr. Lisa Loutzenheiser who mentored and inspired me early on at UBC. It was in her Feminist Pedagogy class that I wrote my first paper deconstructing the dominant discourse on girls. Your encouraging feedback and unapologetic pedagogy helped me discover how I too could have a PhD, despite (or because of) my critique of academia.

This research was made possible by generous support from the Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, UBC Four Year Doctoral Fellowships, UBC Ph.D. Tuition Fee Awards, and the Faculty of Education Graduate Student Research Grant.

I want to extend a special thank you to all of the people who made the *Ab/Ob-jection: Encountering Youth and The City* Documentary Photography exhibit come to fruition. First and foremost I thank Megan Low and Tracei Therres for their creativity in translating this research into beautiful, challenging photography. I am amazed and humbled by your talents. I am also grateful to the photographer Yun Lam Li for his mentorship and artistry with this project. All three of you injected artistic inspiration into this work and gave me renewed motivation when the enormity and the isolation of writing a dissertation set in. I also want to thank the staff and youth at L.O.V.E for their interest in this photography exhibit and for their help in the staging of some photos. And finally, I thank the two galleries and the curators who showcased our exhibit; The Lobby Gallery at the Liu Institute for Global Issues and Lara Rosenoff-Gauvin and The Rhizome Café and Lisa Moore. I appreciate both of you for recognizing the feminist and anti-oppressive implications of this research and for valuing the use of the visual as a tool for social change.

My time in this program has been greatly enhanced by the camaraderie and intellectual and moral support of my research group colleagues; Ee-Seul Yoon, Erin Graham, Lyn Daniels, and Dr. Dilek Kayaalp. I also want to thank my Vancouver friend/family: Anya Chase, Cathryn Lecorre, Maria Routledge, Teal Beattie and especially Dr. Maryam Nabavi, my ‘school’ ally/friend. You all kept me focused and distracted at the appropriate times and showed me that working towards a PhD can be part of an enjoyable life. I accomplished this with you all. Finally, I want to thank my family. My parents Jackie and John Skourtes and my sister Jennifer Skourtes have continually supported and believed in me throughout my intellectual endeavors. Thank you for instilling in me the confidence to pursue an ‘unusual’ route. I especially thank Brian Ganter for his inspiring insight, intellectual guidance, creative ingenuity, and unyielding support. I’ve learned the most from you.

Dedication

To all of the hard working young women I've known along the way. The girls in Project RESPECT in Lansing, Michigan; the Seattle 'teen moms,' Keyanna, Jennifer, Patricia, and Leanna; and the Vancouver girls, Donna, Sam, Riley, Cali, Ramona, Alice, Veronica, Bianca, Alyssa, Lilly, Mary. I see you, I hear you, and I thank you for all that you've taught me.

Chapter One

Subjectivity, Space, and Class Among Urban Working-Class Girls

This thesis represents my attempt at conducting a critical feminist, ethnographic inquiry into the lives of working-class urban female youth who live on the margins of the post-industrial city of Vancouver, Canada. Specifically, the study is centered around an urban drop-in social service center for young people in Vancouver. My primary objective with this research has been to explore how urban working-class girls navigate their daily lives, engage with social services and with each other, and, in doing so, seek to bring value to their own experiences as a response to a wider symbolic undervaluing of ‘who’ they are seen to be in a larger urban context and within the context of Canada. I engaged in this work in order to better understand how negative youth subjectivities are formed and constituted, as well as to demonstrate the ways in which socio-cultural processes function to re-inscribe the ‘out of school’ working-class girl as *object*. I also sought to expose how the micro-spatial dimensions of the city and social class as both real and as imagined elements of everyday life play significant roles in forming working-class girls’ subjectivities and in further securing and consolidating their symbolic status within states of *abjection* inherited from a long narrative of colonization, legitimate citizenship, and nation-building (Adamoski, 2002; Ahmed, 2008).

I use the term ‘working-class’ to highlight the significance of class in shaping and regulating one’s subjectivity. Yet the girls who are the focus of this ethnography do not fit neatly into a specific social scientific population or a rigid account of class. The term ‘working-class,’ as E.P. Thompson (1968) argued over three decades ago (that is, the idea that ‘class is a relation’), reveals little about the behavioral, familial, and living situations that these girls find themselves in on an everyday basis. In addition, the category of ‘working-class’ when referring to young people—particularly in Canada, a country which does not necessarily carry the symbolic inheritance of working-class pride—is often used in social scientific parlance as a code word for so called ‘at-risk youth.’ Such terminology points to the history of pathology behind the term ‘working-class’ without saying so forthrightly (Skeggs, 2004c). Nor does the category ‘working-class’ reveal the often negative but sometime invisible reactions that teachers,

researchers, and the public have in relation to this term and the people who they imagine constitute the category.

When it comes to classifying working-class communities there remains the traditional divisions of working class into rough and respectable (Vincent, Ball & Braun, 2008) with the 'rough' referencing the 'underclass:' those who are estranged, isolated, living 'morally adrift' lives. The notion of the 'respectable' working class, in turn, refers to people positioned as law-abiding, hard working, and employable (Smith, 2008). This extends the distinctions posited by sociologists of the family between *hard living* (unemployed families living in poor-quality rental housing) and *settled living* (stably employed families who are homeowners) (Gorman, 2000; Howell, 1973; Rubin, 1976). By the same measure, when classifying youth there is the respectable, settled or 'good' working class (the well-behaved youth in school working to improve their situation) and the rough, hard-living apparently 'bad' working class (the so-called/classed delinquents, deviants, and drop-outs) (Archer, Halsall, & Hollingworth, 2007; France, 2008). The girls who participated in this research could largely be grouped in the 'rough, hard-living' category from an economic and subjective standpoint, but importantly they do not rest neatly within any category that would signify something akin to 'bad' or even 'rough.'

The young people selected for this study were girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds who simultaneously struggled against, and sometimes accommodated, the subjectivity identified by social service agencies and officials as 'problem youth.' They all could be considered *recalcitrant*, if the term is considered as a form of class or social/cultural resistance to the 'at risk' discourses circulating within the social services world. They defy authority, sometimes overtly, and more importantly resist dominant social norms that prescribe and mandate feminine, middle-class practices as the only acceptable way to be a young female. In this way they are all positioned in particular and contingent ways as 'problems' existing within, and at the margins, of mainstream society. At a more concrete level, the commonalities among my research participants take shape around geographic location (all urban dwellers), their ages (all between 16 and 23), gender and sexuality (all identify as heterosexual girls), economic categorization (all working-class or poor), and perhaps most importantly in their symbolic positioning as stigmatized young women. This stigma is attributed to them because of their class position, the performative dimension of

their social class, and their use of social services. Throughout, I will refer to the girls as ‘working class’ keeping in mind that they don’t fit neatly in the ‘rough, hard-living’ category, as they sometimes represent the ‘respectable, settled’ category as well.

It is appropriate at this time to discuss why I am focusing specifically on girls or young women as opposed to girls and boys. In the past two decades, the concept of the girl as a subject of inquiry and as a subjectivity has permeated the semiotic and ideological landscape of Western culture. Whether through television shows such as *16 and Pregnant* or in books and films such as *Twilight*, popular culture presents the contemporary girl as independent, strong, successful, and capable. More than a subject, conceptions of the girl serve as the moral compass for society. In much the same way that the white, male adolescent was fashioned at the beginning of the twentieth century as the emblem of a new, emergent industrialized society, the contemporary post-feminist adolescent girl is now filling that role. This girl or the ‘future girl’ (Harris, 2004) is defined by her flexibility and resilience in the face of uncertain career pathways and shaky economic outlooks. The future girl can be contrasted with the other dominant depiction of girlhood at the beginning of the twenty-first century: the idea of the girl as problem. Detailed descriptions of this girl’s social situatedness and history are, however, frequently absent from mainstream accounts, particularly as much sociological research focusing on traditional structural determinants of one’s future, such as social class, have diminished in significance (Archer & Leathwood, 2003; Cohen, 1999; Reay, 2004). I also find it equally troubling that such class analysis is on the wane at a time of near world-wide recession: such work seems to be absent precisely at a time when it is most urgently needed.

This structuring debate that undergrids the field of youth studies when framing the girl relates to the proliferation of theories of the self and notions of youth difference and effectively works to eliminate the problem girl as a subject. Thus, while some young women are produced as a problem because of poverty, family distress, racism, and sexism these same girls can sometimes be subordinated within academic inquiry. Given this dynamic, I wish to argue that it is key to engage in critical analyses of the conditions and processes that continue to subordinate working-class, female, young people thirty years after second wave feminism resurrected the girl from the confines of ‘youth’ (Llewellyn, 1980).

Furthermore, as I will elaborate and expand upon in the next chapter, a substantial amount of sociological and youth studies research focused on girls has, in recent years, neglected to consider the stigmatized girl who doesn't fit easily into a particular sub-category in the definition of the girl by either invoking notions of homeless, high school dropouts, and teen mothers on the one hand or sub-groups such as punks, ravers, and skaters on the other. Thus, I wish to underscore how the politics of categorization operates in particular settings that are associated with the symbolic idea of abjection as it relates to out-of-school girls. I will also explore the cultural practices and forms of resistance engaged in by girls who are stigmatized as a 'problem' or objectified as a 'symptom.' Given that Bourdieu's (1989) notion of symbolic violence is widely discussed in existing youth studies literature and is also intimately intertwined with what I witnessed on a daily basis in my research with young women, I seek to illustrate the processes and conditions such violence plays in the formation of a very particular kind of girlhood. I do so as a way to contextualize how both victimization and pathologization play out in certain ways when it comes to young women. This, I seek to argue, is a girlhood which is neither an 'at risk' form nor is it free of pathologization, but represents instead a more complex account of girlhood in space and time. I also seek to demonstrate how our understandings of young women change when we attempt to read girlhood differently or through an ethnographic approach which draws on a layered analysis of and reaction to her class position. Through this ethnographic account of the cultural practices of a group of working class girls who frequent a drop-in social service center, I seek to present a different lens through which to understand and come to know the 'girl.' This lens attempts to move away from and to begin to counteract liberal understandings of gender and its associated normative categories and seeks instead to highlight the hegemonic constructions that constitute a binary of good and bad behaviors and some of the inherited ideas that produce the making of the 'girl.' Here, then, my primary aim is to reveal how the girl participants in this study provide a theatre of understanding for showcasing the intersection of inherited social class relations, social service relations, and their everyday cultural practices. Ultimately, I see this ethnographic account as offering a platform for unraveling, reconceptualizing, and troubling normative definitions of girlhood.

Theoretical Rationale

This study is a contribution to the expanding range of literature and research in the field of girls' studies. In using the phrase 'girls' studies' I am referring to the collection of social thought, academic research, and textual representations that relate to contemporary enquiries into the political significance of the girl and girlhood as cultural entities. Given that I locate the present project in girls' studies I will use the most often-used designation in the field, 'girl,' to refer to the female young people who are in this study, while still noting the complexities and problems inherent to the term. The term 'girl' often connotes immaturity and can signify a pejorative image when used to refer to women or even young people over the age of thirteen (Jones, 1993). *Girl* can also be used politically as a reclaiming of feminist power. The 'Girl Power' approaches and movements of the mid 1990s were an attempt to signal precisely this move. Despite the challenges that surfaced with this liberal movement initially meant to empower girls (Gonick, 2006), this reclaiming of the 'girl' as distinct from the androcentric 'youth' served to put young women in a prominent academic and historical space. The use of 'girl' in girls' studies signals this sort of retrieval.

One way I address the problematic nature of 'girl' in the presentation of my research is by utilizing a variety of terms. In this text I use 'young women,' 'young people,' and 'girl' interchangeably. At times I also use 'female' and 'youth' when it seems appropriate to the flow of the story. I generally avoid the term 'adolescent,' as it refers to a constructed category derived from psychological discourse, as well as 'teenager' which refers to the popular culture term invented by marketers (Schrum, 2004).

There is some debate about both the historical and the theoretical origins of girls' studies, but as a recognizable field it is thought to date back to the mid-1980s (Ward & Benjamin, 2004). At the same time it is important to acknowledge that much of the research that has become associated with girls' studies has been conducted by authors who do not necessarily align themselves with this field (de Ras & Lunenberg, 1993; Griffin, 1993; Kerber, 1986). Still, I have multiple rationales for avoiding the broader category of 'youth studies' or 'the sociology of youth.' The first key issue is that girls' studies emerged in order to challenge the androcentric bias inherent to these other fields. Girls' studies have explored a number of topics pertaining to 'growing up' as a 'girl' or 'being female,' particularly since the emergence

of second-wave feminism. For example, classic studies from feminist ethnographers such as Vivienne Griffiths (1984, 1989), Christine Griffin (1980, 1985), Mandy Llewellyn (1980), and Angela McRobbie, (1978, 1980) have all, in various ways, repositioned the girl as the primary, if not central, subject of inquiry within the social-scientific study of youth. Conceptions of femininity and masculinity were reconceived through this research and seen as cultural constructs, as effects of contingent practices (discourse, ideology, culture, embodiment), in marked contrast to the innate features of the sexed body foregrounded in the prior historical focus on male youth. Early cultural studies work on youth sub-cultures in the British tradition is an example of the latter (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Willis, 1977). In girls' studies, the experiences of women and girls as gendered beings is seen as valuable and legitimate knowledge about young people and the current work that falls under the heading of girls' studies includes research that considers girls' cultural production.

A second reason for aligning the present research with the field of girls' studies is to contribute to what I see as gaps in the current work so as to build a more expansive and inclusive girls' studies approach, especially in relation to ethnographic accounts. To date much of the work in girls' studies has been initiated or carried out through a post-structural epistemological frame whereby agency, individuality, and multiple hybrid identities are foregrounded with the objective being to trouble or deconstruct the fixity of the girl as a stable concept. Informed jointly by third-wave feminism and the rise of identity politics in the 1990s, the new emphasis in girls' studies now has turned to girls' own production of cultural artifacts (Chesney-Lind, & Irwin, 2004; Harris, 1999, 2003, 2004; Kearney, 2006) and their associated displays of agency and resistance in negotiating with popular culture and dominant forms of femininity (Harris & Fine, 2004; Jiwani, Steenbergen, & Mitchell, 2006). While this work has made great strides towards productively troubling gender bias in the concept of 'youth' and in addressing gender inequality, it can be argued that particular postmodern- and post-structuralist informed understandings of assumptions regarding the self, identity, and difference that are dominant within contemporary girls' studies research has sometimes functioned to dehistoricize and dematerialize 'difference.' In doing so, they have disembedded girl subjectivities from their contingent structural mooring or their social position in relation to conditions of inequality and the forms of exploitation that

surround them (Ebert, 1996). Historical effects are therefore bracketed out or simply forgotten in the name of local descriptions of self and identity (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Driscoll, 2002). Further, by applying the postmodern conception of difference as discursive and not wanting to totalize youth experience, there is the tendency for youth identity to retreat into a normative dominant signification (Davies & Banks, 1992; Gonick, 2001, 2003). Finally, the postmodern emphasis on *describing* youth without an *explanation* for why they are in the situation that they are could arguably have the effect of removing opportunities for transformative social change.

These issues or assumptions go far beyond the merely theoretical as current political and material forces are impinging on, impacting, and reordering the lives of young people. Some might also argue that we are living in a time when individualized narratives have replaced structural explanations such as social class to account for inequality (Gillies, 2005). As a result, the material conditions of girls who are marginalized economically, politically, and socially are being reproduced in part through the uneven social and economic outcomes of highly advanced forms of globalization (Nayak, 2003). Girl communities, specifically those composed of girls who operate on the fringes of economic and social changes, are not only socially excluded and left to fend for themselves in the post-industrial risk environment, but are undervalued as contributing members of this 'high risk' (Beck, 1992), individualism-rewarding society.

Theoretically, class as a concept and an organizing principle has diminished in importance particularly since the 1980s throughout social-science research (Crompton, 1998; Shildrick, 2006). Within the field of youth studies, and particularly in Canada and the US, this has translated into a recurring and systematic absence regarding clarity about class and deeper sociological understandings of class as a pattern which has multiple influences upon the everyday cultural practices of low-income young women who are either marked as 'other' (Nayak, 2003) or who simply don't fit easily within dominant markers of social class (Haylett, 2003). Within the field of girls' studies, contemporary girlhood is often defined tacitly as middle-class (Shildrick, 2006), and as a result the dominant discourse of girlhood implicitly romanticizes the vision of an economically secure girl who is conscientious, success-oriented, ambitious, creative and willing to adjust to the demands of uncertain economic forecasts (Harris, 2004). A particular

type of girl is privileged and arguably she is one who supports the requirements of a neo-liberal state (Burman, 2005). Within this highly circumscribed field of representation there is little room to elucidate the real ‘messiness’ of the category of ‘girl’ without pathologizing the large majority of girls (working-class, ethnic minorities, ‘delinquent,’ etc.) who do not (or refuse to) achieve this stature and who, correspondingly, are unable to accrue ‘value’ for themselves.

Ultimately in the Canadian context the ways in which female youth/ful subjectivities have been investigated within girls’ studies has precluded consideration of the importance of the representation or depiction of youth (class) differences¹. In a partial response to this epistemological silence, I am suggesting that the condition of effective categorization (classification systems like gender, ethnicity, class) in producing youthful, classed, female subjectivities should be investigated more directly, rigorously, and substantively. As subject positions are the effect of discursive, ideological, and organizational structures (Skeggs, 1997) (and in contrast to some post-feminist theorizing and empirical work looking at girls and alternative subjectivities mentioned above) I wish to remain focused upon studying the structural organization of working-class girl subjectivities. This work, therefore, seeks to broaden our understanding of contemporary girl culture through the lens of one social service agency operating in and alongside of that emergent social formation some sociologists have named the ‘New Global City.’

Research Questions and Theoretical Issues

I am proposing to broaden the theoretical territory of the study of working-class girls by focusing in particular upon three key theoretical concepts. First, I attend to the concept of ‘value’ and its role in shaping girls’ everyday experience of the urban spaces through which they travel and in which they engage with social services. I use the term value in a way that follows a cultural materialist tradition outlined extensively by Beverly Skeggs (2004a) but which extends the work of Pierre Bourdieu. I do so in order to refer to the positive symbolic qualities of a person and their determining effect on one’s material position within a system of inequality. Following Bourdieu (1977, 1989, 1990), Skeggs maintains that class always matters but she also bridges the gap between concrete identities and global structures by

¹ I will detail this class omission in girls’ studies research in Chapter Two.

theorizing class as itself a production of value. The second concept I draw upon is spatialization largely because it exists in theory and practice as a material force and form (Aitken, 2001; Sibley, 1995) and theories from urban geography (Lefebvre, 1991b; Massey, 1999). Elements from spatial theory are useful for understanding how and why hegemonic meanings of the ‘girl’ are circulated and are helpful in connecting the operation of space to the concepts of value, class, and female subjectivity. Finally, I will be deploying the idea of ‘abjection’ as a way to talk about the bodily marking and effect of negative classifications that preclude the accumulation of value for those who are marked as abject (Ahmed, 2004; Skeggs, 2004a).

Specifically, this research seeks to explore three key questions. First, how do ‘out of school’ young women (aged 16-23) who are either unemployed or underemployed perceive and navigate radically changing urban environments in 21st century modern Canada and in one particular urban concentration (the city of Vancouver, BC)? Second, how do these young women value, describe, and perform ‘girl culture’ as they carry out their lives and move within and/or through the social service ‘industry’ in these ‘New Times’ (Hall, 1996)? Third, how are young women’s accounts of ‘girlhood’ in the ‘new global city’ linked to 21st century social class formations, as well as other symbolic markers of status, exclusion, resistance, and change?

In posing these questions, it is my hope that this dissertation will contribute to the advancement of the fields of youth cultural studies, girls’ studies, and the discipline of the sociology of education by simultaneously deploying spatialized and materialist accounts of young, female working-class lives in urban Canada. Particular accounts of working class girls’ experiences are needed to inform the specificities and contours of modern girlhood which cut across the center and the margin and move between the formal and informal educational spaces in culture at large. It is worth noting that the few focused studies of economically marginalized or working-class girls that do exist are overwhelmingly centered around American or British schools (Bettie, 2004; Connolly & Healy, 2004; Hey, 1997). In contrast, this study will contribute to our knowledge of how female, working-class subjectivities—class understood as subject position as well as socio-economic relation—are constructed at multiple levels in the Canadian context by observing girls as they travel in and through multiple spaces beyond and in

parallel with the site of institutionalized schooling. The concept of traveling here is an important dimension of my research. ‘Traveling,’ as I develop it here, is integral to an ethnographic encounter which is not simply or solely based on interviews but on the forms of walking and encountering working class experiences in situ, drawing on previous work such as Nayak’s (2006) idea of the walking ethnography. Further, an understanding of the processes of categorization and the everyday material impact of symbolic value in the lives of young women will be an additional contribution of my study to the fields outlined above. The intent is to challenge what constitutes the ‘correct’ way of being a girl by focusing on youth who are negatively stigmatized without preconceived ideas about how they *should* be or what they *should* strive for in the future, as well as to bring value to that which is constitutively undervalued: the pathologized, working-class, urban girl.

Research Site and Research Group of Interest

The central location where this ethnography took place was a multi-service youth resource center located in Vancouver, BC operated by a large, non-profit, social service organization funded through provincial, federal, and private grants and donations. I will call this place ‘The Center’ throughout. It is located on a busy street in a residential neighborhood on the edge of the urban core of Vancouver. This is an area of segregated poverty combined with gentrified housing and middle-income residents (Statistics Canada, 2006). The Center provides assistance to young people between the ages of 13 and 24 in the areas of housing, education, employment, counseling, and addictions treatment and is accredited through the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (The Center’s website, 2008). Several other agencies are co-located at The Center, such as an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program.

The youth who visit The Center live either in the immediate neighborhood or in surrounding locales throughout the Vancouver metropolitan area. Some of the young people live with their families and others are homeless or intermittently homeless, while the remaining young people live on their own or with friends (A. Ross [pseudonym], personal communication, June 10, 2008). They represent the diverse gender, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds of the city as a whole, with over 25% of The Center’s clientele being of Aboriginal descent. Nearly all of the youth visitors are from a working-class

background or in some way are economically disadvantaged (S. Miller [pseudonym], personal communication, July 8, 2009).

I entered this setting as an adult volunteer for a year-and-a-half prior to the formal start of my research. In the role of volunteer I grew quite familiar with the staff and many of the youth. As I detail in Chapter Three, being a somewhat familiar face around The Center before switching to ‘researcher’ brought its own unique challenges. However, being familiar with The Center and its operations was very useful in narrowing my observation activities and in designing the focused research methods that I used with a smaller group of girls. These were more easily implemented as I already had some idea as to who the girls were and what their everyday cultural practices were.

There was a large group of youth who visited The Center almost daily, and spent most of their day in the space when they were there. I call them the ‘Center regulars’ and they were the young people I became most familiar with during the ethnography. Seven of the girls in this group participated in my focused research activities. I also recruited an additional ten girls from the ABE program and four other girls who visited The Center on occasion or were in other programs at The Center. In total, I recruited twenty-one working-class girls between the ages of 16 and 23 to participate in focused research activities but had informal conversations with dozens of youth, both boys and girls, over the course of eighteen months.

Among the focused research group, eight girls identified as First Nations, six as white, two as Chinese, one as South Asian from the Punjab, two as Filipina, and two girls as ‘mixed’ race (white and black). These young women were urban dwellers, working-class or poor, and were not ‘properly institutionalized’ for their age: in other words, the majority of this group either were pushed out of high school or attended an alternative education program (two of the girls graduated from a traditional high school within the usual four year time frame). All of the girls enrolled in the ABE program lived at home with their families, while all of the ‘Center girls’ lived either on their own or with friends. Each of The Center girls over age 18 received some government assistance as opposed to being in regular, full-time employment or enrolled in a higher education or skills training program. Some young women held jobs but would certainly qualify as ‘under-employed’ given that only two girls had full-time jobs leaving many

of the remaining girls in a perpetual search for work over the course of the research in order to support themselves. Furthermore, all of the youth either sporadically or intimately utilized social services, and eight of the girls had spent a significant period of time in foster care.

It is important to note two significant elements of the population I studied. The first is the presence of Aboriginal culture, identity, and history. Importantly, this is not a study about Aboriginal girls. However, nearly half of my research participants identified as Aboriginal² and I met many Aboriginal young people at The Center. Moreover, the study took place in a post-settler society contending with a history of colonization and ethnic genocide; thus, I addressed these factors in my analysis. Second, motherhood proved to be an important consideration in both my reflexivity and the construction of knowledge that was to follow. I became a mother for the first time as did three of the research participants during the course of the research and the concept of ‘mother’ played a forceful role throughout the ethnographic process. I will elaborate on the significance of the ‘mother role’ in Chapter Three.

Through participant observation at The Center and in the surrounding neighborhoods where the girls live, work, and play, along with the use of visual research methods, I constructed a portrait of the spaces and places that constituted the girls’ everyday lives (spaces and places that played a central role in the formation of their subjectivities). Through these activities I observed an ongoing series of instances of girl culture and stigmatization in a uniquely spatialized context. Finally, in this research I have attempted to elucidate the cultural resources and strategies (economic, symbolic, cultural) that working-class girls draw upon to live in the transformed urban spaces of contemporary North America and to share how they see themselves and their futures in the Canadian version of the global metropolis. In the next chapter I will detail the existing bodies of literature that I draw from and seek to expand through this research. I will also present the theoretical framework that I used to accomplish the goals of this study.

² I use the term ‘Aboriginal’ throughout this text to refer to people who are indigenous to the land that is now known as ‘Canada’ (First Nations, Métis, Inuit). However, *all* of the Aboriginal young people who participated in this research referred to themselves and to each other as ‘Native.’

Chapter Two

The Making of Working-Class Girl Subjectivities: Urban Space, Social Class, and Value

The context for this study stems from several bodies of literature. Broadly, these bodies of literature can be organized within two categories. The first refers to work associated with individualization and the tenets of what is sometimes referred to as post-industrial ‘New Times’ (Hall, 1996) in the West (also known as reflexive modernization) and its impact on working-class, female youth. The second body of literature encompasses the contemporary conceptualization of the ‘girl’ within popular and academic discourses. I will outline the relevant aspects of each of these subjects, highlighting the gaps in our understanding and indicating places where further research is still needed.

Working-Class Youth and the ‘New’ Global City

Early 21st century market societies have experienced far-reaching social changes over the past several decades. Numerous debates have played out over what to designate our present era: high or late modernity (Giddens, 1996), post-modernity (Harvey, 1990), or a new modernity (Beck, 1992). All of these terms, despite their surface differences, attempt to describe or register the contours of an era of post-industrialization, post-Fordism, and a de-traditionalization and individualization of social life. Stuart Hall (1996) refers to the present era as ‘New Times,’ which he describes as global economic changes marked by flexible specialization, a shift to new information technologies, the move towards decentralized forms of labor processes, an increase in the share of wages put into consumer goods, a decline in the manual working class and rise of service work, and a ‘feminization’ and ‘ethnicization’ of the workforce. Gibson-Graham (2006) have also suggested that current capitalist economic arrangements are not independent of social or familial structures.

Such global transformations are producing uneven social and economic outcomes for young people (Katz, 1998; Nayak, 2006), who are by definition the most vulnerable members of society. For example, in North America and the UK, state support for youth in terms of special programs and education has been eroding with the rise of neo-liberal social and economic policies or austerity measures that favor individuality, privatization, and fiscal self-restraint (Peters, 2011; Ruddick, 2003). This, coupled with social retrenchment in wealthy Western nations and the outflow of labor to periphery

countries, means clear ‘school-to-work’ transitions for working-class youth in the West are much more difficult to navigate (Bivens, 2012; MacDonald & Marsh, 2004). Part-time, flexible work has replaced full-time ‘career building’ jobs. As Castells (2000) has famously observed, “In the new labor market we see a central core of prosperity and security contained within a periphery of part-time contract workers, and those with low skills” (p. 221).

Simultaneously, we can see unambiguously that the number of families living in poverty is increasing (Lovell, 2004; Raphael, 2007). Child poverty is on the rise and economic polarization between the rich and poor is increasing with less inter-class movement (Albanese, 2010; Ball, McGuire & McCrae, 2000; Klein, 2010). This can be seen most visibly in the inner cities of North America (Walks & Bourne, 2006). It is on the urban periphery where the highest proportion of dispossessed young people reside. Yet, as Ball et al. (2000) articulate in their research on youth in the ‘New Economy,’ the ubiquity of youth consumerism and the spatial organization of culture obscure the prevalence of inequality within the global city.

It has been argued that individualized, globalized capitalism and the product of reflexive modernization is superceding industrial capitalism, and bringing about the demise of traditional, working-class solidarity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). According to these ‘risk’ theorists, social class is a relic of modernity (the first one) where it now plays a marginal role in determining either one’s life outcomes or access to material resources. Collective, stable identities, according to this narrative, are declining in significance as people forge their own individually negotiated lives (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005) and assume the demands of so called ‘flexible citizenship’ (Harvey, 1990). It is argued by risk theorists that ‘class,’ as an organizing principle in one’s life, is no longer relevant. This theoretical climate makes building new resistance knowledges of class and highlighting the systematic nature of economic injustice—such as what I seek to articulate here—particularly urgent. It is within this social climate that the present work, seeking to emphasize and rearticulate the continuing significance of class, is situated within the Canadian context.

As I have alluded to above, the social climate of ‘New Times’ is marked by an increased emphasis on an individualistic notion of agency in negotiating and managing one’s life events or life

chances (Gillies, 2005). According to this view, public ties to traditional social structures are diminishing or at least being ideologically eroded. In response to a systematically and deliberately weakened welfare state across all (post)industrial nations, the rise of neo-liberalism, and economic shifts brought on by what is now referred to as late modern or advanced globalization we are witnessing what Nikolas Rose (1996), echoing Baudrillard (1983), refers to as 'the death of the social.' According to this view, individual associations and personal affiliations to local and specific communities are replacing former social connections that were established through kinship or status and rooted in a shared social responsibility, such as collectivity. While there may be evidence to support this claim of diminishing social connectivity, its inevitableness and completeness can be challenged. Still, the cultural ramifications of the rise of neo-liberalism are apparent. Rose (1999) suggests we are, "...[in] an era dominated by a culture of the self" (p. 27).

Rose (1996) documents that in almost all advanced industrial economies, the certainties of the welfare state are under attack. Gibson-Graham (2006) has also echoed this view. Traditional, state-directed social welfare is being replaced with strategies external to the state that seek to govern through regulated, self-management techniques. The discourses of globalization and the language of neo-liberalism are crucial for this process to function. The dialogue of reflexive modernization, where individuals chose their own biographies, functions to present a veneer of individually-driven engagement amongst the forces of globalization. If we are to follow this logic then the citizen (or citizen-consumer) can chose who he or she wants to be in the global marketplace. The 'new' subject/person in this new era must now be self-sufficient and personally responsible for her future as part of a process of constant reinvention and self-perfection (Lucey, Melody, & Walkerdine, 2003). Not participating, however, (a state marked by economic deprivation, social exclusion, or a non-consumptive lifestyle) signals a morally limited and failed individual (Rose, 1996).

Within the realm of labor and gender, the new worker in this new era is now more likely to be a woman (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). Walkerdine (2003) too, suggests, "...the female worker [is] the mainstay of the neo-liberal economy" (p. 238). The post-World War II movement of women into the labor market and the subsequent dislodging of some women from traditional roles (largely in the West but also

elsewhere in the global economy) have created new forms of classification and emergent social divisions that are increasingly feminized, generating new social roles for women to assume (i.e. sole bread winner, entrepreneur) (McRobbie, 2004). At the same time, however, specific female gender hierarchies continue to be maintained through the denigration of working-class and socially marginalized women. As women become detached from their conventional place in the family, the media 'field' (to use Bourdieu's (1977) term) becomes highly significant for producing these new forms of classification (Lawler, 2004; Walkerdine, 1997), making media an increasingly significant space to 'occupy' with oppositional representations, images, and ideas.

The push for individuals to take responsibility for their decisions and actions has undermined a social welfare agenda throughout the English-speaking West and instituted a neo-liberal cultural and ideological regime set on promoting individualism as the cure for all social ills. Nowhere is this more evident than in the language of social science research and social policy debates related to young people (Lawler, 2005a; Rouse, 1995)³. Rather than using economic disparity and material need as markers of inequality, working class youth disadvantage is explained through the concept of 'social exclusion' which is tied to a culturally distinct (Gilles, 2005) and economically marginalized minority (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2006). All 'othered' youth are referred to through this concept which ultimately homogenizes their experience and fails to reveal the structural reasons for their social segregation as local descriptions of self and identity fill the void of historical and materialist explanations. Inequalities among the 'included' majority are overlooked as well (Croghan et al., 2006), as the overriding objective of policy makers and government officials is to create opportunities for all citizens (rearticulated as consumers) to make individual choices based on their own personal desires and needs (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005).

As a corollary to this point it is worth acknowledging that today classed subjectivities are inseparable from 'young' women. As Angela McRobbie (2004), one of the leading voices on youth culture in cultural studies today elucidates, "...class distinctions are now more autonomously generated

³ Examples of this reframing of class through political rhetoric and the criminalizing of poverty can be seen in Great Britain with policies like, *Every Child Matters*, or in the U.S. with the *No Child Left Behind* Act. Both programs target socially 'excluded' young people (poor children) with a range of plans and directives to overcome social disadvantage premised on moving poor youth into the mainstream (i.e. transmitting middle class values). In these programs success is measured through state mandated educational standards, local school and teacher accountability, and parental involvement (US-Dept-of-Education, 2007).

within the media or journalistic field and refracted through the youthful female body” (p. 102). Young women (young female bodies) are inscribed as ‘welfare dependent’ and ‘teen mother’—among other things—always signifying failure, while expensive tastes, and slim, well-groomed girls signify the opposite, namely, success.

This condition of social signification indicates that the promises and goals of second wave feminism, working by way of the liberal ‘Girl Power’ and ‘Reviving Ophelia’ movements of the 1990s, have not been realized for those girls without economic and cultural purchase. Or, as a hypothetical counter argument, could it be that these movements themselves extending from the heyday of liberal feminism may have played some part in perpetuating this inequality (Brown, 2003)? I will take up these issues in the next section as I review the field of girls studies. I conclude this section, however, with a particularly central question: how do girl subjectivities take shape in the current stage of advanced neo-liberalism, particularly for working class girls who both utilize social services and are socially excluded, thus leaving them with access to fewer resources to ‘self perfect’?

The Study of The Girl

The primary body of literature within which I situate this work is the field of girls’ studies. My interests in studying youth subjectivities with a group of working-class, young women stems from both epistemological and methodological gaps within the field of girls’ studies. Epistemologically, girls’ studies has been infused and influenced by some post-structuralist approaches that have been slowly gaining substantial paradigmatic dominance across the social science and humanities disciplines. These post-structuralist perspectives in girls’ studies have sought to trouble the liberal notion of a fixed feminine identity that constitutes ‘the’ girl, highlighting the regulatory norms and discursive processes that produce the very category of the girl (and a hegemonic girl image). Yet, alongside the work of Bettie (2003), Lucey, et. al. (2003), and Walkerdine, et. al. (2001), I wish to argue that the current application of this mode of cultural analysis fails, at least in part, to extend the idea of social construction to explain *why* a discrete form of girlhood is manufactured. What ideological formations necessitate a *particular conception* of childhood, and specifically one that disparages the girl? Before I address this issue and identify what I see as gaps within the field, I will evaluate how different perspectives within girls’ studies

conceive of young women as classed and gendered subjects subsumed under the category 'girl.' It is crucial that we ask: what are the historical processes and forms of knowledge which have permitted the scientific study of young women? Furthermore, what has been excluded from the field in relation to social class and gender analyses because of the field's theoretical locations and contradictions? Ultimately, these questions will uncover silences, fissures, and gaps within the field of girls' studies.

To start with, it is important to situate girls' studies within the historical context of the study of childhood and adolescence as it is the adolescent female who is most often the subject of inquiry in girls' studies. Additionally, it is the role of the adolescent within the historical project of Empire building that continues to give her significance today (Lesko, 2001). Therefore, I start this review by briefly outlining the trajectory of the modern study of adolescence in the Western context leading up to the emergence of the girl as a subject of inquiry within the social sciences and humanities. After a historical appraisal of the emergence of the adolescent and the teenager, I will then move on to explore the early epistemological accounts of the study of the girl in social science research. Next, I'll review and critique the contemporary work that makes up the field of girls' studies. I've divided the analysis into two sections: (a) girls as cultural producers, and (b) girls and class(ed) subjectivities. In each section I will review the work in that area, discuss its strengths and limitations, and propose possible ways forward. The chapter will conclude with an expanded directive on ways the field could proceed, given the challenges I have identified.

Historical Recountings of the Adolescent and the Teenager

For the majority of modern history, recognition of people between the ages of 11 or 12 and 17 or 18 as a distinct age grouping did not occur. There was no romanticization or special recognition for people in this age bracket (Schrum, 2004). In the late 1890s, however, this changed as the modern adolescent emerged in North America and Europe. The American psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, is credited as the 'father' of adolescence, as he popularized the term and solidified the adolescent malady of psychological 'storm and stress' within the minds of the general public (Comacchio, 2006).

The meaning of adolescence as a stage in the life span of the culture and of the human person, however, is contested in the social sciences (Fasick, 1994). Outside of psychological discourse, some would call the 'adolescent' an invention rather than an observation or a finding (Adamoski, 2002; Lesko,

2001; Sangster, 2002a). Fasick (1994), for example, takes the position that the ‘invention’ of adolescence is connected to the growth and spread of the institutions of urban-industrial North America with the secondary educational system playing a dominant role. The historian Joan Sangster (2002a) calls the adolescent a fiction that materialized at a time of tremendous cultural and technological change in the U.S. and the U.K. Tamara Myers (2006) and Cynthia Comacchio (2006) recount the same social transformations in Canada as well. All of these authors highlight the rise of industrial capitalism and, with that, a rise in corresponding social and demographic changes that befell upon the nations of the West. Women had a greater presence in the workforce, fewer men owned their own businesses, and massive immigration and urban population expansion meant an increased presence of people of color, non-English speakers, and poor people (Myers, 2006; Sangster, 2002a). These changes were read by the white, male middle- and upper- classes as threatening to modern civilization—which can be translated, without too much difficulty, to indicate a menace to their way of life.

According to this perspective, the legacy of Victorian Puritanism and white masculine bourgeois privilege faced a growing fear in response to challenges to their power. Scientific rationalism was the philosophy that would propel the emerging industrialized societies into the 20th century and was embellished with the promise of solidifying one’s place in the social order (Lesko, 2001). To be rational meant, of course, to be civilized in a way that was presented as evolutionarily advanced (Walkerdine, 1993). One was to be constrained, modest, hard-working, economically productive, pure, and white. All ‘others’ (working-class women, youth, the poor, [dis]abled people, non-white, and non-English speakers) had their ‘differences’ set in relief against this figure which correspondingly helped to define the advanced, rational person over and against all other primitive, irrational uncivilized subjects (Strong-Boag, 2002). A new political and civic order preoccupied with nationalism, civilization, and white racial progress would ensue.

Adolescence was to become the moment of symbolic and physical division between the rational and the irrational. Since rationality was conflated with maleness, ‘adolescents’ were male youth. As growing beings in their own right, the adolescent contained the hopes and fears of the emerging modern nation-state. He could either grow into a prosperous, productive subject (the national vision of progress),

or go astray, becoming nefarious and corrupt (leading to the degradation of society) (Adamoski, 2002). Maleness thus emerged as the site for the production of the patriotic and industrious modern citizen that would be needed to advance the Nation-State into the twentieth century.

The direction for girls varied somewhat based on their class and ethnicity (which might involve grooming for marriage and motherhood or domestic servitude) but it was always dictated by their status as Other (Gleason, 1998; Sangster, 2002a). Early 20th century codes of purity and chastity reigned above all else for the female young person, and as a result interest in her development was negligible until promiscuity was detected (Chunn, 2003). To be a 'female' adolescent, then, was to be a non-entity: a pathologized Other living through a narrative in which she did not exist.

The 'teen' girl, as opposed to the *male* adolescent, didn't emerge as a conceptualization in Canada until the 1920's through the marketing of teeny-bopper culture to girls (Comacchio, 2006). An increase in high school attendance played a central role in establishing a distinct peer culture among North American young women which fermented age- and gender-specific norms and provided a platform for the use and exchange of newly emerging teen specific products (Driscoll, 2002). As members of a niche market invented by advertisers, teenagers were defined by their consumption patterns in dress, leisure, and popular culture. This meant that in order to be a 'teen' one had to have access to disposable income for consumer goods. Early portrayals of the teenager in pop culture were often just of *girls*. These were girls who observed proper etiquette, were sexually pure, wealthy, and college bound, girls, in other words, who were suitable marriage material (Schrum, 2004). Thus, less than an afterthought, the teen girl was created as a commodity in service to a capitalist state consumed with the reproduction of labor and markets.

This historical relaying of the creation of adolescence for moral purposes by the State and the teenager for financial objectives of marketers is telling, as similar discourses and ideologies are in circulation today in the conceptualization of young people. Youth, and adolescents in particular, are symbols for the dichotomous, fractured selves of the so-called 'post'-modern society. Young people represent the potential for greatness while they also serve as emblems of the deterioration of the moral and social order (Lesko, 2001). What has changed in the more recent articulations of adolescence, however, is that now this mythology also represents and emphasizes girls (Aapola, Gonick, and Harris,

2005). After decades of being ignored and subsumed as part of the androcentric 'youth,' teen girls are now depicted as the bearers of a 'utopian moment.' In contemporary Western societies, girlhood represents the potential for a complex, globalized, and individualized future.

As the girl takes her place as the prevailing emblem of a fresh tomorrow, her real identity is taken for granted. This girl is white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and above all embodies—or at least performs—a middle class persona. This is the 'future girl' (Harris, 2004), produced through the post-industrial, neo-liberal discourse, who sits in contrast to the pathologized, working-class girl. If the first girl exemplifies society's potential for the coming decades, the girl as a problem or 'at risk' signifies her own personal failings. This second girl, then, stands as a potential national block to future global competition. It is the problem girl's life circumstances (poverty, family distress, poor school performance) that render her vulnerable or 'at-risk' for not transitioning into productive, independent adulthood.

The 'future girl' is a new character on the academic and cultural scene (emerging in the last two decades), while the girl as a problem, a delinquent, is a familiar figure going back almost to the beginning of the creation of adolescence. In Canada, the identification of 'delinquents' began in 1908 (Sangster, 2002b). As a raced, classed, and overly sexualized being, the image of the female delinquent is nearly synonymous with urban, non-white, and poor people. The reverse description serves the same goal. To be an urban, non-white, and/or poor young person means to be either a delinquent or an 'at-risk' youth with the potential for future problems. For decades, fear of the urban 'other' was generated as an important element of imperialism and attached to the bodies of young people, and today the figure of the 'at-risk' youth plays out within a similar political economy (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995).

The image of the urban youth is embedded in cultural references, as evidenced by the numerous films depicting both boys and girls from North American cities consumed by drugs, sex, gangs, early pregnancy, and violence (Grossberg, 2007). Far from being a reflection of the modern, dangerous 'risk' society (as the liberal, modern-day child-savers would have us believe) (Males, 1996; Pipher, 1994) this image has been fermenting for nearly 100 years. What is most significant now is that the ideological goals and interests for the establishment of the delinquent girl that existed in 1920—the political and economic

execution of power based on race, class, and gender and the justification for sustaining dominant social norms (Sangster, 2002b)—are the same goals and interests driving the perpetuation of this myth today.

The Contemporary Field of Girls' Studies

The Limits of Modernist Conceptions of Girlhood

It has been suggested that girls' studies, as a distinct area of inquiry, emerged in North America and Europe in the mid-1980s (Ward & Benjamin, 2004). Similar to the progression of the study of youth more generally, the intellectual landscape of girls' studies research can be correlated with the following and sometimes conflicting paradigms: liberal/humanist, postmodern/post-structural, and cultural studies. Even though they each emerged sequentially, with a degree of overlap between them, there remain representations of each of these traditions in contemporary girls' studies scholarship.

In general, work considered to be a version of liberal/humanism emanates from a humanist philosophical tradition (Griffin, 1993). Such work supports the modernist position on youth which views childhood and adolescence as temporal stages leading to adulthood with the ultimate goal of maturity (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The common feature of this work is an acceptance of the girl as a stable, embodied subject position. Analyses of media messages and how they may negatively impact upon girls' identity and development, along with the study of girls' cultural artifacts are common research strategies within this tradition. There are two popular 'movements' associated with a girls' liberation movement that occurred in the early 1990s that originate simultaneously from a liberal/humanist tradition and mark the beginning of what could be called girls' studies in North America (de Ras & Lunenberg 1993).

The first movement emerged from a purported crisis in girls' emotional development. Research that emerged from American scholars sought to extend the idea about girls' moral development, which had been initiated by the American psychologist Carol Gilligan (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990). Two key studies reported a link between girls' psycho-social experiences and schooling; they both purported that as girls approach adolescence, girls' emotional connections with other girls diminishes (AAUW, 1991; Gilligan & Brown, 1992). Girls began to edit themselves and their interactions with others fearing that honesty would lead to conflict or abandonment. Eventually negative feelings were to be suppressed. Over time this silencing bred uncertainty and doubt and made it difficult for girls to express their true

thoughts and opinions. These psychological effects were shown to be linked to biased school practices that resulted in deficits in girls' academic performance (AAUW, 1992). These immensely popular publications would mark the beginning of what could rightly be termed a public scare or moral panic circulating throughout feminist circles about the position of girls in the nation. This panic ultimately reached the ears of child 'experts;' somehow, in the development of young women, the researchers proclaimed, girls had lost their self-esteem and the effects of this developmental reality were contributing to, if not causing, their own inequality.

Books and articles published by prominent feminist psychologists and journalists during the early 1990s relayed this crisis to the general public. A popular example that became *The New York Times*' notable book of the year was Peggy Orenstein's *School Girls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap* (1994). In that same year Mary Pipher, a clinical psychologist, published another book on this theme: the title was *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994). *Reviving Ophelia* would become a number one best seller in the U.S. for the next five years and would turn the supposed teen girls' loss of self-esteem into common household knowledge.

This 'girl-in-crisis' discourse would eventually be referred to as simply, 'Reviving Ophelia'⁴ and prompted years of study of mainstream mass culture and its impact on girls' development (Christian-Smith, 1987; Kearney, 2006). Extensive documentation from this time—generally in the form of content analyses—demonstrated that popular culture offers up an account of girlhood that reproduces a stereotypic girl. Such stereotypes are often deeply sexist and reveal potentially dangerous messages about femininity and girlhood (Mazzarella & Pecora-Odom, 1999).

At the same time, a second girls' movement was spanning academic and most notably public interest circles across North America and the UK (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005) to address the 'girl-in-crisis' dilemma. Since it was thought that the 'problem' of girlhood emanated from girls' development as a response to popular culture, the solution was to protect young women from cultural threats to their psychological health. A primary application of this work can still be seen today in educational and

⁴ The name for this discourse comes from the title of the 1994 Pipher publication, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. New York: Ballantine.

extracurricular activities that instruct girls how to recognize and resist media messages. Other curricula fostered the importance of kinship relationships between adult women and girls (Mazzarella, 2007).

Good intentions notwithstanding, a large majority of contemporary liberal work in girls' studies still retains the sheltering language of an adult, centered, rational subject whose presence is needed to 'save' the still-forming young girl. Ward and Benjamin, in *Women, Girls, and the Unfinished Work of Connection* (2004), review the current field of girls' studies and suggest new directions for the discipline. One of their primary recommendations is for adult women to forge stronger bonds with girls. They describe how the initial association in the field between girls' development and the adult manifestation of problems in adult women has waned, a factor they suggest has contributed to the de-politicization of the girls' movement. While connecting girls' issues to political struggles is important (albeit rare throughout all girls' studies literature), we can see presence here of the familiar sheltering rhetoric. No acknowledgement, let alone a consideration of the implications, is offered of the essentializing sub-text in this relationship: either the assumption that *all* girls can benefit from having an adult *woman* in their life, or the absence of youth agency that such a failed relationship creates. The continual focus on the biologically immature girl in need of adult guidance perpetuates the value of young people only in relation to their potential adult status as future laborers.

By focusing on the conflict-ridden society that girls were 'growing' up in the Reviving Ophelia discourse initially provided the opportunity for a systemic discussion as to how sexism, capitalism, and lookism—all factors identified as contributing to a girl poisoning culture (Pipher, 1994)—contributed to the individually-received tribulations of young girls. However, a framing of the problem as an inevitable outgrowth of biological development, ultimately positioned girls as victims needing intervention and management from adults to resist the impending forces of the toxic cultures of manufactured femininity. Furthermore, other structures of oppression, such as racism and classism, equal contributors of this troubling culture, were generally not addressed through this discourse (Orenstein, 1994).

This sort of essentializing of girls' experience through the Reviving Ophelia discourse is best understood as a continuation of the early work on girls in the modernist tradition begun by Gilligan. The experiences of white, middle-class girls are extrapolated as *the* female youth experience. This is a

partiality in youth research that mirrors the situation in early second-wave feminism more generally, where privileged Western women constituted the early description of *the* universal woman (Mohanty, 2003).

Another concern within the Reviving Ophelia discourse, a concern reminiscent of early treatments for delinquent youth, is the predominance of the reformatory language which is a re-institution of the guardianship parlance used when discussing youth in the early 1900s (Sangster, 2002a). This language is a familiar set of signifiers and is one that has historically aided and abided the societal and political control of the bodies and minds of young women. Behind the ‘save the girl’ verbiage is a moral directive regarding the social behavior of young women: girls should remain docile, virginal, and pure. The unspoken subject of this directive ultimately emerged as a directive towards white, middle-class girls (Swadener, 1995). This sentiment is particularly apparent in the area of ‘risk’ prevention. Sex education and teen pregnancy prevention have almost completely focused on girls as the site for inscribing, as a moral imperative, an appropriate ‘gendered’ behavior, with visible minority girls and working-class girls of all ethnicities constituting the primary targets of the efforts (Lubeck & Garrett, 1995; Tolman, 1994).

Still, raising the red flag regarding sexism in popular culture and extending the critique of androcentric social science research to the media and everyday institutional activities was an invaluable contribution of early liberal girls’ studies projects towards the development of gender-specific youth research. These projects also helped initiate a popular movement to recognize the girl as a unique subject in the latter part of the 20th century. Listening to the voices of girls as an extension of the scholarship on media analysis was another positive outcome of this work and marked a shift in girls’ studies (Mazzarella & Pecora-Odom, 1999). The framing of the girl as victim, however, whose contribution to the idea of gendered culture and to knowledge was unnaturally prohibited, ultimately served to limit the transformative impact of this discourse (Gonick, 2006).

Within the liberal-humanist frame in girls’ studies the focus is generally about encouraging girls to be-all-that-they-can-be and to mobilize their unique ‘powerful’ selves, and to utilize their ‘girl’ power (Garrison, 2000). The first movement for girls’ liberation, Reviving Ophelia, proclaimed (and continues to raise the specter of) the danger that girls might be in. The second dominant discourse to emerge during

the 1990s that would mark the beginning of girls' studies is 'Girl Power.' This discourse would celebrate girls' uniqueness.

The idea of 'Girl Power' refers to a complex, popular cultural phenomenon and social position for girls. It was initially associated with a movement of young American women who called themselves the Riot Grrrls (Leblanc, 1999). Coming out of the small, American Northwest city of Olympia, Washington, these young women emerged from a punk subculture and had a fierce 'Do-It-Yourself (DIY)' attitude in response to the sexist, male-dominated punk music scene (Gonick, 2006). 'Girl Power' is a reclaiming and celebration of girls and girlhood through self-expression in style, music, zines, and other girl produced media forms. The 'grrrl' is a political retrieval of the historically subjugated term 'girl,' for use by girls as an expression of their agency (Smith, 1997).

The Riot Grrrls clearly saw both their actions and the Girl Power mantra as a movement for political and social change (Gonick, 2006). Yet, when their message reached the mainstream media, it was co-opted and transformed into one of the familiar popular descriptions of youth expression: rebellious teenagers ranting or confused 'girls' acting out (Driscoll, 2002). The message was almost completely appropriated by consumerism the more successful Riot Grrrls and their allies became in projecting their views to popular audiences (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000).

Eventually, a genuine scholarly interest in supporting girls' voices was turned into an advertising ploy as 'Girl Power' was transformed into a marketing campaign to sell everything from pop-music to backpacks (Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2007). One of the biggest extensions of this rhetoric was in the proliferation of girl-centered media production programs in North America and the UK that were, and still are, often funded by corporate media sponsors and that, more often than not, produce uncritical expressions of a hegemonic 'girl' voice (Kearney, 2006; Sweeney, 2005). This discourse demonstrates the interpellation⁵ of young female subjects. Girls are recognizing or acknowledging themselves as subjects through participating in the expectations of dominant ideology. As Gonick (2006) suggests, what appears on the surface to be two contradictory discourses—Reviving Ophelia and Girl Power—is in fact the

⁵ The concept of interpellation was popularized by French philosopher, Louis Althusser in his essay, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1971). He introduced the concept to refer to a process where individuals recognize themselves as subjects through ideology. This serves as an example of how ideology functions as a mediator between the state, operating as a system of power, and individuals.

common logic of both in enabling the processes of individualization. This is true especially as this individualization directs attention away from structural explanations for why institutions exclude women and girls. This very circumstance is confirmed by Kelly and Pomerantz (2009) as they detail current dominant discourses of girlhood in popular culture that construct girls as individually-oriented outside of any notion of gender-based inequality.

In summary, the emergence of girls' studies in North America and Europe served initially as a potentially progressive corrective to the androcentric bias in youth research that excluded the study of girls. This work spurred on scholarly and popular attention to the gender bias in the socializing institutions themselves, particularly education and the family, as well as highlighting the media's role in constructing an idealized, hegemonic, girl image. Much of the more recent liberal girls' studies work, however, reproduces the modernist notion of a singular, universal childhood with the inherent maintenance of hegemonic race, class, and national norms (Garrison, 2000; Harris, 2003, 2004; Jiwani et al., 2006; Reid-Walsh & Mitchell, 2004). Sometimes this is presented through a neo-liberal feminist discourse where gender binaries are used to explain the educational achievements of the 'successful' or 'future girl' frequently suggesting her success is independent of her race, class, ethnicity, citizenship, or geography (Aapola et al., 2005; Epstein et al., 1998; Francis, 2005; Ringrose, 2007). Equally problematic is a post-feminist developmental discourse that is used to construct a universal 'mean girl' as the new middle-class girl image (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2004; McRobbie, 2004a; Ringrose, 2006).

The key remaining challenge amidst this complex history is that emphases upon the 'normal' girl as the primary object of inquiry may have uncritically reproduced and essentialized the female youth subject within the field itself. Furthermore, within the liberal feminist perspective, some girls' studies research (Mazzarella, 2007; Orenstein, 1994; Sweeney, 2005) accepted the dominant biological developmental view of youth as unformed representatives of future generations, perpetuating a symbolic focus on the idea of the girl in need of a 'guardian' and an interventionist approach to working with girls. Neither the power differential between adult and child was challenged, nor was the implied individualistic naturalism of traditional socialization theories. Ultimately, some liberal approaches which sought to

engage in the study of girls were unable, at least in part, to advance youth discourse beyond its traditional essentialized, hegemonic roots. Attempts to correct this limitation occurred with the rise of postmodernism in feminist thought during the eighties and nineties. Such thinking would shake the fixity of liberal perspectives on girls even more and turn the focus to differences between girls, a problem that would be seen to have discursive underpinnings. The influence of post-structuralist feminism on girls' studies is where I turn to next.

Post-structuralism and Feminism

At the same time that liberal perspectives in girls' studies were proliferating in the late 80's and early 1990s, there was also a 'new paradigm' emerging for the study of children within sociology that attempted to respond specifically to some of the tensions indicative of liberal youth studies and more generally to the orthodoxy of liberal developmental models (Kitzinger, 1997; Prout & James, 1997; Qvortrup, 1990; Thorne, 1987; Woodhead, 1997). The central tenant of this 'new paradigm' was that childhood is a social construction and that at any given period of time the very idea of childhood can be symbolically located in dominant narratives of the nation and state (Corosaro, 2005). The new paradigm drew from interpretive sociologies from the 1950s and 1960s which stressed the role of the creative individual in the construction of human society (James & Prout, 1997). Phenomenology, history, and anthropology provided alternatives to the dominant, socialized child position which gave youth a more active role in building their own culture (Woodhead, 1997).

What is now referred to as the 'new sociology of knowledge' had recognized the social construction of youth since the 1970s, but by the late eighties, child researchers globally were coming together to share their insight and to solidify, in a more purposeful manner, this perspective within the sociology of childhood (Prout & James, 1997). Post-structuralist feminists around the same time were drawing attention to the relationship between power and knowledge in the production of different gendered identities (Jones, 1993), offering a concrete, theoretical foundation for repositioning childhood away from its historical, developmental psychological domain. For example, Valerie Walkerdine (1989, 1990), initially trained as a psychoanalyst, sought to bridge post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, and cultural analyses to trouble developmental theories of socialization as they were applied to the girl. She

took on the humanist moorings of the developmental model which linked full growth with civilization (the apex being understood as the white, Western male) to demonstrate how developmentalism, from its very inception, "...is always already gendered in that it is the male who is given to be more fitted for rationality" (Walkerdine, 1993, p. 11). To be fully 'developed,' consequently implied or assumed a civilized, rational adult *man*. Such theoretical approaches precluded women from ever being the subject and therefore led to the pathologization of female children (Griffin, 1993).

Socialization theories, too, became controversial as feminist scholars working in the late 1980s extended constructivist critiques of structuralism within women's studies more generally to encompass and address the subject position of the girl (Davies, 1989; Davies & Banks, 1992; de Graaf & Grotenhuis, 1993; Frazer, 1989). Critics rebuked the implied naturalness of a uniform path through which the socializing agents transform an unformed child into a functioning adult (Prout & James, 1997). This extension of psychological determinism to the social world precluded any serious account of diversity, of variation, and of resistance in the process of 'growing up.' Further, the socialization paradigm reproduces the status quo in the form of a pre-determined path predicted for youth, which for girls is a future of dependency and limited opportunities. Finally, many theories of socialization conceptualize gender as a variable organized around a female/male dichotomy. This precludes analysis of the multiple structural factors that impact girls' development (Ringrose, 2007). Extending post-structuralist techniques to reveal the relationship between discourse, language, power, and identity, feminist post-structuralist theorists working within girls' studies, like Davies (1989, 1992), Gonick (2001, 2003), Jones (1993), and Lesko (2001) emphasized the girl as constituted in and through the social and the cultural ultimately producing new conceptualizations of the girl as an active agent/subject.

While the work of researchers like Davies, Dormer, Gannon, and Laws (2001) and Gonick (2001, 2003), are providing exciting directions and possibilities for the study of girls, challenges that have been levied against feminist post-structuralism, or postmodernism more broadly, still remain. First, how might one empirically study a form of identification that is seen as a social construction? Moreover, in a deconstruction of the category 'youth' or 'girl' don't we lose the subject and the agent, denying opportunities for sustained social change (Clegg, 2006; Francis & Archer, 2004)? Childhood may be a

social construction, but children are not. If childhood is produced discursively, and youth identities are fluid, then where is the agency to change one's current situation? Even if the subject is a fiction, as in classical post-structuralism, these fictions rest upon an axis of power (Davies, 1997). Language is contingent on material culture, which exists within relations of power. Language shapes one's subjectivity as it is mediated by culture. Thus, the proliferation of new subject positions for girls—beyond a mainstream white, middle-class performance—can disrupt the fixedness of biologically imperative notions of girlhood. Yet we can still recognize (and must) that making available multiple subjectivities does not, by itself, change the social dynamics that privilege a particular set of hegemonic frames to begin with.

These issues will be taken up in more detail below as I highlight two areas within feminist post-structuralist girls' studies: girls as cultural producers (Driscoll, 1999, 2002; Harris, 2004; Harris & Fine, 2004; Jiwani, Steenbergen, & Mitchell, 2006; Maira, & Soep, 2005) and girls and class subjectivities (Ali, 2003; Archer, Halsall, & Hollingworth, 2007; Bettie, 2003; Lucey, et. al., 2003; Reay & Lucey, 2000; Walkerdine, 1997; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Next to liberal-humanist accounts of youth, a large majority of work in girls' studies today is an investigation of girls' own life worlds. More recently, however, inquiries into the specific world of girls and their own unique cultural productions coexist alongside, and often as an extension of feminist post-structuralist theory. In the second section I will pay particular attention to scholars who have integrated a class analysis with the study of girls' subject formation. This will provide the backdrop for a more precise theorization of class and the mediations by which it structures the historically specific creation of the 'girl' as well as claims to universal 'girl-ness,' as an ideological construct.

Girls as Cultural Producers

Beginning with the discursive deconstruction of the category girl itself, scholars informed by feminist critical and/or cultural theories in the late eighties and nineties, shifted the emphasis on the girl once again to a focus on girls' own lifestyles and perspectives: their life worlds (Griffin, 1993). Girls were no longer seen as victims of culture, but as active agents whose actions and points of view emerged in response to real social forces (van Duin, Poel, & de Waal, 1993). A cultural approach, however, has yet to

replace or sufficiently challenge the liberal humanist frame in the field, with the latter continuing its depiction of more empirical and scientific phenomena as opposed to investigations into the cultural artifacts and activities of the girl (Mazzarella, 2007; Mazzarella & Pecora-Odom, 1999).

The emergence of the study of youth culture is attributed to British sociologists and their work during the 1970s at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The decisive collective work to come out of the Centre, *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (Hall & Jefferson, 1976), detailed post-Second World War II British working-class youth. The studies described British youth subcultures that were commonly viewed as deviant—the Teddy Boys, Mods, and Skinheads—as spaces of resistance within working-class culture. Drawing from Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, the researchers revealed how the youth were resisting dominant hegemonic culture by re-appropriating and resignifying mass-produced cultural forms. Class was central to this analysis. Extending the cultural Marxism of Althusser, youth in subcultures were positioned between the hegemonic dominant culture and a subordinate working class ‘sub’-culture (Cohen, 1999). This work spawned youth subcultural study as a field within the disciplinary sociology of youth. Post-CCCS researchers like Paul Willis (1977, 2003), Phil Cohen (1980, 1999), and Angela McRobbie (1980, 1991, 2004) created work that has been highly influential in the field of youth studies and solidified youth culture as an area of analysis.

Since its inception, youth subcultural theory has been heavily critiqued. One of the main objections to this work has been its theoretical formalism. The primary interpretation of subculture membership as an act of ‘resistance’ against the hegemonic culture(s) may have been an overly optimistic interpretation of the youth’s actions by the researchers (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004). Also, since subcultural theory set out to explain the attempted resolutions of the social contradictions of class (in)subordination, there was an inherent assumption that members of subcultures were predominately working-class, a claim that was not always supported with empirical evidence (Blackman, 2005). This last appraisal is an extension of a more general criticism levied against the CCCS for using a deterministic model of base and superstructure (economic determinism), privileging class location above other socio-cultural markers of difference. Race, gender, and geographic bias were also present: this early work also

retains a universal tone that reproduces a notion of an essentialized youth that has traditionally resided in the sociology of childhood. Lastly, the CCCS researchers were seen as failing to account for the specificity of girls' involvement in subcultural activity. This last oversight was initially taken up by feminist scholars McRobbie and Garber (1976) as they described how the sphere of female subcultural activity was affiliated with the private realm of the home as opposed to the public sphere of the street where the initial CCCS research had taken place (McRobbie, 1980).

More contemporary inquiries that fall under the category of girls' culture or life worlds include work that considers girls as cultural producers (Harris, 1999, 2003, 2004; Kearney, 2006, 2007) and young women's consumptive practices/stylistic displays as instantiations of the multiple selves of girlhood (Driscoll, 1999, 2002; Harris & Fine, 2004; Jiwani, Steenbergen, & Mitchell, 2006; Maira, & Soep, 2005). In her book, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture* (2002), Driscoll discusses the significance of girlhood and the emergence of girls as cultural producers (the study of elements of popular culture produced by girls) during late modernity. What is significant about her work is that as she assumes a cultural studies perspective, she maps out not a historical discovery of the girl but instead reveals how girls themselves experience their own subject positions in relation to a particular historical time period that allows the girl to emerge. Kearney's research (2006, 2007) also highlights girls as active participants in constructing their own image. In her 2007 study she extends the groundbreaking work of McRobbie and Garber (1976) on girls' leisure practices. She too looks at how gender influences youth culture by investigating the media-making practices of girls. However, she critiques the idea of media consumption as central to girls' leisure activities by instead stressing their own cultural productivity. Highlighting the agentic authority of girls is an important contribution to the field of girls' studies and youth studies more broadly. Work like this firmly places girlhood in a position of importance in its own right and renders it as something qualitatively and politically distinct both from their male youth counterparts and from their future potential as adult women.

Contemporary girls' studies research, theoretically, is largely composed of an eclectic fusion of methodologies: the interventions of post-structuralist feminism (as described above); work on girls and individualization (Harris, 2003, 2004); and analyses of girls' cultural productions and everyday practices

(Mazzarella & Pecora-Odom, 1999), particularly questions around femininity, style, and gender performances (Frazer, 1989; Garrison, 2000; Pomerantz, 2005). So while deconstructing the subject position ‘girl’ as a coherent ‘identity’ goes a long way towards challenging the ideological foundations of developmental psychological discourse and associated pedagogies and clinical applications, I wish to argue that some current applications of cultural analyses of the ‘girl’ fail to extend the idea of gender as a social construction into a more concrete and explanatory inquiry into how the very term ‘girlhood’ is manufactured. When both contemporary and inherited ideological formations frame and reproduce a particular conception of childhood that disparages the girl, I believe it is time to revisit and review the most fundamental assumptions structuring the field with fresh lenses.

Assuming a ludic postmodern⁶ perspective, particularly as defined by Ebert (1993, 1996) and Zavarzadeh and Morton (1991), one might argue that some contemporary girls’ studies research is focused on a *descriptive* account of youth practices, as opposed to some sociological *explanations* behind their production. Ludic postmodernism, as I use it here, refers to the dominant theoretical positions within post-structuralist theory that understand post-modernity as a problem of representation within culture (Ebert, 1993). In the ludic conception of post-al theory, the political economy of the sign has replaced functionalist conceptions of production, which, in turn, gives consumption a leading role in capitalism (Zavarzadeh, 1995). It is through texts and signifying practices within the culture, then, that subjectivities are produced.

Post-structuralism, like all theories, is articulated in a historical context and so it too has shifted with these changes over the decades. Still, the ludic logic which is at the center of classical post-structuralist theory remains central to nearly all post-structuralist girls’ studies; as a result we see that consuming and individual ‘choice’ become privileged over human ‘needs.’ The earlier and more radical political project of emancipation is now viewed as totalizing and is replaced instead by a heavy emphasis upon consumption as a contemporary girl practice. Consequently, the political battle of the postmodern

⁶ Ludic postmodernism in cultural studies tends to focus on pleasure—pleasure in textuality, the local, the popular, the body—in and of itself as a form of resistance. See: Ross, A. (1989). *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.

age (within ludic postmodernism) is to challenge or re-signify the dominant ideological discourses. In this case, this amounts to little more than a discursive ‘resignification’ (Butler, 1993) of the girl.

Given this situation, it is important to be vigilant about the myriad ways in which attention is often diverted away from analyses of ‘structures’ and ‘causes’ (material relations and conflicts that produce social meanings) for a focus instead on the ‘how:’ the processes by which taken-for-granted meanings are circulated and re-circulated across cultural and social boundaries (Ebert, 1993). As Skeggs (1997) argues, subjectivities are constructed across a range of sites. It is important, therefore, to inquire into subjectivity not just in its textual/discursive dimensions but in all the institutions⁷ that shape and limit the material realities of girl’s lives (Althusser, 1971). Without a rigorous accounting of the historical and material institutional conditions that produce the androcentric, racialized young woman, a challenge to hegemonic youth constructions will remain, by definition partial and incomplete. This risks allowing the dominant oppressive girl culture to gain new legitimacy by gaining a façade of openness to (partial) critiques, critiques that do not raise the logic of the system as a whole.

The ludic imaginary that governs much of the post-structuralism underlying girls’ cultural studies has led scholars working in this vein towards changing the dominant discourse surrounding girls through resignifying the hegemonic image of young women. Such analyses highlight young women’s consumptive practices and stylistic displays as opposed to what drives them: the structured relations of production that articulate who speaks and who is silent, who is seen and who is not seen. I now move forward to highlight examples of this work to showcase some of the challenges and obstacles that remain within girls’ studies conducted from a ludic postmodern epistemological frame.

One primary concern that has been explored elsewhere (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2000b), is that some girls’ cultural studies research emanating from this perspective undermines or under-theorizes the concept of ‘agency.’ This connection between power and access or accessibility for girls often gets missed in girls’ studies work conducted from a ludic postmodern frame. This oversight can be seen in some of the

⁷ Althusser (1971), writing from a Marxist frame, refers to institutions that advance the State as Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). According to Althusser, RSAs belong in the public domain and ultimately function by violence (i.e. Government, Army, Police, Prisons, etc.). The ISA’s are partially of the private domain and function by ideology (i.e. Religion, Education, Family, Legal, Cultural, etc.).

work of Anita Harris (1999, 2003, 2004) who is a prominent voice in contemporary girls' cultural studies. In her book, *gURL Scenes and Grrrl Zines: The regulation and resistance of girls in late modernity* (2003), she looks at 'grrrl zine' culture as a site for the possibilities of deconstructing prevailing girlhood representations. This work suggests that the young women who are creating these spaces are resisting the public/private split in girls' culture, and utilizing the expanse of the zine to speak to other youth in a non-adult, mediated form. Harris's observations work to challenge the centrality of adults in the lives of young people as she demonstrates the purposeful creation of 'girl only' spaces. However, she puts forth the claim that the production of zines is an act of resistance on the part of the zine-makers to the dominant, gendered media representations of young people. She fails, however, to tell her readers that participation in zine culture is only an option for those select girls who have the time and the financial resources to contribute to zine making.

This same omission can be seen in other girls' life world scholarship, due to the predominance of local, specific descriptions of girls' cultural activities (see Harris & Fine, 2004 for examples). Any specific extracurricular endeavor is not going to include all girls (which is not the point of engaging in a cultural analysis), but such scholarship should include a clear indication of which girls can and can not participate in the cultural practice. Of course, participation is not a matter of personal choice, but an over determined articulation of how personal interest is mediated by multiple social conditions. This type of analytical approach reveals the constraints to any universalizing conception of gender agency.

A second problem with girls' studies conducted from a ludic postmodern cultural frame is that the multiple selves that constitute the postmodern girl often result in an unproductive 'un-naming' of one's identity since the self is said to be un-fixed. Girls represent or temporarily embody difference (different ethnicities, sexualities, lifestyles, etc.). Utilizing the temporality of identity to expand the discursive possibilities for girls through highlighting multiple forms of subjectivity, constitutes a large body of scholarship within girls' cultural studies (Raby, 2002; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Tomlinson, 1998). Wanting to avoid the totalizing narratives of the modernist tradition, such work focuses on detailed, local subcultural activity. A specificity of the local is called for as youth studies has had a history of making grand assumptions about the experience of *all* youth; yet, defining difference in this way, as local and

specific, removes the connection between identity and economic and political relationships (McLaren, 2005). Class and race become descriptive badges that people choose to put on to signify their identity at that particular moment. In a politics of representation, 'difference' may therefore be unhinged from the structural relations of power and exploitation that creates difference and masks or obfuscates a wider knowledge of these very power relations.

A third substantial objection is that, primarily out of a fear of essentializing girl's experience, difference is defined discursively in ludic postmodern cultural studies. Where liberal perspectives in girls' studies dichotomized the white, middle-class girl against all 'other' girls, work falling under a ludic postmodern approach denies any fixed self at all. This move is a new form of essentialism that *essentializes anti-essentialism*. By avoiding external labels that name a youth's identity, some descriptions of girls clear the way for what continues to operate as the unspoken norm, which is white, middle-class, and Western (Jiwani et al., 2006; Ward & Benjamin, 2004).

This perhaps familiar polarization between ludic postmodern cultural studies/discourse analysis (rooted in the local play of signs and desire) and political economy (which, as I do, calls for a materialist structural analysis) goes far beyond girls' studies and has spread across a wide range of fields, from feminism to race studies. Judith Butler's essay 'Merely Cultural' (1997) outlines some of the main terms of this debate. While articulating Butler's affiliations and views towards this polarization, this text usefully reveals some of the limitations of ludic philosophy and politics for girls' studies. I'd like to focus on one of Butler's claims that pertains to my arguments above. Butler attempts to frame the issue, in a common manner of ludic philosophy, as a matter of social movements imposing outmoded 'universals' that undermine the acknowledgement of the proliferation of 'differences' (race, gender, sexual identities). Yet to speak of structures rather than 'universals' and to analyze those precise structural differences which make other differences possible, is to root one's analysis in a structure that is historically and materially limited, not universal. This kind of analysis can contribute to a girls' studies committed to contesting existing social conditions for the purpose of transformation and change.

In summary, some of the conceptions of girls that draw upon a ludic postmodern perspective within post-structural girls' studies may perhaps inadvertently, perpetuate many of the problems inherent

to structural and liberal accounts of youth. Both bracket historical concerns off from the subject at hand in the name of local descriptions of self and identity. Further, by applying the postmodern conception of difference-as-discursive, and not wanting to totalize youth experience, by not naming young people's identity, there is the tendency for identity to be contained within a set of normative dominant significations. Finally, the postmodern emphasis on describing youth without an explanation for why they are in the situation they are in to begin with may be inadvertently impacting or historically foreshortening the possibilities for transformative social change. Thus, some girls' studies research conducted from a ludic postmodern perspective may be ill-prepared to offer a truly transformative paradigm which seeks to problematize the hegemonic construction of the girl and girlhood.

There is other work in girls' studies that is influenced by the discursive possibilities of post-structuralism but considers the everyday material realities of girls, for example, work that presents alternative forms of girlhood taken up through various contemporary girl cultural 'movements' or 'lifestyles' (Miles, 2000). Such work seeks to unsettle established gendered meanings of identity and girlhood by uncovering the discursive practices which reproduce hegemonic forms of girlhood. Driscoll (1999), for example, presents riot grrl and cybergirl movements that are reliant on mass media but that also express objections to global capitalism. Other authors present punk girls (Leblanc, 1999), zine makers (Harris, 2003, 2004; Schilt, 2003), girls in cyberspace (Reid-Walsh & Mitchell, 2004), gym and sport girls (Sassatelli, 1999), or ravers (Wilson & Atkinson, 2005) as alternative girlhoods highlighting the agency involved in resisting and transforming emphasized femininity. These writers attempt to register the staking out of alternative subject positions that are created for girls through their everyday cultural practices and seek to showcase the value they accrue in performing these practices. Rather than being a victim to the normative position of 'girl-as-oppressed,' girls in these movements reclaim a uniquely girl-defined girlhood for themselves through everyday practices.

Such projects are useful for highlighting how girls in these movements are undermining the dominant expectations placed on them by subverting or challenging the discourses through which their very selves are constituted. Still, in my estimation this work remains limited in its potential for transforming dominant meanings of femininity and for discovering non-hegemonic (let alone counter-

hegemonic) subject positions for girls. Even if one could bottle up the alternative girlhood of punk girl discourse and present this articulation as an alternate subjectivity for girls, we still would run into the problem of the persistence of dominant gender narratives. The question is not the availability of alternative girl subject positions, but the transformation of the prevailing subject positions from ones that are seen as exclusive and livable and thus chosen for girls into ones that are 'unlivable,' which is to say historically arbitrary and obsolete. To put it another way, as Davies (1989; Davies & Banks, 1992) made clear almost two decades ago, girls are less likely to take up alternative subject positions because the dominant locations are embedded in sets of meanings which define what constitutes ordinary, "...[young people] actively take up as their own the discourses through which they are shaped" (Davies & Banks, 1992, p. 3). The girl who assumes an alternative subjectivity will always exist against that which is defined as 'normal.' Moreover, she will continue to suffer as a result of the latter: they cannot coexist. Some girls must 'lose' the power associated with their privilege in order that others may 'gain' power over their own identities and histories.

Clearly authors like Driscoll (1999, 2002) and Harris (2003) are not talking about packaging resistant forms of femininity and presenting it back to girls. Their objective seems to be to challenge dominant constructions of the girl as submissive, powerless, and self-degrading by revealing different ways of performing one's girlhood. Still, one is left with the impression that to resist dominant femininity girls and their feminist allies should take up unconventional feminine performances. The punk girl, zine makers, or cyber girls are all alternative discourses identified through the feminist post-structuralist act of de-centering the subject and highlighting the cultural and social activities of female subcultures. Herein lies the problem: the 'alternatives,' rather than being seen as a response to class or gender or other systemic forms of oppression, are presented as unorthodox 'lifestyles,' available for purchase by any girl with the material and social capital to recognize the rewards that can come with declaring her individuality and uniqueness from the 'norm.' What is key, I believe, in theorizing the assumption of any subject position, alternative or mainstream, is the understanding that subjectivities are never solely grounded in the affective context of personal desire. How girls are socially positioned in their social spaces, from nation to city to ethnicity influences the subjectivities available to them and dictates the

sanctions or rewards that come with assuming various locations (Jones, 1993). In short, marking or ‘making available’ multiple subjectivities does not, by itself, change the social dynamics that privilege particular hegemonic frames to begin with.

Girls and Class Subjectivities

As I have sought to highlight above, with the booming theory market in post-structural girls’ studies we have witnessed the erasures and silences linked to material inequalities that are obscured when social class distinctions are formulated as fragmented, localized, individualized narratives. The post-structuralist position of hybrid identities (Hall, 1989), the multiplicity of selves (Sandavol, 2000), and a rejection of any sort of grand theory that privileges social class can be read as depoliticizing and disguising structural inequality. As Archer and Leathwood (2003) note:

...theoretical and political discussions of social class have become unfashionable in the ‘new times’ of an increasingly individualized society. ‘Depoliticized’ neo-liberal Third Way discourses disguise structural inequalities in favour of a vision of a meritocratic society in which it is assumed that anyone who has the ‘right’ attitudes and motivation can take up the opportunities and refashion themselves to achieve their full potential (p. 228).

To redress this silence, an emerging body of literature from post-structuralist feminists has appeared in the last decade exploring youth, gender, and class subjectivities (Ali, 2003; Archer, Halsall, & Hollingworth, 2007; Archer, Hollingworth, and Halsall, 2007; Bettie, 2003; Lucey, et. al., 2003; Reay, 2004, 2007; Reay & Lucey, 2000; Walkerdine, 1997; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Drawing heavily from the work of Bourdieu to show how class positions are generated and reproduced through structured social relationships, the work of these feminist scholars constitutes a crucial starting point for ‘bringing back’ class analysis to the study of female youth subject formation. While starting on a productive trajectory of restoring class analysis to cultural studies, much of this work ultimately rewrites class as a personal and experiential matter of the life world. Arguably then, class may still get reduced to the signifiers of taste, knowledge, and aesthetics which constitute the classed subject (Lawler, 2005b).

Archer, Hollingworth and Halsall (2007), for example, demonstrate how working-class young Londoners displayed their style (in this case Nike sportswear) as a means of both generating value for themselves collectively as working class youth, and negotiating from a position of social disadvantage.

Drawing from Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus⁸, an acquired system of generative schemes that can in part explain class differences, the authors point out how this practice (and working-class youth style performances in general) represents a component of the habitus. Style becomes fixed on the body, reinscribed and reinforced through inherited oppressive social hierarchies.

A similar point is made about class performances and habitus in Julie Bettie's much acclaimed publication, *Women Without Class* (2003). The book is the culmination of an ethnographic study of identity among working- and middle-class Mexican-American and white girls as they broker their lives and their identities in a U.S. high school. Bettie maintains that girls negotiate the intersections of identity through performance. In the case of class identity she states: "...class subjects are the effects of the social structure of class inequality, caught in unconscious displays of cultural capital that are a consequence of class origin or habitus" (p. 52). With this work, Bettie's goal was to re-think class without privileging race, gender, sexuality or class as the most salient identity characteristic of the study participants. Thus, she analyzes gender and race performances as they are intersected and shaped by class. Drawing from the work of Bourdieu, as well as Butler and Hall, she foregrounds the material basis for subjective formations while also emphasizing the production of identity via discursive frameworks. As she writes, "I can have it both ways because, indeed, it is both ways" (p. 54). Bettie's work is a rare example of addressing the dialectics of structure and agency in relation to classed subjectivities.

Ali (2003) is another researcher who has attempted to address the multiplicities of identities in the production of girlhood. Drawing on ethnographic data with 8–11 year old children, the author highlights the limits of restricting ourselves to the plane of the discursive alone. She demonstrates how the girls in her study managed their identity-performances by making cross-cultural identifications and drawing upon a range of cultural resources. The role of class (and culture as class) became most pertinent in the production of femininity for the girls in her study.

⁸ 'Habitus' is part of the conceptual apparatus of *habitus*, *social field*, and *capital* used by the social theorist Pierre Bourdieu to understand individual action and social effect. It can be understood as a set of acquired patterns of thoughts, behaviors, and tastes that are the result of one's lived objective experience (Bourdieu, 1977; Calhoun, 1992).

Still, all of this work reminds us that contemporary notions of class continue to be understood as embedded (meaning ‘inherently’ there rather than placed there historically) in the subjectivities of social actors (Hey, 2003). Even when agency is present, working-class girls’ attempts to ‘change’ their class performances and achieve ‘success’ (defined as class mobility) are extremely challenging. Lucey, Melody, and Walkerdine (2003) show how ‘making it’ in educational contexts is never unproblematic or without costs. Working-class young women who do well in school and manage to enter higher education pay an enormous psychic price as they remake themselves psychologically and physically in order to transition into a different kind of subject, namely the successful, well-rounded student (see also Walkerdine, 1990, 1997; Walkerdine et al., 2001).

Archer, Halsall, and Hollingworth, (2007) also trouble the limits to agency that young working-class women experience. They show how displays of femininity by working-class girls labeled ‘at risk’ in London high schools often countered dominant discourses of normative, middle-class girlhood in ways that fostered agency. However, the girls’ displays of resistance or transgression (often expressed as verbal assertiveness) were met with consternation by school officials, resulting in feelings of shame and regret on the part of the girls. Any social capital they may have gained for themselves among their peer group was lost and could therefore not be translated into legitimized symbolic capital (Skeggs, 1997). These observations provide another layer to studies of class as culture and/or performance: in these cases, the researchers highlight the power of one’s history and one’s ‘habitus’ in actively mediating the process of identity formation.

Studies theorizing class in relation to other forms of girls’ identification clearly reveal a struggle for recognition and value at play as processes of authority and surveillance intersect to construct (and more specifically to contain) the female working class subject. Walkerdine (1997; 2003), Reay (2005) and Walkerdine et. al. (2001) argue for a psycho-social approach as a way to understand the interrelation of inequalities in the production of women and girls as classed subjects. Stressing that class is more than an economic category Walkerdine (2003) demonstrates how the discursive meanings and narratives about class produce, “modes of subjectification and subjectivity” (p. 239) that work most efficiently through technologies of self-management and self-control. In the current post-industrial era of flexible

subjectivity, choice, and individualism, a limited degree of class mobility is ubiquitous—the rule rather than the exception—as inherited social location is said to be of little predictive significance. In such a political climate if working-class girls don't 'achieve success' it is publicly read as a reflection of their own laziness and stagnation. The discourse of flexibility masks "... the regulation of identities which severely limits the apparent freedom to become *whomever you want to be*" (Walkerdine et. al., 2001, p. 32). In short, 'choice' continues to be a fiction of power, even in New Times.

In their analysis of how class is gendered and gender is classed, the authors referenced above tend to emphasize class as identity, as taste, and as pleasure, as a discrete phenomenon mediated by concrete desires and the impulses of the body. Desire and performance emerge as central. As Lawler (2005b) points out, consumption patterns and cultural tastes are equally as significant to understanding class as production or pain. "[A] good leftist will willingly share the pains of working people, willingly redistribute the wealth, but will she share in their pleasures" (p. 40)? In the current neo-liberal moment understanding class as culture and performance will be interpreted by some as a move to make economics synonymous with choice—one *chooses* what identity to perform—thus obscuring economic inequalities as class is reconstructed as matter of personal self-assertion (or lack thereof). This sort of (de)theorizing of class comes dangerously close to the individualization thesis and the 'end of class' discourse purported by the new pundits of late modernity (Beck, 1992; Pakulski & Waters, 1996). As Reay (1998) reminds us, discourses of classlessness do not displace class, rather, "...they act in the interests of the privileged in society by denying their social advantage" (p. 261).

Those materialists who treat the cultural aspects of class more critically, exploring their limitations as well as their scope, open up a space for exploring the realities of class. This is not to say that the theorists described above aren't considering how the cultural and symbolic elements of class are woven together with women and girl's lived experiences; indeed, they are. Rather, Gagnier (2000) reminds us that the introduction of the idea of consumption as a stand in for class in contemporary neo-liberal economic theory really points to the continuing significance of class objectivity, distinguishing one's position in the labor process:

A view [of class] not based in methodological individualism would argue that, in order for there to be individuals who assert their class by asserting their tastes in their

consumption patterns, there have to be social processes whereby surplus labour, including women's unpaid labour, is performed, appropriated, distributed and received (p. 43).

The gendered division of labor that Gagnier (2000) speaks to is not the only form of objective imposition in the constitution and structuring of identity. But it does remind us that one's identity and subjectivity may stand in an ambivalent relation to one's class, as class performance is constrained by material limits.

In summation, studies theorizing class in relation to other forms of girls' identification clearly reveal a struggle for recognition and value that is at play as processes of authority and surveillance intersect to construct (and more specifically to contain) the female working-class subject. It is important, thus, to link one's subjective class position with one's objective position in such a way that class does not become a strictly discursive performance, as this may undermine our ability to understand the material processes involved in the very making of the 'girl.' This is particularly necessary for girls' studies when addressing the issue of class as traditional liberal accounts of individual choice in subject formation fail to explain not only class formation in general, but the formation of the 'abject girl' or 'problem girl' in particular. In the neo-liberal moment, the abject and marginalized youth have become the new 'classed' subjects. 'Girl,' as in the normative signification, refers to the non-classed subject. This is also what 'middle class' itself has come to signify in popular political discourse: it is the naming of a form of social class without class. What is, therefore, needed is a multi-conceptual and layered understanding of class to help us understand the making of the abject girl.

Moving Forward From Contemporary (Postmodern) Girls' Cultural Studies

The epistemological issues within girls' studies that I have addressed above may appear to have only *theoretical* implications which are best addressed through the expansion of theoretical territory in the field. While this work is certainly necessary, I also would like to maintain that these impasses within girls' studies have perhaps led to misunderstandings or misapprehensions of how the *category* of 'difference' is manufactured. Specifically, the functions of categorization are to manufacture forms of difference that maintain a hegemonic meaning of the girl. This kind of problematic elides the posing of particular questions and the analysis of particular 'types' of girls within youth cultural studies. Even as sociological and educational research abounds with instances of the *experiences* of working-class girls, the exclusion and expulsion of classed female bodies and the impact of the various forms of social disgust

that circulate in popular culture are not adequately considered in studies on working-class female subjecthood. Girls who utilize social services, for example, represent one such group that is negatively inscribed in this way, but whose circumstances and experiences could be more substantially elucidated in social science research.

The focus in girls' studies on describing difference as multiple-identifiers-of-the-self means that discussion of dissimilarity generally does not extend to those young people who are viewed as a problem and therefore need to be 'fixed' to be considered for inclusion within the category 'girl.' The decentering of the subject within girls' studies, therefore, may sometimes fail to assist us in understanding how the subjectivity of the 'other' girl emerges. Nor can the mere consideration of gender, class, or racial inequality in-and-of-themselves explain this development. The process is about the categorization by symbolic positioning within a structure of pre-existing material disparities in which class plays a central role. As Beverly Skeggs (1997) remarks, "positioning by categorizations influences access to economic and cultural resources" (p. 12). As I seek to argue here it is imperative to consider 'value' in relation to classed subjectivities. Value is an important component in understanding the intersection of class relations and the making of the girl. Correspondingly, one objective of this study is to understand how the processes of inscription—the process of marking the worth of specific bodies through regulating mechanisms (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977)—simultaneously limits, contains, and frees young women in their attempts to be seen as 'legitimate' or 'valued.'

Further, in discussing working class (adult) women, Skeggs (2004) remarks how they occupy a position of symbolic void in academic and popular representations of their own lives. Reay (2004) also calls for working class understandings of locality and place within academia to challenge the hegemony of middle-class approaches. Such an argument applies with an even higher degree of urgency in the case of the study of youth. When girls who are socially excluded and/or facing life challenges are studied, it is most often with a directive towards change: changing the deviant behavior or changing the environment in which the deviant behavior occurred (Ward & Benjamin, 2004). What often remains intact, however, is academic (i.e., middle class) definitions of what comprises deviant behavior. This thesis represents an attempt to challenge what constitutes good and bad youth subjectivities by focusing on youth who are

negatively stigmatized. I wish to turn the gaze away from a simple description of their lives and towards explaining why binary constructions of normal and deviant are generated in the first place. The goal is to therefore develop some understanding of the structural organization of apparently ‘problem girl’ subjectivities.

Finally, it is significant that studies on gender and subjectivity related to working-class girls often focus initially on the institution of schooling (Bettie, 2004; Hey, 1997; Luttrell, 2003). Working class status in this body of work is frequently established through noting a given youth’s attendance at, or geographical affiliation with, one or more ‘working-class’ schools. This is puzzling since these authors are most often defining class as performative, attempting to move away from socio-economic location as a measure for class; yet, that is precisely the starting point for their analyses. Attention to any one particular institutional setting may unwittingly prioritize the significance of that space in the construction of class subjectivities. A robust understanding of female subject formation would ideally observe youth as they travel in and through multiple spaces (Connolly & Healy, 2004). This is particularly true for girls who are negatively stigmatized and who may not attend or at least have a precarious relationship to formalized schooling. Reaching this population necessitates traveling to alternative sites and domains, like social service agencies, that are charged with containing, constraining, and constructing the working-class subject where school has fallen short (or failed altogether). I have, therefore, attempted to address these gaps in this research by focusing on working-class girls who utilize social services and do not attend a traditional school setting.

Reading the Spatial Landscapes of 21st Century Girl Culture: Theoretical Concepts

In consideration of the gaps I have identified in contemporary girls’ studies scholarship, I seek to expand, in a generous sense, the theoretical terrain of the field by employing the concept of spatial materialism together with a cultural studies approach which embraces the concept of class as an expression of value. Specifically, I bring together theories of social class and spatial theories of urban culture from human geography. I seek to argue that these two bodies of literature in particular can help create the foundations for an expansive dialogue through which to conceptualize girls and the representation of youth difference. Together they can assist us to construct a picture of how value, space,

and class operate in the lives of a group of urban working class girls who visit and maintain an ongoing relationship to a neighborhood drop-in social service center.

The Hidden Dynamics of Class

As socio-economic class continues to quietly diminish in importance as a subject of inquiry within social science research, the significance of class positioning and structured inequality in the lives of young people in 'New Times' is expanding. Over the past two decades, feminist critiques of social class as an organizing principle in one's life centered on the problem of economic reductionism, a focus in traditional Marxist economic theories that centered on the economic realm as the primary organizing concept in society (Nicholson, 1987). Beginning in the 1970s the labor market, in the theorization of class, was seen by feminists as privileging male occupational status as the measurement of household class position noted for its contribution to the neglect of any consideration of the role of gender in economic inequality (Reay, 1998). Given these critiques and with the rise of post-structuralism and postmodernism throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a view of social life emphasizing culture and consumption that separated socio-economic class from specific cultural formations was favored among some post-structuralist feminists (Lovell, 2004). As I have argued and attempted to provide evidence of in my literature review, many feminist theorists abandoned social class, both as a relation and a process of social division.

A reinstatement of the significance and relevance of class within feminism has been taken up in recent years primarily by British post-structuralist feminists as they explore the contemporary relevance of social class in relationship to other systems of inequality (Hey, 2003; Mahony & Zmroczek, 1997; Reay, 1998, 2004; Skeggs, 1997). These accounts consider the critiques levied against traditional structural approaches to class and resist the male-dominated emphasis on the family household as the central unit for analysis. Instead, this work considers the interplay of multiple categorizations, including gender, ethnicity, and social class, as well as factors that mediate one's access to economic resources.

Drawing on analyses of women's/girl's lives, their embodied and affective experiences, and their own accounts of 'mobility' and acceptance, this work strives to present a view of class linked with gender which seeks to consider women's sense of class and how it is enacted and performed as a social process.

Moving beyond the boundaries of the labor market, class is considered as it is enacted in daily interactions and lived out relationally (in general) and individually (in particular). Class is forged through taste, value, and affect, experienced moment-to-moment in short term effects (Lawler, 2005b)—a return to the notion that class is deeply subjective, fragmented, and contingent. In short, class is both culture and ‘a happening’ (Williams, 1977).

Class, which includes embodied subjective traits punctuates much of the recent work on youth subjectivities (Ali, 2003; Archer, Halsall, & Hollingworth, 2007; Archer, Hollingworth, & Halsall, 2007; Bettie, 2003; Lucey et al., 2003; Reay, 2004, 2007; Reay & Lucey, 2000; Walkerdine, 1997; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Connected to this affective framing of class is the idea of class-as-performance, which reflects the Butlerian (1993) influenced act of signifying or displaying the markers of a discursively constructed social position (Fraser, 1999; Gagnier, 2000). The enactment of identity performances is an identifiable theme that connects the projects of these authors who research the interplay of youth, gender, and class.

In forging a productive meaning of class in relation to girls in ‘New Times,’ as I detailed above, I believe it is critical to link a subjective position on class with an objective position so that class does not become a strictly discursive performance. This would entail exploring the objectivity of one’s class position as it moves through symbolic and cultural forms in the production of subjectivities. Such a dual conceptualization of class is termed by Stephanie Lawler (2005b) as ‘dynamic:’ “... a system of inequality which is continually being remade in the large—and small—scale processes of social life...” (p. 797). In this way, class can be conceived as a dialectical unfolding between a structure and modalities of agency (Bettie, 2003). Class, then, designates the large processes of global economic change and the small-scale dynamics of social interaction. Together, these conceptions of class, to use Nancy Fraser’s (1997) terms, necessitate claims for redistribution as well as claims for recognition.

This dynamic position on class is what I seek to utilize in this study, taking specific direction from the work of Beverly Skeggs (1997, 2004a). She maintains an unyielding stand on the centrality of class but also bridges the gap between concrete identities and global structures by theorizing class as a production of value. The production, inscription, and distribution of value are really the questions that

take us to the ‘root’ of social class. Accordingly, then, class is not to be determined only by what happens in the work place (Marx, 1867), in the domestic sphere (as materialist feminists tell us), or in purely consumptive practices (Bourdieu, 1977). With Skeggs’ contributions we are empowered to see that class is all three of these. Taken together, these theoretical concepts are important for moving beyond notions of girls as purely ‘choice making’ entities. This is a necessary intervention in order to account for the production of ideas circulating about the ‘abject’ or ‘problem girl’ within and beyond girls’ studies discourse. In the neo-liberal moment, the abject and marginalized youth are *the* ‘classed’ subjects. ‘Youth,’ as in the normative signification, refers to the non-classed, that is, a middle-class hegemonic disposition and identity. Skeggs’ multi-conceptual or dynamic position on class can help us understand the formation and regulation of the under-valued or abject girl.

Use Value – Rewriting the value narrative on girls. Skeggs takes the position that class is not reducible purely to an economic system (2004a). Class, as culture, is produced in a way that mobilizes and ‘frees’ some and inhibits and ‘limits’ the movement of others. Skeggs’ research therefore offers important insight into how class functions at the level of the symbolic to the disservice of those who are ‘classed’ (the working class) and simultaneously to the benefit of those in whose interest class hierarchies are created (Skeggs, 2004b, 2004c, 2005). This process reveals the significance of classification systems (like gender, race, sexuality, and class) functioning at a symbolic level in forming one’s sense of self and in determining one’s position within a dominant system of inequality (Bourdieu, 1984; Deleuze & Guattari, 1977).

The other significant feature of Skegg’s work for the present research is her incorporation of value into market processes. Skeggs details the language of class as it is spoken through different dimensions of everyday life and how categories within classifications can be labeled positive or negative as a form of value. The process of exchange in the marketplace, that is, turning ‘things’ into commodities that are then exchangeable, is one such mechanism.

Traditional capitalist political economy in the West from the time of Adam Smith⁹ up to the early 1800s was based on exchange value; value was derived through the relationship of objects to other objects. Marx turned attention away from the traditional understanding of exchange (exchange-value of the commodity – the ratio by which one set of goods is exchanged for another set of goods) to one focused on production (the exchange of labor – surplus labor – embodied in the commodities in question). He showed how the commodity was able to eradicate its own production, its labor, in order to generate value that related only to other things, a process called commodity fetishism (Marx, 1867, p. 163).

Ultimately for Marx in a system of fetishized commodities, value appears to be established only through the act of exchange. Following his qualification that the exchange of the person's labor, not the person, is the foremost exchange object, it is then the relationship of exchange (and the conditions that make exchange possible) that counts and that realizes the profit. In this model, use-value (the personal or social value attributed to objects) is collapsed into exchange-value (how much something is worth in relation to other commodities). It is this collapsing of the boundary between use-value and exchange-value that Skeggs takes issue with. It is the relationships that emerge between the exchange and which make such an exchange possible that is the crucial factor for Skeggs.

In response to this inadequacy of traditional exchange theory coupled with the feminist critiques of economic reductionism or 'labor reductionism' (as I outlined previously) Skeggs draws on a model of exchange from the arguments of British anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (1992). Here, exchange is based on the capacity for people to extract from others items that then become the object of their relationship. People as both entities and dispositions can be seen as part of this relationship. This model takes use-value out of exchange-value permitting the recognition of people's characteristics, culture, and artifacts as imbued with value (if these items are useful to them). Significantly these are also qualities which may never be part of market exchange. Skeggs (2004a) maintains that this is a preferable approach as it accentuates the relationships that are crucial for the formation of exchange to take place, thus, exposing how they are produced through conflict. In this way, Skeggs shifts attention away from the object being

⁹ Adam Smith was a Scottish economist and philosopher from the 18th Century. His 1776 publication, *The Wealth of Nations* is a classic account of economics at the start of the industrial revolution in Britain. In it he argues for free market economics.

exchanged and consequently permits an exploration of the power between groups and how value is assigned to those relationships that makes exchange possible.

The focus on use-value explores an element in the exchange process that is systematically elided in the traditional capitalist economic model. This is most relevant when trying to understand how class, as a classification system, works in the interests of some and not others. Skeggs's (2004a, 2004c) work is also useful for understanding the significance of value in relation to class, gender, and space in girl's subject formation primarily because it enables an understanding that obtaining and possessing value is the beginning of the process towards selfhood. This is because one has to have an identity recognized as worthy to even be seen as capable of possessing, let alone accruing, value. A process of exchange based on 'exchange-value' dictates in part those who can use their identity as a resource and those who cannot.

Operating at the level of the symbolic, classifications work to encode or inscribe particular bodies. Drawing from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1977), we know that inscription is the process of regulation and control that interrupts the flow of desire in the body. Classifications (and hence society itself which exists as a system of classifications) then are a product of inscription, which are established through marking the value or worth of bodies through various hierarchical and regulating mechanisms. Through the process of categorizing certain people as-a-problem ('at-risk' youth for example) their bodies are marked and then inscribed as valueless, which restricts their movement away from the label both symbolically and materially thus limiting one's ability to gain social, cultural, and economic capital. In this context, cultural characteristics related to class which have been designated as 'abnormal' are reinforced, re-inscribed, and normalized through the inscription mechanism. It is this process of conversion of symbols into significant structures of meaning (or categories) that is central to understanding how power operates in the making of class.

Class, in this way, functions as culture through forms of bodily and material inscriptions which also play some part in the very making of classifications. A conception of class that separates use-value from exchange-value makes room for those who have been deemed valueless to reclaim a sense of worth and to subvert the dominant symbolic order. A recognition that some bodies are negatively marked,

separate from and beyond their own identificatory positions, directs discursive action for change. As Skeggs (2004a) states, "...value comes from re-valuing that which is seen as unvalued" (p. 25).

Privileging use-value is also an important theoretical move in reanalyzing exchange-value as exchange *coding*. Adding the concept of value complements a theory of social class as culture and taste mediated and reproduced through material processes and allows the connection of class and subjectivity. Positioning by classification, then, is central to understanding how social class operates in the reproduction of the hegemonic 'girl.'

In short, following the work of Skeggs, in this study I understand class as a dynamic process operating both culturally and as a discursive framework which enables the possibility for material inequalities which are highly complex and multilayered. This approach will be used to reveal how female youth subjectivities are generated and explain an issue that I hope will be of interest to a wide range of youth studies scholars: how is the marginalized, working class girl who is marked as abject constructed in the contemporary, urban Canadian context?

Theories of Space and the Making of the Urban Girl

There are three elements from spatial theory that are useful for understanding how and why hegemonic meanings of the 'girl' are circulated and that connect the operation of space to the concepts of value, class, and female subjectivity. The first is an understanding of the spatialization of youth culture as it relates to one's social position in the state. Second, the concepts space and place and their relationship to identity shed light on constructed meanings of 'girl.' The last element is the idea of difference and social/spatial exclusion. I'll briefly touch on each of these areas and then outline the specific theory of spatiality (spatialized materialism) that has been utilized in this study.

Beginning with a global/local dichotomy and youth agency, knowledge of and research into the particularity of young people's geographies plays an important role in understanding the material effects of much larger socioeconomic processes and transformations (Aitken, 2001). As I have argued, the trend within post-structuralist influenced girls' studies to focus on the local, specific activities of particular girls precludes a robust framing of how girls can create change in light of the broader global forces impinging on their lives. Youth exclusion is contextualized in global economic space as it plays out in the spaces and

places through and within which youth move and have access at a local level (Massey, 1998). A geographical framing of the girls in this study, thus, is significant in terms of extending agency beyond the local and exposing the fallacy of a dichotomous global/local distinction (Katz, 1994; Maira & Soep, 2005).

Second, the spatial and spatialization—the social and political imaginaries that bounds a given space¹⁰—are deeply connected to youth identity construction (Aitken, 2001; Reay, 2004; Sibley, 1995). How the physical environment is signified, re-signified, or de-signified plays a forceful role in how one perceives their ‘place’ in the world. It frames young people’s sense of attachment to or disgust towards the places they come from, move in, and even move towards (Reay, 2007; Reay & Lucey, 2000). For example, Nayak (2003) and Sibley (1995) have demonstrated the strong association to ‘place’ among youth subgroup members and their claiming of ‘space’ to distinguish their group identity. Such associations are particularly strong for young people living in urban domains (Katz, 1998).

Correspondingly, place (designating our relation to the world, social or natural) and space (an index of our relation to the ‘other’ within this world) (Massey, 1999) affects how we view others. Stigmatized places are seen as containers or sites for the housing or warehousing of stigmatized people (Sibley, 1995), with young people (particularly teenagers) most often representing the pinnacle of the negative representation of the space. For teenage girls residing in the city, the association linked to this space depicts a girl who is sexually promiscuous, poor, uneducated, delinquent, and likely pregnant or parenting (Fine, 1995; Males, 1996). Human geography is useful as a way to contest this misleading impression. One of the benefits to utilizing spatial theories is the emphasis on the situatedness of competing subject positions along with cultural and historical contextualization of those relationships. A spatially informed subjectivity necessitates a locatable subject, even if temporarily, and produces a historical record that marks the process through which subjectivities are formed, hence making them contestable and changeable (Massey, 1999). This type of framing of subjectivity resists the postmodern conception of difference as discursive, resulting in an absolutist form of anti-essentialism. In this way,

¹⁰ I draw from Rob Shields (1991) understanding to define the concept of spatialization.

using space to challenge the unspoken, hegemonic norm inherent in a 'girl' subjectivity while also naming her variations changes the course of how we might think about the making and production of the girl.

Finally, human geography provides the tools to understand the processes of exclusion that produce, re-circulate, and sometimes limit our categorizations of the 'other.' This mode of inquiry goes a long way in answering questions as to how and why social difference is made in particular micro-spatial contexts. In this case, how is it that the working class girl who is marked as abject comes to be seen as 'other'? To speak of human 'difference' immediately references categories, thus, distinguishing one's position within social relations of power. Traditionally difference is viewed as a corollary of identity and identity is produced out of binaries such as, for example, feminine/masculine, good/bad, smart/dumb (Massey, Allen, & Sarre, 1999). Such binaries necessitate the existence of their opposite (spatially expressed as closeness), yet the relational aspect between the two is often concealed (distance). Difference not only 'locates' subjects in geographical and metaphorical space, but the act of differing conceals the social constructedness inherent to subjectivity itself (the difference 'within' that founds the relation of self-other as opposed to the difference 'between' that separates one identity from another identity.) This spatial process, as it frames the cultural and civic order, functions largely at the level of intuition (Lefebvre, 1991a). The manifest result being that differences between people, even as they are socially reproduced, lead to social exclusions which are then spatially enforced (Sibley, 1995). A spatial analysis is needed, therefore, to expose the social and spatial categories of difference that appear 'natural' and as a result, unchangeable (Sibley, 1995).

Spatial arrangements, consequently, are central to capitalist hegemony because of their seeming naturalness. The point to stress is that as we organize our lives around spatial routines, ideas about space do not reflect an actual permanent spatial arrangement because space is socially produced and reproduced (Massey, 2005). It is this gap between 'absolute' space (Harvey, 2006) and 'relational' space (Massey, 1999) where the moment for thinking space differently—and correspondingly changing social relations—rests. To bring about such change requires investigating the processes of spatialization, and reading spaces by examining the assumptions about inclusion/exclusion and normal/marginal inherent to the design and designation of space. Finally, and most critically, to counter hegemonic constructions and representations

we need accounts of spaces from those who are spatially and socially marginalized and excluded (Rathzel, 2000; Sibley, 1995). To carry out these objectives, I will next explore in more detail the specific spatial theory that will be utilized in this study.

Spatializing the dialectics. Understanding space in relation to youth difference can be accomplished through a reconstitution of the meaning of the spaces through which youth live, work, and play. A theory of space outlined by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991b) provides a compelling and provocative premise with which to begin such a project. The goal here is to discern the role of space in the construction of classed subjectivities.

At this point I should clarify my use of the concepts ‘space’ and ‘place’ and how I will be using them in this study. I borrow the definition of these terms as laid out by Doreen Massey (1995, 1999) where space is conceived of as ‘relational’ while place represents more stable, local meanings of a space. Relational space is constructed out of the interactions between social phenomena. Rather than space being fixed in time (the modernist view of space), space is the “meeting up of multiple trajectories” (Massey, 1999, p. 127). In this way, the *social* is spatially constituted—all social phenomena have a spatial location, and the *spatial* is socially constituted. Social relations create space (Massey, 1999). Since space is the production of social relations ‘space’ is “full of power and symbolism, domination and subordination” (Massey, 1992, p. 5). Massey’s separation of space from place permits recognition of a subject in space and unites the old dichotomy of time (history) and space. A spatially produced subjectivity could account for the de-centering of the subject prominent in post-modern girls’ studies as spatialization permits an understanding of urban female youth identities as, at least in part, constructed through strategies of spatial organization that are historically produced.

This view of space and place is in line with Lefebvre’s definitions of the same terms, where he moves away from the Enlightenment treatments of space, to propose a space that is socially produced and organized. Originating from a Hegelian or Western Marxist position, Lefebvre was interested in challenging the Western reductionist view of space predominant at the time – the 1960s – that reduced space to relations between objects (Merrifield, 2002). Space was conceived as that which could be seen or visually presented or what might be seen as a realist approach to understanding space. According to

Lefebvre (1991b) this, "...conceals the fragmentation of the elements of spatialization. A divorce between representation and practices in the interests of control" (p. 55). Space, he proclaimed, is a dialectic made up of land (private property) combined with everyday activities (labor, production) and human interactions. Space internalizes the contradictions of capitalism. "Social space as a form is a concrete abstraction of its contents and its production by a society" (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 128). The dialectic is the union of the social relations of its production: "...the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space...and in the process producing that space itself. Failing this, these relations would remain in the realm of 'pure' abstraction..." (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 129).

Lefebvre's theory of space suggests that it is necessary to view the concept of the dialectic of labor set forth in the writings of Marx and Engels as something that can be understood spatially. And in so doing, one can place the seemingly disparate parts of the social relations of the *production* of space back together. The three parts of the dialectic include: (1) Spatial practices which refer to the lived elements of space or perceived space; (2) representations of space which are the hidden ideological content of space (this is the space created by city planners, government officials, or the capitalist conceived space); and (3) spaces of representation which refer to the abstract space of the social imaginary and space as it is socially lived in daily practice (Lefebvre, 1991b; Shields, 1999). The spatialized dialectic provides a comprehensive study of the identities, activities, and images associated with any given place. It is the third nexus, spaces of representation, that offers transformative possibilities for challenging the construction of space and the exclusionary practices which are in operation in particular places.

The intrigue of Lefebvre's social theory of space is the third term of the dialectic which he refers to as spaces of representation. This transforms simple dualisms of difference (like good girl/bad girl, rich/poor, valuable/un-valuable), opening up possibilities (or making space) for representations of the 'other' that counter dominant understandings. What I therefore wish to argue is that a spatialized dialectic provides a structured alternative for thinking about girls and moves away from an ungrounded or decontextualized postmodern fluidity and hybridity in order to concretize differences between girls as the result of relationships of power. Further, the historically generated practices which reproduce spatial and

social exclusion are exposed in a more concrete and everyday way, thus discerning how hegemonic meanings of the girl come to be.

I use Lefebvre's theory of spatialized dialectics as part of a formula of spatialized materialism. I use this term to refer to a comprehensive analysis of the spatial 'dialectics'¹¹ (the opposing forces of every process that leads to gradual change) of identities, of activities, and of images associated with any given place or space. The term, spatialized materialism, refers to the socio-spatial imaginary that girls move in and through constituting their culture(s). Applying this form of spatial materialism to understand the totality of girls' subjectivity—not just daily life but the unity of the subjective and objective aspects of subjectivity—will open up a space to provide a contrasting dialogue through which to conceptualize girls and the representation of youth difference.

Objectives Going Forward

In consideration of the limitations identified above in contemporary girls' studies scholarship, I wish to argue for the expansion of theoretical territory in girls' studies research. In this chapter, I've provided an overview of three areas of social theory that when taken together can be a starting point for politically active social theorists to expand the field of girls' studies in a different direction beyond its embrace of post-structural multiplicity, hybridity, and flexible (girl's) subjectivity. The first concept is the idea of class as culture and as taste mediated through material processes (Skeggs, 2004a). Bringing class back into the analysis of the study of girls, both theoretically and empirically, and not as an identity marker one chooses to display at will can help explain why hegemonic meanings of the girl predominate. This conception of class privileges the concept of use-value and provides a way to understand the significance of stigma in the lives of young women who have been labeled 'at-risk,' or 'problematic,' or simply 'poor.'

The formation of subjectivity is more complex—meaning it entails more layers and levels of mediations—than simply the adoption of discursive options. Classification through inscription bounds,

¹¹ Following Lefebvre, I use dialectics as in the Hegelian tradition. This is the idea that the material world is reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought (Shields, 1999).

limits, and restricts one's opportunity for assuming, enacting and/or reproducing any particular subject position. This works well for those who are able to deploy the inscriptions available to them as a resource, but does not prove as positive or as straightforward for those who are fixed by the marking, that is, working-class girls. Positioning by classification, then, is central to understanding how social class operates in the reproduction of a 'problem girl' or 'future girl' subjectivity (Harris, 2004; Skourtes, 2008).

Finally, a conception of space as relational and that considers how places/spaces are formed out of the traces of multiple historical, socio-political events provides some of the tools for conceiving of space as difference. A materialist girls' studies approach that attends to spatiality may further contribute to a de-centering and superceding of the subject in girls' studies.

It is my objective through this ethnography to apply these theoretical interventions towards the study of a group of working-class girls who frequent a social service center. The intent is not only to attempt to widen the field of girls' studies, but to contribute to the emergent and to be disclosed nexus of projects that can build a society out of a collective space that organizes our differences—and specifically youth differences—without regard to race, gender, class, age, sexuality, or ability.

The stories that fill the following pages will reveal how social difference about a particular group of girls is made, solidified, and reproduced while also offering a sincere account of the desires, loves, fears, and hopes of a group of girls typically viewed by the public as a 'problem.' In the next chapter I begin this narrative by exploring the epistemological concerns that are inherent to ethnographic research, and discuss the methodological resolutions I employed for use in this study. Such reflexivity is intended to reveal the constructed nature of the story being presented.

Chapter Three

The Methodological Politics of Power and Representation

My Entry Into The Research

To begin this chapter on the epistemological and methodological framing of the research, I want to attempt to answer the questions ‘who am I?’ and/or ‘who I am meant to represent?’ in this work. I also outline the tasks I undertook in this endeavor to engage with the stories of working-class girls living ‘on the fringe’¹². Two particularly poignant thoughts extracted from field notes do, in part, point to my position in this context. The first entry dates back to month three into my fieldwork:

Ok, this is getting ridiculous. I understand that this population is ‘transient’ to use Steven’s¹³ term (a youth worker at The Center), but even when I go to the person’s house?! I just went to Angel’s house for an interview. Scheduled for 10:30 am. Too early for sure but she said she would be there. No answer, drapes closed. Sleeping? Slept somewhere else? I am in a strange position of acting like someone’s social worker. I am now the person who calls them all the time and tries to find them. Why is this so hard??! And what am I doing wrong? (March 13, 2009).

This entry emerged after three girls who had agreed to participate in the study dropped out before we had even begun, and after numerous cancellations from girls who had agreed to be interviewed. The entry below was recorded a few weeks after the conclusion of data collection:

I have moved from outsider to insider! Nothing more clearly exemplifies this than the phone call I received today from Tanya (a staff person) asking that I leave girls’ group. Apparently there was confusion among the staff as to whether or not I was a participant in the group (one of the girls) or a facilitator... (June 18, 2010).

Taken together, these passages are emblematic of my experience throughout the research. I have always stood out - to the girls, to the staff, to someone - which made building rapport with the community and slipping into the woodwork initially quite challenging (more on this later). My approach to recruiting participants in the first few weeks of the study was to approach girls who were ‘hanging out’ in The Center, explain the research and invite them to participate. One of a handful of responses usually ensued: nothing, silence, a grimace of discomfort, or a very slight inquisitive interest. Occasionally a girl would enthusiastically express her desire to participate. I, of course, jumped on these rare opportunities that

¹² I borrow this term from Dillabough and Kennelly (2010) where they describe the ‘urban fringe’ as working-class and immigrant neighborhoods located on the edge of the inner city but not representative of it. As urban centers regenerate in a global context, low cost housing is replaced by high-end housing, which pushes poor communities to the ‘fringe.’

¹³ Names of all research participants, both the young people and adults, have been changed to protect anonymity.

served to fuel my confidence. If someone did say ‘yes’ we planned a future (big mistake) date for us to meet where I would explain the study in more detail, and give them a consent form and a disposable camera to take home: the first step in the research process. After five girls made no further contact with me, I realized having a lapse of time between the ‘yes’ and the start of research was not really working. I will describe my ‘Plan B’ towards the end of this chapter but for now I want to get back to the question of *why* it is that I stood out and why it was so challenging to find people willing to talk to me in the early stages of the research.

Because I had been coming to The Center for a year-and-a-half as a volunteer before beginning the research, I knew many of the young people and many members of the staff. Therefore, I had assumed that transitioning from volunteer to researcher would be a seamless exercise. Blending in, of course, should not be the goal of ethnographic research, and the true ‘messiness’ (Luttrell, 2003) of fieldwork became starkly apparent. As the research instrument in an ethnographic project, my presence not only shaped the research relationship, but also the outcomes that emerged (Britzman, 1995a). Thus, it is necessary to continue to explore the reasons for my discomfort and, at times, the extreme challenges – resistance, dismissal, anger, frustration – I encountered in doing this work.

Insider vs. Outsider

In her discussion of ethnography, feminist sociologist Judith Stacey (1991) argues that “fieldwork is always unequal and potentially treacherous... [and] ...the researcher remains powerful as author of the research text, and this includes the power to expose research subjects to harm” (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004b, p. 114). As I am a white, middle-class and highly educated woman, it seems clear that I am distinctly ‘different’ from the young people I am studying; these are young women who are economically and socially marginalized and marked by a history of racialization. Yet, to say that I am an ‘outsider’ to the young women in this research is to provide far too simplistic an account, and perhaps too binary of an explanation for what is, after all, a rather routine and to-be-expected level of researcher discomfort. Issues of difference become a problem in ‘outsider’ research when the historical relationships of domination and subordination that come with particular group affiliations are not acknowledged, and when dominant group bias (or researcher bias in general) is not considered in the design, analysis, and representation of

research (Cannon et al., 1988). Furthermore, the idea that insider status is somehow ‘better’ just as problematically relies on the idea of an inherent authenticity to group membership (i.e., “all women are alike” or “all First Nations people think this way”), which feminist reflexivity was intended to address (Merriam & Johnson-Bailey, 2001). As indicated in my field note entries above, my transformation from the-person-to-avoid outsider to one-of-us insider (even though nothing about my social location actually changed) indicates the inaccuracy of these distinctions. Simply cataloging or stating ‘identity’ characteristics as the explanation for suspicion among the researched towards the researcher does little to solve the problem of the insider-outsider dilemma.

A researcher (even if she is from a middle-class background and talking to middle-class youth) is doing ‘strange’ things in ‘foreign’ (not her everyday environment) places. In an era of identity politics where group membership is supposed to provide the ‘cure’ for human alienation, can we be surprised when those who are seemingly like ‘us’ (like the researcher) still don’t want to talk to us? More than simply being an outsider, the discomfort and challenges I encountered serve as an indication of the effects of class stratification within reflexive identity politics. Class, as one of many social markers that organize our daily routines, conceptions of time, and social priorities produces different reactions to the idea of talking to an adult about your life (Lawler, 2005b). This is why two girls, both working class and in an after-school photography program at The Center, and expecting to graduate from high school at the end of the year, jumped at the chance to be involved in a *university* research project: they connected it to a class imaginary of upward mobility through the use of popular and academic parlance. “Oh, that sounds like Girl Power,” remarked one girl. “Do we come to the University?” asked another.

Certainly the divergence of my history from that of the girls in The Center, including our histories of ethnicity and generation as well as of class, factored into their suspicions about me. Thus, in order to remove these suspicions I had to be ‘real’ for the girls. What I mean by ‘real’ here is the aesthetic sense and comfort of fitting into their schema or habitus (Bourdieu, 1989) of a trustworthy adult. This was particularly challenging in a social service setting where young people are subjected daily to the symbolic violence of surveillance and confession as disciplining practices. A particularly important moment of trust building that changed my relationship with the girls occurred when I brought my four-month-old baby to

The Center. The mother role in this particular setting turned out to be something that these young women could understand and trust.

Ultimately, my discomfort resulting from the position of privilege that I *do* occupy ensured, I believe, a commitment to presenting the partial and multiple truths that I lay out in this writing. It also provided a constant reminder as to my purpose in doing this work – to expose the constructs of power – given that my presence meant continually reexamining and being aware of my differently located position of power. As will be articulated more thoroughly below, what is most important to consider when researching ‘difference’ are the dynamics of power operating throughout the research relationship and the political responsibilities that compel the researcher to act reflexively, ethically, and morally. This is a good place in my writing to explore the ‘why’ of this research. Why am *I* researching working-class girls who are negatively stigmatized and what is it that I want to say *about*, or on *behalf of*, these particular young women?

Concerns Relating to Epistemology

The Politics of Representing the ‘Other’

Talmidge Wright (1997), in his ethnography on homelessness, engages with the issue of speaking *for* others, especially when the ‘other’ is a member of an oppressed minority. Drawing from Alcoff (1991), he presents two primary dilemmas resulting from the unbridled effect of positivist science. First, the place where one speaks ‘from’ (their social location) undoubtedly affects any truth claims about what is said. Second, the practice of privileged persons “...speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons” can be discursively dangerous (Alcoff, 1991, p. 7). These issues certainly apply to studying economically and socially marginalized girls where speaking *for* the ‘other’ can, and has, increased the oppression experienced by this group (Lesko, 1996).

My argument here is that reflexivity¹⁴, however important it may be, does not change the unequal power dynamics present in the adult/youth research relationship, and if speaking *for* marginalized youth is disempowering and potentially increases the subordination of this group, then arguably speaking *on*

¹⁴ I refer to reflexivity as a source and a process for examining power relations and overcoming limits of understanding in the research endeavor, and as a way to hold the researcher accountable for the production of knowledge (Foley, 2002; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004b).

behalf of, or *with*, marginalized youth is problematic as well. Given the stratification of social interaction in Western society in terms of race, class, religion, and most intensely, perhaps, the constraints of age, young people may not always be in a position to advocate for themselves without adult intervention or permission (Corsaro, 2005). Thus, speaking *for* or *with* those who are marked as ‘other’ also poses epistemological challenges as well as containing its own unique power dynamics.

Wright (1997), in wrestling with the politics of representation, reminds us of the political and ‘ethical’ responsibilities of the privileged researcher as a way out of this conundrum; he writes, “...invoking an inability to ‘speak for’ can also be a concealment of one’s privileged location and unwillingness to act politically when confronted with deprivation” (p. 32). Considering the political dimension of the research relationship and the political imperative of research concerned with historically oppressed groups moves the discussion away from how best to ‘represent’ identities to the question of the best way to reveal power formations which underlie the making of identity or even the making of stigmatization. Maintaining this intention begins to address the epistemological and ontological questions regarding speaking *for*, and on *behalf of*, the ‘other.’ The knowledge sought has the possibility to extend *beyond* the ‘subjects’ of the research if the potentially politically transformative objectives of the project are kept in mind.

Thus, as James Clifford (1986) discussed in a key contribution to debates on ethnographic representation of ‘the other’ the issue becomes not ‘who’ is the focus of inquiry or whether the researcher is an insider or an outsider, but for what purpose the marginalized group has become a subject of investigation to begin with. What are the representational practices through which knowledge about the ‘other’ is being constructed? Research conducted in this fashion should invoke and remark upon shared political interests with the research participants. Further, as I discussed in the previous chapter, challenging hegemonic forms of power that construct a distinct image of the girl cannot take place without empirical footing in the material dynamics of a particular girlhood. This is the impetus and the motivation for the present research given that many of the discussions, arguments, and critiques that have led up to, and that now frame, the study of the girl can best be summarized as bound up with the

problematics (epistemological concerns) and the politics (concerns of social transformation) of representation.

To adequately redress these issues a critique is needed that can reveal the damage committed by relying solely on descriptive representations of girls (both academic and popular). Since ‘critique’ itself is the subject of ideological misrepresentation in dominant feminist discourses, where it is portrayed as masculinist intellectualizing or as personal ‘trashing’ (see Skourtes, 2008 for a review), one could argue that it is necessary to resuscitate critique itself here. “Critique is a practice through which the subject develops historical knowledge of the social totality: ...in other words, an understanding of how the existing social institutions have in fact come about and how they can be changed” (Ebert, 1993, p. 9). The ‘what next?’ after critique is both an epistemological and a methodological question. How, through the research process, can subjectivity and agency be maintained in a way that resists the hegemonic cultural arrangements that construct a normative girl image, while new resistant subject positions are arrived at? In short, we (researchers, theorists, activists) need new ways of constructing knowledge of, about, and for girls. Correspondingly, as the present research seeks to resist the dominant narratives of girlhood through critique, this necessitates research methodologies that serve to counter—in part—the typical post-positivist youth research.

It is for these reasons that I have employed critical feminist ethnography (Foley, 2002; McCorkel & Myers, 2003; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004a) combined with visual ethnographic methods (Harper, 2002; Noblit, 2004; Pink, 2007a, 2007b) in this study. An ethnographic approach utilizing critical cultural studies (critical feminist ethnography) and visual methods is best suited to address structural power in its various forms—not the least of which is the social-scientific research relationship itself—and to legitimize the knowledge produced through the voices and the practices of working-class girls. The value of these methods, given the political objectives I have for this research, becomes even more apparent in light of certain epistemological issues related to studying girls. In the next section I will describe these concerns and highlight the utility of combining visual sociology and visual ethnographic methods with critical ethnography.

Representation and the Ethics of Appropriation

As alluded to above, issues of representation and knowledge production are intricately related to the power dynamics present in the research relationship. Youth studies scholars have been particularly conscientious on this issue and have developed a variety of research strategies in an attempt to value cultural and social specificity. Reporting back findings to participants (O'Reilly, 2006) or acknowledging that interpretation *constructs* meaning rather than *represents* meaning (Harding, 2004b) are two such examples. When researching girls, 'giving voice' to youth has been a popular technique in an attempt to execute a reflexive representational practice (Baxter, 1999; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2004; Mazzarella & Pecora-Odom, 1999; Pipher, 1994; Samuels, 2007), as has the production of films or videos (Kearney, 2006; Sweeney, 2005) and the implementation of participatory action research (Garcia, Kilgore, Rodriguez & Thomas, 1995; Lewis, 2004; McIntyre, 2000). However, some scholars have been critical of attempts to 'represent' or 'give voice' to un-seen 'others' (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992; Packard, 2008) and I too regard this technique with a significant degree of suspicion. The 'giving' moment in these techniques is temporary and any empowerment is not sustained: unequal power relationships still remain. Furthermore, the researcher is not required to examine his or her own implications in the continuation of oppression. One can also recall the effects of liberal, second wave, feminist girls' studies where empowerment through the discovery or recuperation of one's 'voice' was, and still is, the goal (Greeno & Maccoby, 1986). Individually, young people may experience temporary moments of liberation, but structural emancipation from an oppressive and/or exploitative system does not occur. Hearing, seeing, or reading the voices of those who are habitually spoken for (literally or metaphorically through media representations) becomes an oppositional—if not emancipatory—political activity if the social conditions that conceal their voices are revealed.

Another problem within the standard reflexive practices of feminist ethnographies is an issue that I wish to call the 'ethics of appropriation.' Who benefits from such research and in what ways? Perhaps most importantly one must ask: where does the researcher draw the line when using their informant's voices, experiences, and lives for personal purposes (and careers) as authors and academics? This, too, is an issue of representation. I take the stance that my participation within an academic field that historically

and in the present benefits from defining and establishing who is ‘unusual’ and ‘different’ needs to be acknowledged and repeatedly inscribed within the writing of my research. One important objective in this research *is* to make visible the experiences of one group of working-class girls. However, as I am utilizing a feminist, post-positivist epistemology my goal is not simply to ‘give voice’ to the girls, but rather to reframe the traditional modernist view of childhood by exposing the institutional practices that have constructed working-class girls as ‘other.’

It is on these last two points—the representation of marginalized populations and the ethics of appropriation—that the use of visual ethnographic methods can be particularly useful as an augmentation to the constructive insights of critical feminist ethnography. This is a strategic place in my writing to turn to an accounting of how these theoretical approaches ultimately came to be integrated into my methodological concerns in this study.

Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnography

Critical Feminist Ethnography

Critical feminist ethnography is an incorporation of interpretivist movements in sociology combined with neo-Marxist and feminist theory (Noblit, 2004; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004a). The central position in this view is that social life is constructed in the context of power and that, “[a]ll cultural groups produce an intersubjective reality which is both ‘inherited’ and continually constructed and reconstructed as it is lived or practiced” (Foley, 2002, p. 478). Critical feminist ethnography seeks to account for the dialectical relationship between social structural constraints and social agency (Weis, 1990). This approach is appropriate for the present research as a way to allow for an understanding of how young people exercise some agentic authority and as a means of highlighting how their forms of accommodation and resistance have developed in response to the larger social struggles and political limitations imposed upon them. My objective is to develop a picture of the link between structural and micro-level processes that play some part in the production and marking of urban female youth identities.

Another strength of using a critical feminist, ethnographic approach is the particular concern for materially marginalized populations that results from the overt consideration of class as a structural entity functioning culturally in the lives of young people (Foley, 2002). Utilizing a feminist and cultural Marxist

frame, the objective, by and large, is to generate the value-laden knowledges necessary to challenge hegemonic forms of power (Harding, 2004b), hence making room for a shared engagement of political interests between the researcher, the research, and the subjects of inquiry.

Finally, critical feminist ethnography utilizes reflexivity as a resource for examining power relations in the field, taking as its premise the limits to our understanding and the inherent researcher biases that may unwittingly reiterate perceptions of ‘otherness’ (McCorkel & Myers, 2003; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2004b). The purpose of reflexivity for me is not simply to highlight my own subjectivity but also to expose my partiality and involvement in a politically treacherous and, at times, historically destructive academic enterprise. I aim to privilege a collaborative relationship between myself (as the researcher) and my informants that produces an analytically-based, experiential and ‘negotiated version’ (Pink, 2007a) of reality. The intention behind my reflexivity, correspondingly, is a commitment to partial and multiple truths and a demonstration of the constructs of power within the research relationship that historically (and continually) frame the ‘girl’ as a hegemonic, white, heterosexual, middle-class figure.

Visual Ethnographic Methods

Working visually within the social sciences is one way through which knowledge can be produced in field work and then, in turn, represented as a component of ethnographic research (Pink, 2001). The requirements involved in using visual methods mean that one advantage in the use of a visual form is the exploration of the link between practice and theory generation. As Halford & Knowles (2005) state, “Working visually is a way of pursuing a more dynamic and performative sociology, grounded in everyday experience” (p. 1.3). Visual work permits the uncovering of practices of daily life at a level that cannot be reduced to words, or to put this differently, at a level that words alone cannot represent. It is said that cultural meanings have become increasingly embedded within visibility (the cultural construction of what is seen and how it is seen) as Western societies have moved from modernity to late modernity (Mirzoeff, 1998; Rose, 2006). And while the centrality of the visual in Western society, or occularcentrism, is disputed¹⁵, few would refute the significance of the visual in the cultural construction

¹⁵ See Harway (1991) and Sturken & Cartwright (2001) for compelling arguments critiquing the significance of the visual within contemporary social life.

of contemporary social life in the West. Visual methods acknowledge and utilize, as well as contribute to, the visibility of social life.

The specific form of visual ethnography I have utilized draws from both visual sociology and visual ethnography. Within the broad category of visual methods (and within visual sociology in particular) there are two modes for utilizing the visual: the interpretation of visual culture and the creation of visual images (Pink, 2007a). The latter mode involves either the researcher or research-participants producing visual pieces (photographs, film, video, drawings, paintings, drama, etc.) for the specific purposes of the study at hand (Rose, 2006). This is the approach I introduced as part of my research process.

Visual sociology, at least in part, has been built upon the rise of documentary photography, which was thought to offer an objective portrait of reality¹⁶. Visual sociology, as a blossoming field that had begun growing in strength by the late 1980s, had to grapple with its history of fact-based, objectifying, ‘good intentions’ (Harper, 1998). The field is thus rightfully positioned to contend with the issues of representation that I addressed above: namely, how the creation of visual images can be useful in attending to the problems of studying the ‘other;’ how the work of visual images can challenge in part the appropriation of marginalized research informants; and how a wider remit in the forms of reflexivity in the research endeavor can be encouraged.

What some have termed the ‘cultural turn’ of the 1970s (Jordan & Weedon, 1994) led to a reassessment of the meaning of truth in the pictorial representation in its relationship to observation, to power, and to subjectivity (Pink, 2007a). Scholars engaging with various visual ethnographic forms now accept that the visual image is not a representation of a single ‘reality,’ but rather a multifarious entity with numerous meanings and interpretations (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Photographic and video imagery are now positioned to offer transformative potential regarding how knowledge is produced in the ethnographic process; this sheds light on what we know and how we come to understand individuals, cultures, and societies (Prosser, 2007).

¹⁶ This ‘realist tale’ as it is termed by visual sociologist Douglas Harper (1998), who is drawing from categories put forward by John Van Maanen (1988), is in line with positivist epistemology and the assurance of the objectivity of the researcher/photographer in capturing a preexisting truth.

Working in this mode, visual ethnographer and anthropologist Sarah Pink (2007b) no longer sees relevance in drawing a distinction between ethnography and visual ethnography. Rather, she highlights the complexity of the process, the multi-modal nature of the endeavor, and the expression of the researcher's consciousness in the representational products that are produced. She defines ethnography as follows:

a process of creating and representing knowledge that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective account of reality, but should aim to offer versions that are as loyal as possible to the context and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was created. It should account for the observable, but also for objects, visual images, the immaterial and the sensory nature of human experience. Finally, it should engage with issues of representation that question the right of the researcher to represent other people.... (p. 22).

I took Pink's fundamental definition as an instructive base upon which to initiate my own ethnographic project. In retrospect, I also found it to be a useful characterization to highlight how visual ethnographic methods can be used to address the problems of representation inherent to traditional ethnography and incorporated into the development of reflexive methodologies used in the study of youth and girls.

A Reflexive, Pragmatic Epistemology

I'd now like to return to the previously mentioned three dominant issues in traditional ethnography's study of youth and especially girls: unequal power dynamics in the research relationship; issues of representation; and appropriation of the 'other.' I'd like to suggest here that each of these can be most effectively accounted for through a reflexive, pragmatic epistemological position. According to visual sociologist Gregory Stanczak (2007) a pragmatic epistemology in relation to the visual, "provides variation in assumptions but steers clear from holding the realism of the image as a unifying constant across projects" (p. 9). This position considers the intersubjective process of knowledge construction between the participant and the researcher, rejecting the objectivity of an image, while, at the same time, maintaining a commitment to the materiality expressed through a visual creation.

Visual methods, in light of the above, should not be simply about gathering data or visual representations in the service of the same (old) kinds of knowledge. Rather, their emphasis should be on narrating something new, as well as attempting to disrupt and reconfigure the 'old.' In my role as researcher the aim was to elucidate the power relations that fix girls in metaphorical and physical space, and by doing so uncover places and spaces of representation that open up possibilities for 'other'

representations of the ‘other:’ these are representations that counter dominant understandings of what it means to be a girl. In a similar manner to the way feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2005) understands ‘space’—as the accumulated collection of stories thus far—visual methods can collect and present the accumulated stories that emerge in the research moment. This, to my mind, is what is meant by a physical (or visual) manifestation of a theoretical position, a position I will name as critical spatialized dialectical materialism.

Toward these ends, at the start of my research I envisioned a form of visual depiction that would move away from a literal account of the visual, especially in the form of the portrait (along with the landscape and the still life, two of the most conventional genres of painterly representation). Working collaboratively with two young, female photographers who were the same age as my research participants and from East Vancouver, I created a non-representational photo-documentary exhibit as part of the final representation of the research.

Crawford (1992) reports that ethnographic representations, whether visual or textual, produce a stable signifier that is, an indicator of the ‘other’ which is taken as an expression of ‘reality.’ As traditional documentary and ethnographic film focuses on specific events, hiding the structural interconnectedness of social processes (Harper, 1998), an alternative photographic representation such as what we co-created consciously considers ways of symbolizing (and thus revealing for public inspection) existing social constraints. Taking this even further, an alternative, transformative visual representation conducive to transformative political praxis has to re-position the subject so as not to become reified as the object of ‘the gaze’¹⁷. A photo display *about* girls, for example, that does not *feature* girls constitutes such a visual representation. Accordingly, instead of presenting girls’ voices through pictures of them, we created images that reveal the girls’ view of the audience and the subject ‘behind’ the gaze. This creates a

¹⁷ The concept of the gaze stems from feminist screen theory in the 1970s (Mulvey, 1988). Drawing from psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, these theorists challenged the common feminist idea that the meaning of a film is transparent and obvious based on the ‘truth’ of the visual images, by exposing the ‘gaze,’—the taken-for-granted patriarchal codes upon which cinema depended (Cook & Johnston, 1988). Other film theorists have spoken of a ‘colonial gaze’ or ‘class gaze’ in mainstream media representations (Kaplan, 1997). Working in the same fashion as the male gaze, the believability of the images is achieved for the audience (the visual representation appears natural) because the images are a reproduction of hegemonic ideologies about the colonized, racialized, or classed ‘other.’

reversal of the gaze so that it is turned back against the audience: a display of the world as viewed from these particular girls' perspective.

This photographic process began with a list of words that I presented to the photographers that were representative of my research findings (like friendship, power, social exclusion). We then thought of how we could visually represent each idea through a photographic image. Some of the photographs we staged like scenes for a movie, and others we found by going on 'photography fieldtrips' around the city. The entire process took over six months.

The final images that we selected (I maintained the final editorial decision) showcase, symbolically, the socio-spatial imaginary that working-class girls move in, through, and against in constituting their culture(s). The images became part of a traveling photo-documentary exhibit for the general public titled, *Ab/Ob-jection: Encountering Youth and The City*. One space for this exhibition was a traditional art gallery; the second space was a café in the same neighborhood where the research took place; and the third space was a hallway within a social service agency. One objective behind placing this work in public spaces was to present back to the public the institutional and spatial practices that tie working-class girls to a particular space and place. Also, the public art exhibit format allowed for immediate dialogue among the viewers regarding what is a social process of abject making. As the photographs represent themes from the research, I have included them in this dissertation at the end of each data chapter that corresponds with the representative themes in the photograph. This representation begins in Chapter Four.

Methodological Framing

In light of the epistemological concerns regarding reflexivity, power, appropriation, and representation of the 'other' that I discussed above, I have utilized a reflexive, pragmatic epistemological position to develop a multi-modal methodology that draws heavily from visual ethnographic traditions. I spent 18 months in the research setting, which included The Center as well as the surrounding neighborhoods where the girls who use The Center live, work, and recreate. Observation and the taking of field notes were heavily utilized in this study as the classic technique of critical ethnography when the fieldwork is exploratory in nature (Fetterman, 1998). In the early stages of the work, I spoke with many

young people, boys and girls alike, and came to know many of them quite well. In order to address the intersubjective process of knowledge construction and to move away from a purely discursive construction of girls and towards an articulation of materially grounded youth discourses, I engaged in more in-depth activities with a smaller number of girls. I recruited twenty-one girls from the research site to participate in more focused research activities (see Appendix A).

The four primary methods that I used in addition to participant observation were the following: auto-driven photo elicitation; open-ended in-depth interviews; guided walking tours called ‘go alongs;’ and various visual methods (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Harper, 2002; Knowles & Sweetman, 2004). These methods occurred reflexively and concurrently. For example, I would conduct an interview with one girl and then give her a disposable camera to take pictures of her daily life (Marquez-Zeknov, 2007; Prosser, 2007). I would schedule and conduct a second interview only after I developed her pictures. This might then be followed by an invitation to her home and then a later meeting at The Center where we might, to take a typical example, discuss a movie that had just been shown. Of course throughout all of this I’d be taking field notes. For ease of description, I’ll recount how I used each method as it unfolded during fieldwork, beginning with the practice of photo elicitation and interviews (Marquez-Zeknov, 2007; Pink, 2001; Rose, 2006).

Auto-driven Photo-elicitation

A wide range of techniques have been used by researchers employing visual images in an attempt to be collaborative with their participants (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2006). Auto-driven photo-elicitation has become a popular method for use with young people, where informants are given cameras to create their own pictures for discussion during an interview (Clark-Ibanez, 2007; Marquez-Zeknov, 2007; Prosser, 2007; Samuels, 2007; Wagner, 2004). The objective with this method is to allow the participant to initially establish the research content and contribute a greater sense of meaning-making by indicating for themselves the parameters that define their world. This type of visually-based data produced by young people can provide an account of alternative ways of visualizing and making sense of particular kinds of questions in research, and often garners insights that can not be obtained through traditional language based techniques (Clark, 1999; Collier & Collier, 1986; Margolis, 2004).

I employed this technique by giving disposable cameras to the twenty-one girls I recruited for focused research activities. I then asked them to create visual diaries of their daily life (see Marquez-Zeknov, 2007 and Pink, 2001). The participants were instructed to take a couple of weeks to take their pictures and then I would develop the film and we'd have an interview wherein they would describe to me each picture and why they took it. Usually, I would give each participant a camera as soon as she agreed to join in the research after we went through the consent form. Presenting a camera early in the relationship served as a token of an agreed partnership and mutual accountability. This usually worked, but still, girls *and* their cameras would frequently disappear. Or I'd see a girl a week later and the conversation would begin with something to the effect of: "Stephanie, Stephanie I lost my camera. My purse was stolen from a club and my camera was in it." Or someone would leave it on the bus, or it would fall out of a moving car. The depths (and sincerity!) of apology were quite revealing and each time I tried to reassure participants that they weren't in trouble and simply handed over another camera.

In addition to allowing the young women to establish the direction of the interviews based on the content of their photos, another advantage to youth-generated photography is the immediate and tangible products that quickly result during the research process. In this instance, the girls were given the photos to keep following the photo-elicitation interview. This is one gesture in an attempt to 'give back' to the research participants, an objective that has been a crucial component to many feminist, post-ethnographic research projects (Khan, 2005). The photos themselves were received as valued and concrete materials that the girls were quite excited to obtain, particularly as most of them did not have cameras of their own and few had many photographs of themselves. Permitting the girls to keep their pictures also helped build rapport prior to the start of the formal interviews.

Analytically, the photos were useful for understanding the meaning-making that went on at an ideological level as the girls navigated their way through the city. I was able to remark on what was *not* in the photos and also question the cultural signs present in the images. Furthermore, a visual record of the girls' daily experiences helped reveal the cultural resources and strategies that they drew upon as they made their way through the metropolis (Harper, 2002).

Examples of the photographs the girls took are included in this text throughout the various chapters. I have placed photos near relevant written content. However, since I did not use the photos as ‘data’ (I did not analyze the photos themselves) my placement of them in this text is not to be interpreted as visual evidence.

In-depth Interviews

Consistent with the auto-driven photo-elicitation technique described by Banks (2001) and Clark-Ibanez (2007), the photos served as the content for open-ended, phenomenologically driven, in-depth interviews that allowed participants to situate their own ideas and descriptions of the spaces through which they move, their understandings of exclusion and inclusion, and their cultural practices (Marquez-Zeknov, 2007; Rose, 2006). I utilized a cultural phenomenological approach in conducting the interviews (Connor, 2000). Cultural phenomenology considers the embodied experience of individuals, but veers away from traditional phenomenology by adding an analysis of the “shared conditions of making,” (Connor, 2000, p. 4) to that which might otherwise be left to pass as “direct experience” (p. 4). As Connor (2000) describes:

The word ‘cultural’ in ‘cultural phenomenology’ would suggest the importance of acknowledging that the ways in which the world presents itself for and is grasped by consciousness is an inter-subjective way. To say that something is cultural is to say simultaneously that it is shared and that it is made (p. 2).

This perspective allowed for an inquiry into the individual patterns of thinking and feeling that occurred in the young women’s everyday lives that were collaboratively constructed and simultaneously shared.

In some cases I conducted two in-depth interviews with the girls with the first interview following the development of their photos and the second interview being conducted at a later time (see Appendix A). Some of the girls, however, participated only in an interview without photo-elicitation as they chose not to take pictures. In the case of three girls, they had lost two cameras and so we decided to go ahead and have an interview without the photos. In total, I conducted 32 in-depth interviews with the girls. I also conducted 10 semi-structured in-depth interviews with staff at The Center and other adults who were employed or affiliated with The Center in a professional capacity (see Appendix C).

The ‘Go-Along’

Another method I employed with many of my research participants in the recruited group of girls

was the ‘go-along’ (Anderson & Jones, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003). The ‘go-along’ is a qualitative research technique that consists of a guided walking tour with a participant through a familiar space or common outing in their daily routine. Some have called it a hybrid of participant observation and interviewing. However one defines the particulars, it is a valuable method for exploring the ‘everyday’ of lived experience which has been a primary objective of this research (Anderson, 2004). Through observing, posing questions, and listening the researcher is able to explore the research participant’s meaning-making and spatially informed interpretive practices as they move through their social and physical environments. In this way, the method effectively complements the phenomenological approach I used for the interviews as this ‘walking and talking’ attends to the “sensorial elements of human experience and place-making” (Pink, 2007b, p. 245). What made the go-along method unique in the present work is that I was at times able to observe the participants’ spatial practices in situ while simultaneously accessing their interpretations.

To conduct a go-along I would meet a participant at her home or at a coffee shop at a scheduled time and ask her to give me a walking tour of her neighborhood or take me on a familiar route in her daily routine. Sometimes the girls didn’t quite know what I meant by this as they thought there was nothing particularly interesting about the area around their home. I’d reassure them that it may seem commonplace to them but as I was interested in the spaces in the city where girls hang out, I would find it interesting. The tour worked best for the few girls who lived at home with their families. They had lived in the same house or at least the same neighborhood since they were young, and thus had a place-specific history that they could retell. For the youth who lived on their own or with friends, which, for most, meant they had been homeless at some point in the past, a tour of ‘home’ did not make much sense in relation to their own experiences. Some girls didn’t have a ‘daily routine’ to show me as their everyday activities were constantly changing. Thus, the intention reported in the go-along literature of experiencing informants in their ‘natural’ environment (Kusenbach, 2003) needs to be questioned when the participants are young people living on the fringe. Still, these kinds of temporal and spatial encounters within the environment acquired empirical strength when they occurred during the go-along activity. An informant could tell me that she had no set routine, but when I was able to observe what that meant in practice and

how that informed her interpretation of local, spatial practices it created a sense of something very particular and aesthetically meaningful. Thoughts and observations from the ‘go-along’ I recorded as field notes for inclusion in analysis.

Multiple Visual Methods

At various times throughout my fieldwork, I employed diverse visual methods to understand how the girls described and performed ‘girl culture,’ which helped me to assess what their relationship was to dominant female youth discourse. One technique was to view a mainstream film directed towards young women and then ask them for a written or pictorial review of the movie. I did this with the films *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (Bruckheimer, 2009) and *Mean Girls* (Michaels, 2004). This provided a good opportunity to discuss girl culture in a depersonalized manner (i.e., they didn’t have to talk about themselves¹⁸). This same sort of review and evaluation occurred with other forms of popular media like magazines and news headlines that I would bring in to The Center or, in the case of music, I would build on things they were already listening to.

A second technique that was used to indirectly address research questions was the interpretation, by me, of the photographs that that girls took as part of the photo-elicitation interviews for their depiction of mainstream female or dominant youth expressions. While I did not do a content analysis of the pictures, I did look for the symbols of culture that the girls used as resources to position themselves and to think about their futures. For example, I noticed that most of the girls took pictures of their everyday possessions, like a TV, hairdryer, posters on the wall, or shoes. (See examples below.)



¹⁸ Researchers who study young people have remarked that it is challenging for youth to be reflective about their participation and experience with youth culture (Bottrell, 2007; Harper, 2002). Viewing pieces of popular culture with youth can be useful towards this end as it provides an intermediary between the young person and their perceptions.



A third visual method that I used was to build a discussion around individual narrative drawing (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006). I suggested that the girls think of a past personal dilemma or encounter with authority and then draw a picture of the incident. This activity was very effective in helping the girls recall and then articulate their struggles with power and domination as racialized and gendered young people. All of these various visual methods were conducted at The Center either at a prearranged time with my research participants, or as part of an existing group activity at The Center. Information gleaned from these activities was recorded in my field notes.

Participant Observation

Although I have this method listed as the final activity I would like to reemphasize what I stated at the outset: these methods, aside from the ‘multiple visual methods,’ came into play concurrently and in conjunction with one another. This method of participating with and observing my research participants happened throughout the research process. As I revealed in the introduction to this chapter, ‘observing’ was often quite challenging at the beginning of fieldwork as my presence in The Center was questioned, pondered, and occasionally challenged, both by the girls and by figures of authority. Still, it is The Center where I began the fieldwork and where I recruited participants for the more focused research activities.

Upon entering The Center a key place of interest was the ‘resource room.’ This is a large, open space with cushy chairs, public computers, and a snack food table off in one corner. This is the most public space in The Center and young people could always be found hanging out and chatting amongst themselves. During my visits this main room was a ‘youth’ driven space. Adult (staff) interaction consisted of either being ‘on the floor’ monitoring the room (hence, chit-chatting with the young people there), or in other job-related capacities. In the resource room one could find at any given time a mix of social work practicum students, staff from other youth agencies, or the occasional provincially-sponsored

researcher gathering information on youth drug use or something of the sort. Adult volunteers, such as I had previously been, were not as visible because they typically work on a particular program and were thus usually in one of the back rooms or in the kitchen. This meant that even though many people recognized me from my previous year-and-a-half of volunteering, being that I was an adult but not a staff person, there was not an easy or accessible route for youth to talk with me in the resource room when I first began the research.

To navigate this situation I became involved with more specific programs so there was at least the semblance of a reason for youth to interact with me. I continued my volunteer work with the group 'Music Matters' (formed for the discussion of popular culture topics) and volunteered in the weekly 'Clean-Up-the-Neighborhood' activity. I would stay late on Thursday nights for a group dinner and helped out with as many one-time events as I could. This is also where having a newborn baby became, surprisingly, very useful in redefining my accessibility in The Center. When I began as a volunteer I came to The Center once a week, but as a research I was there three or four days a week and would often bring my baby with me. We would just sit in the resource room and play with his toys. He was like a people magnet. Everyone would come up to us and comment. An observation from my field notes showcases the power of the role of a parent in the role of researcher:

Matteo [my son] is great for building rapport with the girls I have to admit. I was hanging out for weeks and no one would talk to me and then I brought him in one day and was flooded with attention. One of the girls from the ABE program who was quite stand off-ish talked to me at the bus stop last Tuesday when they were on their way to a snowboarding trip. She said, "Oh, is that your baby? He's cute," and "Nice stroller." Alyssa and Beth, too, really opened up to me when they met Matteo. This was after a year-and-a-half of seeing Alyssa at Music Matters (March 10, 2009).

Then, after two months in the field, Sam, a young mother of an eight-month-old who had frequently approached me about my son, invited me to join a parenting group that had recently formed, saying: "You could give the older parent's perspective ... Because we're young and not supposed to have kids yet." I hadn't really considered myself an 'older' parent but was quite pleased by her warm and friendly invitation. For a time I became known as 'the lady with a baby.' I worried that this would alienate me from the non-parenting girls and so confined the presence of my baby to the once-a-week parenting group. However, after the young people, and more importantly staff, got used to having me in the

parenting group I was allowed to join the ‘Girls’ Group.’ My participation in this group was beneficial in building rapport with girls as most of those who frequented The Center also attended the Girls’ Group.

Prior to beginning this research I thought my participant observation would include more doing, which is to say, more moving and traveling with groups of girls. However, most of my time was spent ‘hanging out’ with girls and talking informally in one-on-one conversations. In her 2003 publication *Women Without Class*, Julie Bettie describes this activity as “girl talk” (p. 28) and suggests it was an integral part of her ethnographic methodology. I, too, spent a lot of time engaging in ‘girl talk’ and hanging out. I often found myself in unusual places doing random activities that didn’t really feel like ‘work,’ such as a spur of the moment swim outside on a very hot summer day, or a trip to the play zone at Science World with our babies. Other popular destinations were the grocery store, the shopping mall, playgrounds, coffee shops, and Subway restaurants. Through it all I kept observing, writing, and thinking, always wondering if I was actually ‘doing’ research or at the very least if I was ‘discovering’ anything.

Famed anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1995) voices this dilemma of fieldwork by raising perplexing questions for the ethnographer, “[questions about] the sheer possibility of anyone, insider or outsider, grasping so vast a thing as an entire way of life and finding the words to describe it” (pp. 42-43). I, too, wrestled with this issue. How was I going to make sense of it all? Additionally, as the research was largely exploratory I encountered the common problem within ethnography of what exactly it was that I was looking for (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). At the very least I was gathering information that could be explored further and corroborated through other methods. And thus began the next stage of research: discovering, through my data, what it was that I could say and write about this group of young women.

The Phenomenologies of Speaking For/With/Of Marginalized Young People

Strategies of Knowledge Construction

As I reflect on the process of coming up with something to say about the girls in my research, I recognize that while it was sometimes messy and convoluted, there were also moments of clarity and straightforwardness. What has become most apparent, however, is the constructed nature of knowledge creation in the very writing of this work (Luttrell, 1999). I am the primary narrator, and I have arranged

the plot in a particular way, but I also see the moments where the girls' voices were guiding my analysis and decisions about which stories and events to showcase here.

Perhaps this might be the appropriate place to highlight the use of 'I' in this text. As Sipe and Ghiso (2004) remind us, it is all too common to read ethnographic accounts where the overt pronouncement of the researcher's presence disappears from the text to be replaced by the passive, seemingly less subjective, third person voice. This, of course, represents an inaccurate attempt at researcher objectivity as if the text is an unmediated depiction of fact.

I utilized a reflexive methodology to reveal my own subjectivity as a central element to the creation of knowledge, interpretation, and representation. As Wagner (2004) maintains, "...the choice is not between truth and invention, [or empirical versus experiential] but between inventions that lead towards truths and those that lead away from them. This ties the soundness of empirical inquiry not only to techniques and methods, but also to the ethics and integrity of the investigator" (p. 13). The trouble with truth claims, therefore, stems not from declaring something about the material existence of those who are the subject of the research, but in hiding the constructed act of the process of knowledge creation. Reflexive accounts should express the subjective voice as always mediated by material and technical limits, dissipating, in turn, the objective/subjective dichotomy.

What came as a surprise to me through my analyses is how this collaboration was informed by the *affective* connection I had made with the girls. Wendy Luttrell (2003) writes of the emotional participation of ethnography as one part of ethnographic knowing: "I needed to have analytic distance, and to be present, able to acknowledge powerful emotions" (p. 162). This feeling part of ethnography is what went into the 'gut feeling' element that is a necessary part of making sense of ethnographic data (Lareau, 1989) and for me the emotional connection came in large part from the common experience of motherhood that I shared with many girls. Not all of the young people were parents, but the experience of having a baby at the beginning of the research connected me to all of the girls and made me appear familiar and approachable, perhaps even 'safe.' I believe this held true for many of the boys as well, for whom 'mother' was a female role they understood. Sam, one of the young mothers I came to know well, encapsulated this when she remarked, "who's going to mess with a girl with a kid?" And when four of the

young women in my research had babies right before or right after I did, there emerged a collective sense that we were all in it together.

Being a mother not only indicated safety to the girls but also seemed like some kind of indication to them that I was a ‘normal’ woman. Having spent many years working with, creating for, and advocating on behalf of working-class young women who were similarly marked as ‘abject’—not unlike the girls in my study—I was familiar with the acceptance, everydayness, and enjoyment of children in such communities. As a childless, young woman in many previous social service settings I was often seen as suspect and as just plain ‘odd’ for not having children. “What? You’re 26, no kids, *and* you’re not married?!” a 16-year-old mother of one said to me during the making of a documentary about teen mothers that I directed (Skourtes, 2003). But now I did have a child and having given birth right before I began fieldwork served to diminish my ‘researcher significance’ in the eyes of the girls and lessen some of the stark contrasts of power between us. I, too, was now in a vulnerable position, and for young people who had grown up with lots of children around them, they had something to teach me: they identified me as the novice, a scared, ‘old’ mother. This isn’t to say that all working-class young women like children or are more open to them. Rather, in working-class spaces like The Center, the norms for separation by age are more relaxed and ‘mothering’ is extended beyond the biological definition (Naples, 1992). This stands in contrast to middle-class spaces like the school, the office, or the place of work where the presence of one’s children is frowned upon.

Still, as my new role of mother served to unite us, my privileged position clearly shaped our experiences of motherhood and brought in to focus how class histories operate in the present. The immediate needs of an infant are similar across categories of difference (feeding, sleeping, diapering, loving), but economic deprivation or excess informs how these needs are met, which played out daily in our mothering practices. All of this is to say that having a baby gave me ‘in-between-er’ status. To say I became an insider is to ignore all of the ways I am privileged and our very different histories, but at the same time I was no longer strictly an outsider. Being an in-between-er put me into an emotional proximity to the girls, which in turn enabled me to be ‘collaborative’ in my interpretation of their stories. Without an emotional or empathetic understanding, ethnography runs the risk of reinforcing objective positivist

science claims (Luttrell, 2003). I began my analysis with this consciousness of the dynamic relationship between the sensing and the seeing in ethnography, while always maintaining a commitment to reveal where the emotions came from—in history, in space, in time. This, I hope, will provide a negotiated story of the normative, everyday, gendered, youth culture of a group of Canadian working-class girls.

Techniques of Interpretation

As I set out to understand the value-making processes of the girls through the lens of one social service agency, I drew from Michael Burawoy's (1998) extended case method which provides a platform for looking at ethnographic data intersubjectively. Burawoy explains his method in the following terms:

The *extended case method* applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the "micro" to the "macro," and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory (p. 5).

The appeal of this method for interpreting ethnographic data is its imperative to 'extend out' from the data. What this means is that external factors like structured inequality, colonialism, empire, and subjective influences are considered when locating the lived experience of the research informants. Keeping this objective in mind, I utilized inductive content analysis as the analytic strategy to interpret the data as described by Berg (1995), as well as by Miles and Huberman (1994). This is the application of a coding strategy (a process for developing codes) towards the development of themes from documents, and in this case from written field notes and transcribed interviews, and from the research participants and other informants. All text data was entered into the HyperRESEARCH qualitative data management program. The unit of analysis was thematically organized as a simple sentence or string of words. Analyzing at the unit of the theme the process included both manifest content (elements that are physically present in the transcribed interviews in the form of verbatim) as well as latent content (interpretive reading of the symbolism or meaning underlying all of the data sources (Berg, 1995).

Open coding. The analytic coding strategy began with open coding of the data as described by Berg (1995) and started with the reading through of the typed, transcribed interviews and field notes. The purpose of open coding is to open up the inquiry upon initial review of the data to see what the information reveals and is the first step towards categorizing the data and developing a coding scheme. During this stage, I recalled the original objectives of the study while also remaining open to multiple or

unanticipated results that could emerge from my interpretations of the data. Following this process, all field notes and transcribed interviews were read through one time and analyzed minutely at the level of ‘theme’ and loosely coded while I kept theoretical memos and notes on the data. Open coding the data in this manner and creating preliminary codes allowed for the emergence of unanticipated results and ensured that the extensive theoretical coverage that occurred later was securely grounded (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992).

Across and within-case level analyses. Within-case analyses provided the best means of preserving the individual narratives of the girls (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which was important here as one of the primary purposes of this study is to bring value to those who have historically been unvalued—working-class, socially marginalized girls. The first step in this process was to create a coherent narrative of each girl or ‘case’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994); accordingly, I wrote a summary or narrative for each girl that included the major emergent themes related to the research questions. This type of analysis permitted a thorough examination of each girl’s narratives for commonalities with, and differences from, dominant female youth discourses. It also provided for comparison of narratives across cases, during which I discovered some similarities in narratives as well as substantive and important differences.

By contrast, across-case analysis proved to be more useful as a technique to identify themes across cases. These could then be used to develop codes for those cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I proceeded with analysis by reading through the transcripts and field notes while writing comments on the content, using keywords to summarize apparent answers to research questions, highlighting key phrases, and keeping theoretical notes. The materials were then reread in order to generate preliminary coding categories. New categories were constantly created in an attempt to prevent forcing information into a category. Major codes were created first, and then material within each code was broken down to create sub-codes. Starting with the major codes and sub-codes, I grouped the codes into four themes based on my research questions and, more importantly, my theoretical framework. The four themes were the following: (1) Space/Spatial Imaginary, which referred to my use of spatial theory; (2) Inscription/Exchange, which referred to one of the primary research questions in this study; (3) Self/Use-Value/History, which relates directly to the theory of social-class that I utilized in this study (Skeggs,

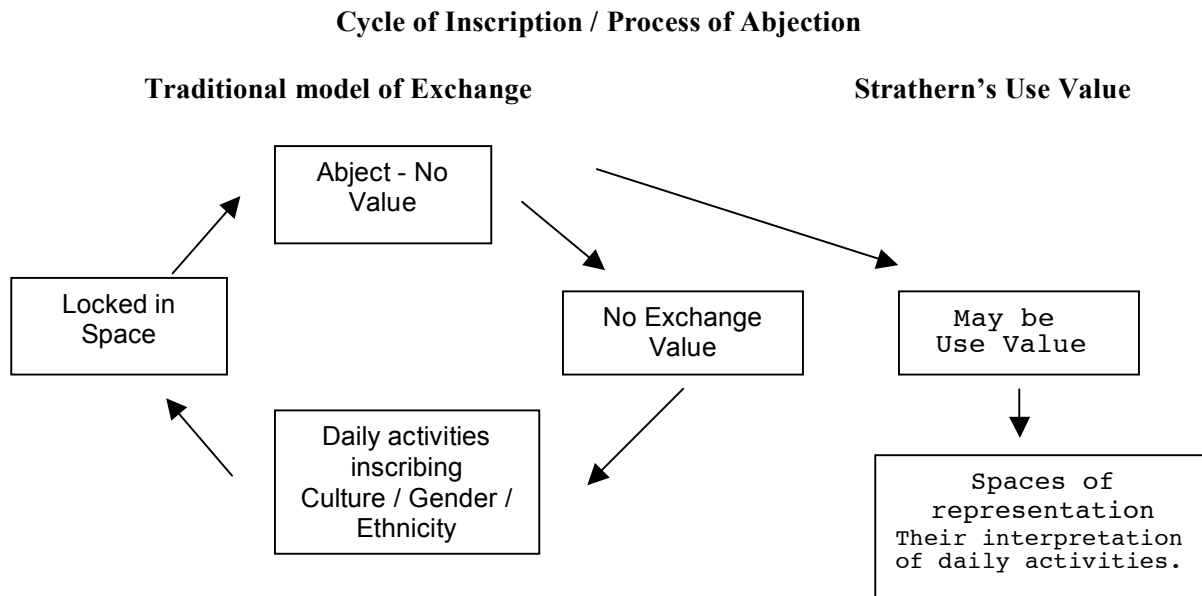
2004a) and the re-valuing of those who have been unvalued; (4) Popular Culture/Gender, which referenced the research questions. In the end I had twelve major code categories and a total of 78 sub-codes (see Appendix B). Some authors recommend limiting the number of codes to 30-50 (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992); however, for me, it was easier to make sense of the data with more codes. I then read through the transcripts and field notes numerous times assigning codes to specific units of data until all of the data was coded.

Analytic strategies. As I read through the data materials I developed conclusive categories by asking questions of the data. Cuadraz and Uttal (1999) suggest asking questions of the narrative accounts underlying interview data – reading close up or between the lines – as a way to begin to uncover intersecting processes of race, class, and gender operating within the narrative. I found this approach quite useful and asked myself questions such as the following: *What characterized the girls’ personal troubles? How are individual experiences shaped by one’s social location? How does the history of working class disgust, economic deprivation, and ethnic stratification explain the girls’ troubles (or not)?* These sorts of questions were a nice complement to Burawoy’s (1998) extended case method and what he describes as “a second dialogue between local processes and extralocal forces” (p. 6). I attempted, above all, to connect the girls’ immediate life experiences to historical-political factors.

A second analytic method that complements Burawoy’s (1998) approach is ‘theoretical refinement’ as described by Snow, Morrill, and Anderson (2003). This is an approach to theory development that refines or modifies existing perspectives through the extension or the application of new fieldwork material. I interpreted this approach as generating theoretical summaries or conclusions by placing and comparing the data against my theoretical framework. Thus, I have not created new theory, necessarily, but have instead sought to distill, confirm or challenge, at least in part, the existing theories related to class, girls, space, and value.

A final approach that I used to make sense of the material and to form a base for writing the ethnography was the creation of a visual model which I entitled the ‘Cycle of Inscription / Process of Abjection.’ The four themes within which I grouped the codes served as the basis for constructing the visual model. The model highlights the relationship between the girls’ subjectivity, their cultural

practices, and spatial processes as they relate to Strathern's (1992) theory of 'use-value' which is modified by Skeggs (2004) and which I apply to the present study. The model suggests the manner in which the girls are inscribed through social and cultural practices as well as showcasing the ways in which inscription is inherited. The key elements, which are of significance here, revolve around the notion that experiencing abjection and the social processes that make such experiences possible are deeply connected to the politics of morality and youth and the ways in which value is accorded to different young



people differently across space and time. This model was useful for me in thinking about how abjection circulates as a historical process, and helped me see the categories and subjects that should and should not be the focus of the written ethnography.

Methods of Representation

In this chapter, I have sought to bring my epistemological and methodological claims into the foreground in order to reveal the constructed process of the story being presented. A final element of the ethnographic method to underscore here is the issue of representation as it relates to the outcomes of research. If reflexivity is, in part, about the subjectivity of the researcher, then reflexivity's corollary is the representation of the 'other' or, to put it differently, the (mis)appropriation of the informant. Both visual and traditional ethnographies about youth and girls gesture towards an intersubjective analytic through

their enthusiastic embrace of hybridity and difference, but ultimately what I am most concerned about is how they may sometimes fail to consider the situatedness of those differences in material structural constraints as well as ignoring or obscuring the articulation of that difference through the representation of ethnographic content. Ultimately, the end product of an ethnographic study, to my mind, should be a visual and physical manifestation of critical, spatialized dialectical materialism and cultural phenomenology. This is what I have attempted to do in both the writing of this ethnography and in the alternative, visual ethnographic depiction in the form of the photo-documentary exhibit.

Representations of young people—and particularly youth marginalized because of gender, race, class, or behavior—have historically been mobilized as the raw material of liberal trauma narratives (McLeod & Wright, 2009). Such stories are aimed at garnering individual resources, public sympathy, and local reformist changes. Making use of youth-generated imagery in the research process can embolden young people to stake a claim on the validity of their own perspective, and confront the legitimacy of what has come to be seen (and accepted) as their (youth) culture. The creation of visual alternatives to traditional media depictions of young people connects research to new cultural representations that challenge the taken-for-granted, ascendant, hegemonic depictions of youth. This is an exciting prospect and a necessary endeavor if girls' studies is to be part of a wider project of transformative social change. In this way, it is my hope that this ethnography positively contributes to legitimating the knowledge produced through the everyday practices of the girls in this study and consequently serves as a resource and handbook for challenging the hegemonic norms of power they (and we) confront.

Chapter Four

Resisting Risk and Individualization: Girls Doing Divergent Femme(s) in Space and Place

One of my objectives with this research is to explore how female youth subjectivity takes shape for girls who are symbolically and socially excluded from aesthetic self-making, which is one of the promised rewards of contemporary, middle class girlhood. The subjectivities of the ‘future girl’ and the ‘problem girl’ that I detailed in the previous chapters exist as dichotomous fictions, while the former requires the construction of the latter for her existence. This chapter begins the process of disassembling this dichotomy and identifying the misconceptions that arise when individualized narratives replace structural explanations like social class to account for inequality (Gillies, 2005). Here, I respond to the question: what does gendered subjectivity look like in the urban Canadian context? In asking this question I wish to argue that more than just a micro description of girls’ daily lives is needed. In order to understand the construction of new youth configurations in a shifting global context, we must acquire a spatially informed and culturally specific account of how youth live out their everyday lives. Thus, I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of spatial theory and its relevance to the production of transformative dialogues with which to conceptualize girls. This will be followed by a description of the global/local milieu of the research site. The chapter concludes with the beginning of a re-writing of the hegemonic girl narrative through a presentation of two youth spatial practices that challenge traditional, gendered youth behavior. The first considers the girls’ friendship and peer interactions at The Center, while the second looks at the space of The Center itself as a transformative site that brings value to youth living ‘on the fringe.’

Urban Canadian Landscapes and its Global Manifestations

Spacing and Placing

Before I describe the city, neighborhoods, and buildings where the research took place, a distinction between *context*, *space*, and *place* needs to be made (Massey, 1992; 1999). Context references the circumstances and geographic places that form a setting for events to occur. For this research that would include Vancouver, the streets and neighborhoods where the girls traveled and lived, the social service center where the bulk of the research took place, and the girls’ leisure and work spaces. Context,

thus, operates as a ‘free zone,’ an empty container to be filled in much the same way that ‘space’ as an empty gap was considered part of the modernist project (Berquist, 2002). Space in this instance—borrowing from the critical sociological term used by urban geographers—is however, part of a generative process of classification, identity construction, and power. ‘Space’ emphasizes the political relations inherent to the representation and foregrounds collective understandings (Massey, Allen, & Sarre, 1999; Massey, 1992). In this way, space is ‘relational’ and constructed out of the interactions between social phenomena (Massey, 1995; 1999). Thus, as described by the human geographer Doreen Massey (1999), all social phenomena have a spatial location, and social relations create space. Continuing with Massey’s definition, ‘place’ represents more stable, local meanings of a space. I consider context, then, to mean the ‘place’ elements of the spaces within and through which the research occurred. The social phenomena of ‘girlhood,’ for example, is produced or rather played out in space(s) just as the ‘space’ of the City or particular neighborhoods are realized, metaphorically and physically, through social occurrences. Lastly, space operates as the platform for power relations. Thus, a consideration of spatiality—the combination of conditions and practices of individual and social life that are linked and that exercise a determining role upon daily life (Pumain, 2006)—is key to providing an empirically grounded cultural and material account of the ethnography to follow. In the next section I apply these spatial definitions to explore the global context of this research and its local arrangements.

Vancouver: New Global City

Vancouver, British Columbia is the urban backdrop for this study. As a “global city” (Sassen, 2001) Vancouver manifests the effects of global economic and socio-political practices. According to Saskia Sassen (2001), ‘global cities,’ “...function as command points in the organization of the world economy. A ‘global city’ emerges as a transnational location for investment, as key locations for leading industries and specialized services for these firms” (p. 3). The processes that underlie globalization and its corresponding economic restructuring of social and political life—de-industrialization, mobile production centers, social retrenchment, flexible labor flows (Pilkington & Johnson, 2003) – are in effect in Vancouver. These are also stories about place and about the multiple connections between people, places, and spaces that emerge and are transformed in global ‘New Times.’ As I will demonstrate in the

Vancouver case, urban development projects initiated by processes of globalization have most intensely transformed those spaces in the city where poor and working class people reside, while at the same time transforming local youth's relationship to urban space (Boyd, 2008; Derksen & Smith, 2002).

Vancouver has grown rapidly since its incorporation in 1886 when logging, mining, and fishing were the city's primary industries. These industries flourished through the early 1900s, and forestry still remains one of the city's largest industries next to mining (Vogel & Wyse, 1993). Never a base of much manufacturing for Canada, the city is seen to have easily transitioned from industrial to post-industrial status. This includes a shift to new information technologies as Vancouver has become a center for the U.S. and Canadian West Coast economic zones in the high technology and software development sectors (Olds, 1995), exemplifying a rise in producer services like engineering, accounting, and resource management (City-of-Vancouver, 2008), an increase in the share of wages put into consumer goods, and a 'feminization' and 'ethnicization' of the workforce (Davis & Hutton, 1994). These last two factors are, in part, the result of multiple changes to immigration policy over the past two decades that have made it easier for Asian and South East Asian, low-skilled service workers and domestic laborers to immigrate to Canada¹⁹.

Vancouver's location on the Pacific Coast, positioned at the shortest distance to Asia of any major North American city, has made it a major player in global trade and export production and an economic center for Canada in Pacific Rim trade agreements. The Port of Vancouver is Canada's largest, doing more than \$75 billion annually in trade with over 160 different economies (Vancouver-Port-Authority, 2009). These factors, along with the city's location at the western terminus of the cross-Canada railway, position Vancouver as a key nodal point in the global economic system, qualifying it as a 'global city.' In addition to having a tangible effect on economic global affairs, being a 'global city' requires specific cultural characteristics such as international name recognition, taking a role as a key site for arts and

¹⁹ Canada's live-in domestic care program is one immigration policy that has increased the number of women from economically depressed countries (i.e., the Philippines, Mexico) living and working in Canada (England, 2010).

media production, and the ability and experience to host mega-cultural and -sporting events (like a World's Fair and Olympic Games²⁰) (Sassen, 2001). Vancouver meets each of these criteria.

The structural shift necessary for Vancouver to move from an industrial to post-industrial economy along with its embrace of the neo-liberal government policies needed to create a 'global city' have meant a long term, decisive movement of industrial land in the city center towards residential and commercial uses. The effect of this conversion has meant increased land values in the inner city, which have drastically reduced and eliminated low-cost housing stock (Olds, 2005). Through the use of contemporary neo-liberal discourse over the past decade, it has been easy for government officials to attempt to blame 'natural' market processes for astronomical real estate prices and the shift of the changing urban landscape towards affluent interests. Quite to the contrary, however, development projects tied to economic restructuring and driven by specific global market processes (most visibly policies under the North American Free Trade Agreement²¹) underlie the transformation of Vancouver into a 'global city' (Jones, 1991).

Beginning in the 1980s, the provincial government of British Columbia focused on refashioning the city into a competitive global force, enacting vigorous development projects in Vancouver and implementing a central plan to further develop the downtown core (Vogel & Wyse, 1993). Much of this development was funded internationally, with major foreign investment coming from Japan and China. By the 1990s the scope of private investment into BC's economy from these two nations would reach \$6 billion. The largest of these development projects are today called Pacific Place and Coal Harbour and are located along the north and east shores, respectively, of False Creek (the site of a former rail yard and industrial wasteland) (Olds, 1995). Hong Kong development companies purchased these sites, which, to date constitute the largest real estate development projects in North America. Following these mega projects, the last remaining undeveloped waterfront land near downtown, Southeast False Creek, was developed by Millennium Properties as the site of the Olympic Village for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games held in Vancouver. The City of Vancouver provided \$1 billion in funding to bail out the

²⁰ Vancouver hosted a World Exposition in 1986 titled Expo '86 and the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

²¹ The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is an international trade agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the United States that created a trilateral trade bloc. NAFTA was enacted on January 1, 1994.

developers and with the hope of ensuring the project's completion before the start of the games (CBC News, 2010). With land no longer available in the downtown core for new development projects, more recent efforts have shifted to the Downtown East Side (Boyd, 2008). This is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city and is notorious for its high incidence of poverty, drug use, and sex trade activity. Large mixed-use, high-end condos plus commercial space have sprung up in what is referred to as, "Canada's poorest postal code," and as the impact of the 2008 North American recession comes to full fruition, it is predicted that the city will increase market-rate development projects in the area as part of an economic recovery plan (Crompton, 2010).

The result of unbridled development, urban retrenchment, de-investment, and devaluation of major industries (like forestry) has meant the systematic displacement of low income persons from the city center accompanied by an overwhelming threefold surge in homelessness over the past decade (HRSDC, 1998). Poverty rates increased in Vancouver throughout the 1990s (CCSD, 2000b) along with an intensification of class stratification (the concentration of poor families confined to particular neighborhoods) (HRSDC, 1998). All of these factors mean that qualitatively there are large groups of economically marginalized urban residents in metropolitan Vancouver who live on the edge of the urban core due to the unavailability of affordable housing (Stats-Canada, 2006).

Linking economic development and city planning reveals how globalization impacts urban space and can produce deleterious outcomes for economically marginalized residents, with youth specifically generally being the most affected (MacDonald & Marsh, 2004; Sibley, 1995). Economic transformations, coupled with the marketization of schooling across Canada (decentralizing state responsibility of schools in favor of privatization) (Dillabough, Wang & Kennelly, 2005), are representative of neo-liberal social and economic policies and have contributed to diminished entry-level employment opportunities and difficult school-to-work transitions for working class youth in the city (CCSD, 2000a). The unemployment rate in British Columbia for youth aged 15 – 24 in 2009 was 8.1%, a 58% increase from the previous year and the highest rate in 11 years (CBC News, 2009). Moreover, even as the rate of poverty in the city has leveled off in the past three years (HRSDC, 2008), the number of children living

below the poverty line in British Columbia at the time I began this research in 2008 was 20.9 percent, the highest in Canada (First-Call, 2007).

Female youth in particular are experiencing heightened forms of social exclusion in urban centers worldwide and Vancouver is no exception (MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007). With a scarcity of entry-level jobs in the city (First-Call, 2007) and the lowest minimum wage of any province in the country at \$8.00 an hour²², female youth from low income families living in Vancouver face a dire economic future. This reality, combined with their increased susceptibility to familial sexual abuse and male violence, means that female youth are particularly vulnerable to poverty, which can lead in turn to homelessness and prostitution as a means for survival (Taefi & Czapska, 2007). Additionally, the intersections of poverty, racism, homophobia, and colonization exacerbate the disparities girls already experience because of age and gender, making minority ethnic and Aboriginal girls the most vulnerable to exclusionary practices brought on by global economic policies in urban centers. It is this very population of young women who frequent the social service agency where the research took place. As study, work, and housing opportunities have decreased in Vancouver for economically disadvantaged young women, their requirements for social services have increased. Yet, the combination of the recession of 2008 and neo-liberal economic policies favoring corporate growth in the province of B.C. have meant a cut in funding to the Ministry of Child and Family Services in the 2007-2008 budgets (ELCCR, 2007).

As I've attempted to demonstrate above, Vancouver is representative of North American cities that have experienced increased stratification over the past two decades due to economic transformations indicated by the term 'New Times' (Hall, 1996). The development of new urban spaces, as both a contribution and response to the formation of the 'global city,' is strongly linked to contemporary globalization processes. It is within this context that economically marginalized young people are working to find their place in the city. As so often happens in the urban environment, the practice of attempting to find space is narrowed to particular regions of the city on the fringe of the urban core where working class and poor youth have been pushed. These are the exact neighborhoods where my/our ethnography

²² On May 1, 2011 the BC Ministry of Labour raised the minimum wage to \$8.75 per hour. In addition, the first job wage that was applied primarily to teenagers, also known as the 'training wage,' was repealed (B.C. Gov, 2011).

occurred and they are the topic to which I now turn: a contextual and spatial exploration of the local setting.

The Local Scene

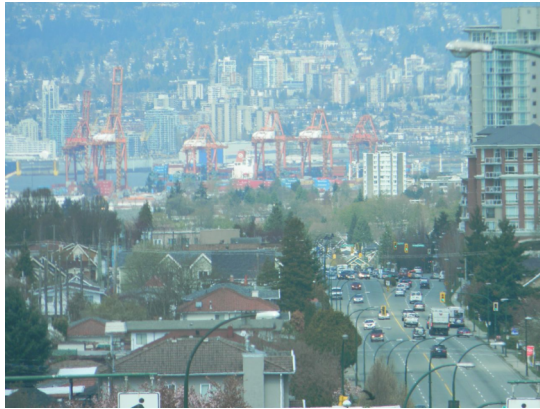
In the Neighborhood(s)

What constitutes a ‘neighborhood’ is a highly contested and controversial notion within the social sciences (Galster, 2001; Kearns & Parkinson, 2001). Scholars undertaking urban research have grappled with defining neighborhood as a ‘community’ of individuals with similar lifestyle choices (Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1967) or as government-designated, census tract distinctions formed from a typology of particular characteristics of people and environments (Galster, 1986; Olson, 1982). I tend towards the former description and add to it a spatial dimension, drawing from Martin’s (2003) definition which emphasizes the ‘space and place’ element of neighborhood. “[A] neighborhood” she posits, “is a type of place, and, as such, should be studied as a contingent, flexible space that nonetheless has material, experiential salience for people’s lives” (p. 361).

The neighborhoods where this ethnography took place are located in the region of the city called the ‘East Side.’ Officially the East Side is composed of seven distinct neighborhoods (City-of-Vancouver, 2005) but the majority of the research took place in just two neighborhoods, Grandview-Woodland and Mount Pleasant. I never heard any youth use these terms, however, as the most common name for the East Side both colloquially and as stated by the youth in particular is ‘East Van’²³. Some of the young people who visit The Center where the research took place used to live in East Van but have since moved to outlying suburbs. They come in to the city just for the purpose of going to The Center. In these situations, such youth would identify themselves with the East Side. Since this is where The Center is located and these are the streets and neighborhoods that I visited and observed along with the youth, ‘East Van’ is what I will call the neighborhood in this study. It is East Van as an experiential, collective space (Massey, 1999) that I go on to describe next.

²³ I will use the term ‘East Van’ to refer to the neighborhoods of Grandview-Woodland and Mount Pleasant and ‘East Side’ to reference the broader east side of Vancouver.

East Van



Photos by
Megan Low, 2010

Demographically, East Van is the most ethnically diverse area of the city, having served as the first home for immigrant groups since the 1880s. Low-cost housing and close proximity to the Vancouver core were attractive features up to the past two decades. Distinct Italian, East Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Filipino communities remain (Stats-Canada, 2006) and most of the city's Aboriginal population is located in this area. In the 1990s, sixty percent of all Indigenous Vancouverites lived on the Eastside and one in six households in East Van were First Nations families (Tupechka, Martin, & Graham, 1997).

The most noticeable difference today, as evidenced from immigrant groups settling in the neighborhoods of East Van since the 1970s, is the rise in numbers of Asian immigrants, and more recently, South Asian immigrants, beginning in the early 1990s. According to 2006 Census data, persons with Chinese as a first language made up 14% of residents in the area, Vietnamese people made up 4.2%

of the area's population, and the number of Tagalog-speaking Filipino residents increased from previous counts, moving up to 7% of the neighborhood's population. In contrast, the number of Italian speaking residents declined from 12.7% in 1971 to 2.3% in 2006 despite a remaining Italian cultural presence specifically in the Grandview-Woodland neighborhood (Stats-Canada, 2006).

The intersection of nationality, ethnicity, and class impact the socio-economic status of the area. The East Side is home to many working class and poor communities, and, notably, the majority of the city's social housing is located here. The two neighborhoods, Grandview-Woodland and Mount Pleasant, together have a median household income that is well below the city's median at \$35,000, with 35% of the population of the area considered 'low income' (City-of-Vancouver, 2005). These figures make this area the second poorest in Vancouver, surpassed only by the adjacent East Side neighborhoods of Strathcona, which includes the city's Chinatown—one of the largest in North America—and the Downtown East Side (DTES), which represents the highest rate of concentrated poverty in Canada (Roe, 2009).

In addition to immigrant and working class communities, East Van has, for the latter half of the 20th century, been attracted and become home to the traditional roster of gentrifiers such as artists, political activists, students, and small businesses (Tupchka, et al., 1997). This type of gentrification became common across North American cities from the 1950s through the 1970s under the guise of urban renewal projects that sought to galvanize urban economies. The look and feel of the East Side is changing, however, as a new form of gentrification tied to privately-funded redevelopment projects has rapidly increased over the past two decades, replacing renters with middle-class home buyers (Crompton, 2010).

Local residents and social activists report that city planners are attempting to transform the East Side from a working class, highly diverse, culturally rich, urban community into an extension of Vancouver envisioned as a refuge for the middle class (Boyd, 2008; Crompton, 2010). Several authors attribute this alteration to a changing, market-driven form of gentrification that is now increasingly being used as a form of global urban policy within neo-liberalism (Shier, 2002; Sommers & Blomley, 2002). The traditional form of gentrification was highly regulated as it was dependent on public financing (Smith, 2002). In the new form, as is evidenced in Vancouver, private development corporations receive

public subsidies, creating planned, corporate-driven gentrification. Rapid development of the DTES specifically has also meant innovative and proliferating modes of containment and regulation of ‘social undesirables’ (homeless people, particular youth subcultures, youth of color). This means that people marked as ‘dangerous’ are pushed even further east on the East Side, which contributes to the public image of East Van as a place for marginalized urban youth; a view that inadvertently contributes to the defense of gentrification (Boyd, 2008).

One of the main hubs of East Van where the urban fringe can be seen on ‘display’ is Commercial Drive, or ‘The Drive’ for short. Seen as the business and entertainment center for East Van, The Drive is a 12-block strip of the street that still resembles its former days as a ‘Little Italy’ and reflects what emerged fifty years ago as a multi-ethnic and bohemian *mélange*. Older Italian men can be found sipping espresso in outdoor cafés squabbling about the news of the day or watching a soccer game on large screen TVs. Small shops, natural food grocers, and ethnic restaurants line the street, with buskers performing and sidewalk salesmen selling their wares. The Drive has the reputation as a haven for hippy and alternative crowds, and on any given day young people of all stripes can be seen parading up and down the street. Youth homelessness is very evident here and the ‘illegal’ drug trade flourishes.

East Van, as an urban space, signifies the ‘outlaw’ or ‘fallen’ neighborhood of Vancouver. Negative public perceptions of East Van bolstered, in large part, through media accounts are part of the common understanding of the city; they are deeply ingrained in collective consciousness, and reproduced in daily activity. A shared social consciousness and memory regarding space, an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991) that has tangible existence despite its members never having encountered one another, is the beginning of the creation of the physical environment. This process can be understood through the concept of spatialization, which I employ here drawing upon Shields’ (1991) definition: “the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of collective imagination and physical intervention into the environment” (p. 31). Travel blogs and tourist websites about Vancouver neighborhoods caution visitors against going to the East Side, which is usually grouped with the DTES. Here are two residents’ accounts

of the neighborhood from the travel website²⁴ *Virtual Tourist* posted under the heading, “Vancouver Warnings and Dangers: the East Side.”

I live in the immediate area and I often have problems with the street animals, but I'm used to it and have learned to live with it by developing ‘Street Smarts.’ Yes, the Downtown Eastside is hell... (posted date: August 22, 2010)

I was warned to avoid this area by hotel reception. I was in Gastown [close to the DTES] and needed an ATM at one point and stumbled into the edge of this area by mistake. If you imagine a mixture of something like ‘Zombies: dawn of the dead,’ ‘Thriller’ and ‘V the visitors’ then you'll get the picture. Sad but who said life was perfect? (posted date: August 30, 2008)

It is actually difficult to find documented opinions about East Van as distinct from the DTES. This is due in part to the close proximity of the DTES to the main business and tourist districts of the city, whereas East Van, being primarily residential, doesn't attract the same official and public condemnation. All of the neighborhoods in Vancouver described on private and government-sponsored tourist web sites, in fact, are located on the West Side and Downtown except for the occasional mention of Commercial Drive. The seemingly innocuous veneer of a contained grittiness on The Drive permits the city to use this one region as evidence of Vancouver's public international image of progressive hipness and counterculture acceptance.

It is fitting that East Van doesn't appear in official public advertisements about the city, as it truly is ‘on the fringe’ of the public representation of Vancouver as a cosmopolitan yet easy-going scenic “outdoor playground” (Frommer's, 2005). The defacing of East Van occurs through more covert measures as well. Media accounts of the East Side make a not-so-indirect link between the place and violence, as reporting on the area disproportionately foregrounds negative incidents and possibilities. During the summer of 2010, an informal two-month review of newspaper articles in *The Province* and *The Vancouver Sun*, using the search term ‘East Van,’ brought up headlines like, “Boy, 13, charged for allegedly stabbing another boy in East Van Park,” “Two young men plead guilty to manslaughter in stabbing death in East Van,” “Parents and students rally to save East Van school,” “Police identify man found murdered in East Van home.” Searching the same sources using ‘Westside’ or ‘Kitsilano’ (an affluent neighborhood on the west side of Vancouver) brought up few crime-related stories and instead

²⁴ I utilized this travel website to ascertain public perceptions of Vancouver in line with the qualitative research technique that uses internet sources for data gathering (see Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln; Lichtman, 2010).

featured more headlines about families, housing, and public interest articles. Media reports about crime in one area and not another do not mean that crime doesn't happen on the West Side, but function to build up the public perception of the East Side as a place of immorality, violence, and risk. In this way, a false dichotomy between the West Side—a place of affluence and safety—and the East Side—a place of poverty and fear—is constructed.

When places are stigmatized they become seen as containers or attractors for stigmatized people (Sibley, 1995), with 'wayward' young people (particularly teenagers) most often representing the pinnacle of the negative representation of the space²⁵. Attempts to territorialize space are one way to enforce dominance and to control others, as strategies for spatial organization are deeply connected with the social construction of identities (Massey, 1998). This process of spatialization works in multiple ways: it contributes to the formation and the reinforcement of one's perception of a place, of who populates a given space—East Van as home to poor, dangerous youth and people of color—and of the corollary identities connected to place.

Especially for young people in urban domains, there is a strong identification to the 'place' that one is from and the 'spaces' that one's group claims as their own (Sibley, 1995). For the youth in this study, East Van was *their* space. This is where they would hang out and the area they identified as their own. Being a home to youth on the fringe is what attracts them to the area even if some people don't actually reside in East Side neighborhoods. The following exchange illustrates this point:

Stephanie: Where do you hang out with your friends? What kind of places?

Ramona: Skytrain stations and parks.

Stephanie: What parks?

Ramona: Every park in Vancouver.

Stephanie: Do you go to Kitsilano or downtown?

Ramona: No. Only on fireworks, people do.

Stephanie: So places on the east side?

Ramona: Yea.

This exchange with Ramona, an Aboriginal girl from The Center, reveals a common sentiment I heard: place was expressed *as* East Van. This is where they hang out, what they know, where they live, and the spaces they explore. Whenever I would ask girls about the West Side, did they go there or what did they

²⁵ The riots in Vancouver in the summer of 2011 following the Vancouver Canucks' loss at the Stanley Cup finals, point to a local example of this. It was 'youth' as a group who were blamed for the melee.

think of it, the response was either a disparaging comment about that area or, more frequently, no reaction at all stemming from little first-hand knowledge of the place. “Do you ever go to the West Side, like Kitsilano?” “No.” Some youth, however, held up this area as emblematic of a symbolic, spatial escape, a semi-utopia where they would go if they could get out of their current situation.

Bianca: I like the West End, I like downtown.

Stephanie: Do you ever go to Kitsilano?

Bianca: Yeah, I like it there, it’s peaceful.... In the summer I would go to the beach.

Statements like these demonstrate that the young people who invoke East Van as ‘their’ place understand the spatializations of the city. Their adoption of an East Side spatial imaginary (Aitken, 2001) was even more evident when they talked about the areas of the city to be avoided. Here is how Krista, a white girl, described the DTES: “Crackville, Crack Town. Yeah, I try to avoid that area, just because it’s dirty and gross. My friend died there too.” “I don’t like going to East Hastings” [the main street in the DTES]. Or this quote from Veronica, an Aboriginal youth: “Yeah. That’s not a safe place, [Hastings] I don’t like going there. We used to have to catch the bus there all the time, and there’s scary people.” Yet, later on in the conversation she talks about her own neighborhood in East Van positively, saying “Yeah, [I live] right off Commercial, but I think Commercial is a pretty safe place. It’s easy to get to, like I usually just walk up and down, instead of taking the bus.”

This dual spatialization of identity and place points to how local spaces bear upon one’s self-perception and one’s insertion into a social community. Yet, as place and identity are closely linked, the connection often leads to exclusion (Massey, 1998). The youth here understand the outside meanings attributed to their space, and, when they can, assume the position offered by the dominant spatial imaginary. But they also resist this imaginary when their own experience of place and ‘home’ conflicts with the prevailing perception. I’ll speak more to this at the end of this chapter when I provide one example of how the youth re-represent *their* space. First, however, I’ll describe that space, the social service center that was the home base for this research.

The Center

In East Van, in a historically working class neighborhood that is now the site of one of the key sex-worker corridors in the city (Farley & Lynne, 2007), is the drop-in youth social service center where I

began to conduct my research and which I have referred to as ‘The Center.’ It opened in 1999 and according to its public mandate is designed on an integrated multi-service continuum of care model to “provide a wide range of social, health, education, employment and life skills services to homeless and at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 24” (The Center web site). It is located on a main thoroughfare next to other small businesses, most of which are ethnic eating establishments or convenience stores. There is a large identifying sign out front, above the doors, along with a hand-painted mural depicting young people and outdoor scenes that youth from The Center created as part of the Youth Arts and Media program. The Center operates as a storefront, meaning anyone can freely enter or exit the space, yet its location several blocks away from The Drive in a primarily residential neighborhood means that youth have to purposefully travel to get there, something many youth do. On a typical day, between 50 and 100 youth visit The Center. Ethnically, the youth represent a microcosm of the demographics of the city, with Chinese, Vietnamese, South Asian, Latina, and White youth frequenting the space. The Center does not keep data on ethnicity but un-officially declares that 60% of the youth are Aboriginal (S. Parker [pseudonym], personal communication, February 25, 2008). There is a strong Aboriginal presence in the space by way of the décor, the programming, and the staffing.

Upon entering The Center it is common to find young people standing outside on the steps talking, smoking cigarettes, playing with someone’s dog, or just ‘hanging out.’ Being free to come in and out of the space as they wish is an important feature for youth who may be street-entrenched (living on the streets), homeless, or in other ways victimized by structured inequality and suspicious of adults and authority. Being ‘free’ or having a sense of control over one’s movements and personal space is a big issue for young people who come to The Center. I should note that there is another youth drop-in organization in the area created specifically for Aboriginal youth with its own distinct group of regulars. To access this space youth are required to ring a doorbell and wait to be buzzed in while being monitored by a camera. This center is located on a busy street in East Van that leads directly into the DTES. Thus, the safety of the youth and the staff may have been the rationale for the considerable amount of surveillance at this particular site. Most of the Aboriginal youth who frequent The Center, however, rarely

visited this other site, which they referred to as “unfriendly” and “cold.” I suspect the video-camera-locked-door scenario played a part in their assessment.

Moving through the front doors of The Center brings one into the ‘resource room,’ a large open space furnished with a coffee table and cushy chairs next to a long table with folding chairs where youth could gather to write, draw, fill out applications, play games, or just talk. Through the front doors on the right is a desk where the resource room staff is stationed to respond to questions and manage the space. There is a computer on the desk and all youth entering The Center are asked to sign in on the computer the first time they enter. I was told that this practice is designed for funding purposes, to keep track of how many people utilize the space. This kind of tracking is typical for non-profit agencies that work with a transient population and I never witnessed anyone object to signing in, although they could easily use an alias.

On the north wall of the resource room is a hallway with some of the staff offices and a large collection of informational brochures on topics such as how to do a housing search, and personal care information like drug information and health issues. On the south wall are two community health clinic offices where nurses meet with youth on their weekly visit to The Center. On the west wall is a row of computers that youth can sign up to use. A large sign overhead reads: “Computer Use Priority is Given to Resume Writing, Job Searches, and Housing Inquiries;” however, the computer spaces are always full and Facebook is on the screens eight times out of ten.

Behind the resource room and down the hall are various staff offices and classrooms where the numerous programs offered at The Center take place. In accordance with the multi-service care portion of the mandate, several distinct agencies are located on site to provide access to: drug and alcohol counseling; mental health services; an Aboriginal youth program; a health clinic; a Vietnamese youth program; an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program delivered through a local community college for youth pursuing a General Education Diploma (GED), and; a youth-to-adult transition social skills program. The majority of the regular staff deliver this last program as certified Youth and Childcare Workers, which is a position similar to a social worker but different in two significant ways: it requires less schooling and the workers do not work directly for the Ministry of Child and Family Development.

Youth workers (as they refer to themselves) are assigned to specific youth by the Ministry to assist those who are in care (in foster care or another care program administered by the Province).

Delivering these social services is the primary purpose of the organization. Yet, in order to attract youth to this drop-in voluntary space The Center offers a variety of special programs that address basic needs—food and companionship being the top two—along with culturally specific programming to serve and attract youth. Hunger is an ever-present undercurrent at The Center, or more particularly, hunger and what low-income people need to do in order to avoid it. One of The Center regulars, Riley, an Aboriginal youth, commented, “Yeah, we all just survive. Just come here and eat, come back and eat, get some food and go. Survive until the next day, come back, eat, leave, come back, eat.” Every morning before The Center opens a free breakfast is served. Staff and usually workers from another agency make breakfast for all the youth who have woken up early enough to come out for a hot meal—which many do. There is also a once-a-week group dinner prepared by the staff or a guest chef. In addition, food is usually available on a snack table in the resource room and food was always present at every special program.

The Center’s staff create special programs in response to both young people’s interests and perceived needs. There was a Girls’ Group and Guys’ Group, a parenting group for young parents and their children, Movie Night, and Clean the Streets, where youth earned volunteer hours that could be turned into cash for picking up trash around the neighborhood. All the groups varied in popularity and attendance depending on who was facilitating and how entertaining the activity was, but it’s fair to say that all of The Center regulars participated in one or more groups at one time or another.

My description of The Center serves to situate it within the local geography, constituting the ‘place’ elements of the ethnography. Vancouver, East Van, and The Center combined with global socio-economic processes both present and past to form the context for this research. The youth in their movements through, and frequently ‘against the grain’ of, socio-geographic space, make up the final element of the ‘space’ and, when understood along with other socio-spatial phenomena, set the stage for a critical, ethnographic analysis of working-class girl culture.

In the next section I’ll begin part two of this chapter where I apply these contextual features to explore the familial relationships that were formed in The Center. It will become apparent how class and

space interact with gender to constitute distinct gendered subjectivities that function in part to counter the dominant or hegemonic (binary) conception of the contemporary girl as either eager, ‘can do’ girl, or as problem, ‘at-risk’ girl.

Making a ‘Home Space’ – Friendship and Family

My introduction to The Center came through my work as a volunteer facilitating the weekly Music Matters program with a well liked youth transition worker, Steven. Theoretically, Music Matters was cultural studies in action. Either the youth or the facilitators would bring in music lyrics, music videos, film excerpts, or other popular media related to a particular topic, and over pizza and pop we’d deconstruct the meanings and codes inherent to the piece. This was a lofty example of praxis, particularly for a social service agency. The group was popular mainly because of Steven’s presence, but also because it was a chance for youth to listen to their favorite songs on YouTube. Outside the meeting I would make CDs for anyone who requested particular songs. Given that no one had a computer of their own and very few attendees had MP3 players or I-Pods, this was quite a treat.

At one particular meeting the topic was ‘bad neighborhoods.’ The room was rather full that day, with mainly Aboriginal young men and about four or five young women in attendance. As the group had not yet begun, youth were ducking in and out, talking with others in the hall, running back in, grabbing food, running back out—a contained chaos of playfulness and laughter. Edward, who was an Aboriginal ‘Center regular’ and his girlfriend Beth, also Aboriginal, were taking care of a Center regular’s baby, Alex, which they frequently did while his mother, Sam, was out doing errands. Sam, a white girl was close friends with Edward and Beth, and referred to them as ‘uncle’ and ‘auntie.’

Ramona, a 23 year old Aboriginal Center regular who was almost an alumna (24 was the maximum age to attend The Center) and who self-identified as a ‘ghetto girl’ walked into the room. She saw me and asked, “Did you bring the disk?”, anxiously anticipating the mixed CD she had requested. After I gave it to her, she hugged me and sat down next to her friend Alyssa, a mixed-race 16-year-old girl, and a male friend, James. He was talking about his guy friends and what they were doing later on that day. Ramona asked him, “Do you want to all hang out tonight?” “Yea, we’re going to meet Daniel at Commercial at 7:00,” he replied.

Steven, having finished setting up the portable LCD projector, settled the group and brought the meeting to order by playing a music video by one of the youth's favorite groups, *War Party* a Canadian-Aboriginal hip-hop band. As the music stopped Steven asked, "What is a bad neighborhood in Vancouver?" Everyone responded in unison, "The Downtown Eastside." I asked, "Who lives there?" "My mother," Ramona exclaimed to roaring laughter. The other youth, all boys, gave thoughtful and politically astute responses, indicating their full awareness of the racial and class divisions in the city. Except for Ramona, the other girls remained silent during most of the 45-minute discussion that followed.

This five-minute snapshot of one interaction at The Center is distinctly representative of the social dynamics in the space. Youth formed close bonds with particular staff members; friendships were established irrespective of race, age, or gender; and girls wanted to hang out with guys or at least not, "be like a girl." Also, it was common for boys to do most of the talking when there were groups of boys and girls together, yet when they were just hanging out in the resource room, the girls were very vocal, loud, and present.

These race and gender interactions were noticeable because they are different from gender peer groups reported by other youth ethnographers where race seems to play the same role as class in dictating friendship associations (Archer, Halsall, & Hollingworth, 2007; Bettie, 2003; Hey, 1997). In the space of The Center, the Aboriginal youth had perhaps the most presence. As a distinct cultural community, they were more represented than other cultural groups and there was a visible camaraderie among them. Everyone knew everyone and the Aboriginal girls reported that their closest friends were also Aboriginal.

However, there were other criteria for bonding and friendship in addition to race: common experiences and longevity were key. I often heard comments like, "I knew her back on the streets." or, "I've been coming here since I was 16. Everybody I know is from here." or, "Yeah, we're really close ... like I've known them for a long time, it's been almost 5 years now. That's pretty good." All of these remarks were in response to discussions I had with girls about why they go to The Center. Knowing someone for a long period of time in combination with that person staying on good behavior and good terms, without betrayal, were requirements for the designation of 'close friend.' One could accumulate trust more quickly by being affiliated with another already-established friend. The longevity of friendship,

on the other hand, was largely spatialized. Continual visits to The Center demonstrated that one was in a similar situation as the others: impoverished and socially excluded from mainstream society. This last factor was the primary requirement for friendship as it gave the new person credibility, signaling that they were ‘one of us.’



Still, the relational element of space (Massey, 1999) meant that gender interactions played out differently in The Center when compared to the girls’ everyday interactions outside The Center. The Center operated as a neutral space for gender processes. Here boys and girls, same-gender groups, and girls across style groups all interacted with one another. There remains, however, a distinctiveness to the close relationships the girls developed with one another that looks different from what has been reported previously about girls’ friendships. Their friend relationships as they are articulated through everyday spatial practices, are familial associations.

The pictures on this page are representative of photos taken by the girls using their disposable cameras that represent ‘family’ or ‘friendship.’ The girl who took the picture of the barbeque said it represents friendship to her because when she looks at it she thinks of friends coming over and having a good time. The girls took many pictures of their friends and most often they were photographed in The Center. The question of how The Center, as a spatial imaginary of ‘home,’ contributed to a formation of family is where I turn to next.



Spaces of Representation

Ramona: Looking at myself [in a photo she had a friend take of her] sitting in east Vancouver, in front of my favorite youth center [The Center] that has helped me a lot. Like, a lot, the youth center has helped me through thick and thin, like, it's crazy.

Stephanie: Does it feel like home?

Ramona: Yeah. I come here every day, it's crazy. I always get help with my things.

[...]

Stephanie: How would you describe The Center?

Riley: Kind of like a home away from home, basically. It helps me when I need it, like redoing my resume, or getting a bus ticket to go to a job thing or an interview, or getting referrals or references. There are a lot of good programs here too. There's the breakfast club, and the shower, and housing meetings, indoor picnic.

The programs offered at The Center are often enticing, but this isn't what attracts the young people to the space. Being able to spend hours on Facebook, making a phone call on the community phone, getting some food from the always stocked snack table, or picking up a note from the message bulletin board—in other words being social, feeling connected, and being in their community—is what brought the youth to The Center. The two girls quoted above are both Aboriginal and Center regulars. They had been coming to The Center for years when I first met them. Riley was quite accurate when she called The Center, a “home away from home.” For the Center regulars this is exactly what it was. Many of the regulars arrived when the doors opened at 1:00pm and stayed until closing at 7:00pm. They knew the place and how it functioned, they knew the staff intimately, and they acted with a sense of freedom and ease when they were in The Center.

Twenty blocks from The Center is a SkyTrain station (public transit) which many of the youth, particularly Aboriginal youth, used as a meeting place. Many youth riding in from the suburbs also exited at this location, and so it served as a boundary space bridging the urban and suburban. My drive to The Center took me along the route from the station and I would frequently see youth hanging out there until 12:30 or 1:00pm waiting to make the trek down, not having money to spend \$2.50 on a bus ticket. After I had been going to The Center for some time I would sometimes pick up regulars if I passed them along the way, and one time I picked up Beth. I knew her to be shy around adults and I had not formally interviewed her but we knew one another through Music Matters. My attempts at small talk to ease the tense three-minute drive were met with nervous, abrupt “yes/no” responses. I parked the car and Beth

quickly jumped out, as though she had counted the seconds until she could get away from me and her feelings of discomfort. As soon as we opened the doors of The Center, however, this awkward, quiet girl was transformed into a friendly, jovial, confident young woman. She was home. The transformation was notable and it made me realize the power The Center had to provide youth with a sense of value. Outside, they were ‘mess-ups,’ feared, shunned, and invisible, but inside, they were important. They were appreciated. They had a place of *their* own.

What is particularly exemplary about this story is the conversion of a government-controlled space into the youths’ own place. As working-class young women and men, their options for claiming a space are very limited. Yet, by reconstituting the meanings of the spaces through which they live, work, and play (like The Center) the complexity of the social relations of space, and the innovative potential of space, are revealed.

It is here that Henri Lefebvre’s (1991b) dialectic of space can be applied to understand this process. As I stated in Chapter Two, Lefebvre conceives of space as a dialectical formation dynamically made up of private property, labor, and human interactions. The three parts of this dialectic include: (1) spatial practices which refer to the lived elements of space, perceived space; (2) representations of space which refer to the hidden ideological content of space created by city planners, officials, the capitalist conceived space, and; (3) spaces of representation which refer to the abstract space of the social imaginary or lived space (Lefebvre, 1991b). Applying the dialectics of space to The Center, the ‘representations of space,’ as a provincially-funded, social service organization, meant The Center was created to attract young people whom the State had deemed ‘a problem’ for their defiance of mainstream productive citizenry; with the objective being to change them to meet the demands of a post-industrial capitalist society. Nevertheless, the youth I encountered at The Center re-coded their lived spatializations to form new representations somewhat free from the dominant, State-controlled depiction of the space. Their understanding of the space or ‘spaces of representation’ was of fun, sociability, respite, nourishment, home, and possibility.

The social imaginary of The Center as ‘home’ connects to the youths’ re-definition of family in the lived space. Their friends are their family. “I have lots of siblings, so to speak, they’re not necessarily

my blood family, but as far as I'm concerned, blood isn't what makes family, it's how people treat each other": this statement came from Calli, a Center regular. As much as a survival strategy as for companionship, the youth formed strong ties with friends who were in a similar situation as their own. They lived with one another, shared resources like food and clothing, and relied on one another for support and love.

These relationships were distinct and noticeably different from what has previously been reported on working-class girls' friendship formation where shared dreaming of heterosexual romance, peppered with assertive heterosexual femininity as a response to a common disinvestment in school, dominate the female friendship landscape (Griffin, 2000; Hey, 1997; McRobbie, 1980, Wiseman, 2002). Rivalry, exclusion, rumors, and name-calling (all routines described in these studies) were reported by the girls in the present case, but the objective behind these cultural practices were different. Unlike the studies on female friendship cited above, these girls were not in school. Studies that have focused on working-class school girls describe the development of female friendships as part of a response to being positioned in the milieu of institutionalized, middle-class school. Friendships under this dynamic are relegated to a secondary status culturally and socially, and are therefore secondary to the primacy of the biological family unit (and here only the heterosexual nuclear family is legitimate). This leads to the principal difference in the friendships formed by the girls at The Center; there, their friendships assumed a primary, domestic role.

It is interesting that this key source of value and social capital for the girls in some way contributes to their illegitimate social and political framing. Friendships in the eyes of the State are delegitimized as insignificant social relationships, as friends have no legal authority or rights in relation to other friends. Even after three decades of feminist commentary on the public in the domestic sphere, when it comes to youth the ideal and really only acceptable family form is still children under the care of biological parents. The lack of a parental presence in the lives of the girls in this study and their corresponding reliance on peers engenders the old 'child saving' rhetoric of pity and sympathy (Strange, 1995), invoking State governed parenting/policing practices. Within the space of The Center, however, the youth rebuke this ideological imposition to create their own friend-families.

Using the terminology of Lefebvre's three-part dialectic, this is the third space—spaces of representation. The everyday, lived social reality of the young people residing in urban Vancouver transforms the space of The Center into a productively meaningful space of family and opportunity. Their transformation of the government-controlled space challenges the hegemony of capitalist practices that narrowly define 'home' as the biological center for the nurture of the worker (Engels, 1943; Sibley, 1995). Even if an element of the intended spatial practices of the space are to create a 'feeling' of home to attract youth to the social service center, spaces are produced dialectically through contestation and struggle (Massey, 1995); thus, the space of the Center is defined just as much by the youth's lived use of the space as by its 'official' definition and publicly mandated intentions. Holding on to the 'spaces of representation' as I explore the lived, every day practices of the girls, signals space as always reproductive as well as transformative. What the young people in this study are able to do in particular spaces and the ways in which spatiality is experienced are each determined by the spaces of representation that the youth themselves socially construct. Considering space in this way expands the possibilities for historical representations of the 'others' who are excluded within current spatial relationships. In the context of the present research this means viewing working-class girls through an image that they themselves have constructed and not as troublesome misfits. Here then is one way that this text can serve as an agent for change as I attempt to dismantle the same old narratives constituting 'us' and 'them,' 'good' and 'bad,' 'I' and 'other.'

Photos at the end of each chapter are from the 2011 documentary photography exhibit, *Ab/Ob-jection: Encountering Youth and The City* created as a visual representation of this research.



Photo by: Yun Lam Li 2011



Photo by: Yun Lam Li 2011



Photo by: Megan Low 2011

Chapter Five

Urban Girls' Struggles for Symbolic Recognition: Redemption, Value, and Imagined Futures

I just like the tree here because it reminds me that no matter how broken things seem, you always have the chance to grow more, and maybe even grow stronger for it.

-Cali, age 19

As I sought to demonstrate in the previous chapter, the girls built a family through friendships and created a 'home' for themselves as tactics in their strategic struggles for recognition. These strategies are also about redemption, and, more specifically, a form of redemption that is connected to aspiration. In this chapter I consider how the girls generate 'use-value' for themselves through narrative expressions of redemption. Each girl has a redemptive tale to tell and it is through these stories that they claim a sense of selfhood while also providing a vision for their future. I want to argue that these tales provide some indication that those who have been deemed valueless do attempt, albeit in diverse ways, to subvert the dominant symbolic order.

During one of my regular visits to The Center, I was sitting in the resource room when Alyssa, a 16 year old Center regular came storming in, visibly upset: "They won't let me see him! They won't let me see him, because I couldn't get to see Robin in time because I didn't have any way to get there. And Jason is being a *#%!& ..." She was attracting a lot of attention and some of Jason's friends (Jason was her ex-boyfriend) were coming towards her and getting riled up too. Steven, a youth worker, quickly gathered Alyssa into his office before the incident could escalate further. She was talking about her eight-month-old son who was in foster care. She had scheduled visits with him that had been arranged by her social worker, because she herself was in care. Alyssa, a slender and stylish 'tough' girl of mixed ethnicity was known for being loud, impulsive, and brash. Her straightened, dark brown hair was sticking out in all directions creating a purposeful mish-mosh on top of her head, a fitting image that paralleled her impetuous yet kind personality.

After 15 minutes in Steven's office, she re-emerged more visibly relaxed and calm; she sat down on one of the cushy chairs in the middle of the resource room and started chatting with a friend. I asked Steven how he approached such incidents as he seemed to work magic to soothe tense situations. He reflected, "I try to turn something negative about the youth, like Alyssa's outburst and lack of control, into

something useful. Like a lot of our kids drink [alcohol] and black out. We have to find something positive in that.” Spending a lot of time at The Center, I found that I would sometimes get caught up in the Social Work impulse towards psychologizing the space. I, too, would be struck by the intensity of the young people I encountered, by the ‘inappropriateness’ of their behaviors, and by the sheer number of problems they had to contend with. Yet Steven’s response above reminds me that what we see—the youth’s outward affective displays, such as anger, drug use, and instability—are justified reactions to the situation of being marked and under-valued. Middle class young people might express the same kind of disgust and exhibit similar behaviors, but they are not under the watchful eye of the state. The young people at The Center aren’t fragmented people; rather, they’re forced into states/experiences of fragmentation by the system. Their behavior is only a ‘problem’ because it violates accepted middle-class norms of temperance and individualism, both rooted in a secure ‘vision’ of aspirational futures. Steven was correct in his response: we have to expose the calculus of power behind the manufacturing of dominant definitions circulating about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behavior. Only then can we ask why some get valued in this process at the expense of others.

Whether valuing *something* or *someone*, each of these processes has a prescriptive quality. Each invokes, compels, and directs action towards a specific subject and tells us, in turn, whom to look at, in which way, and with what intent. We are inculcated with assumptions about who needs to be contained in special programs, and who, on the contrary, needs to be affirmed, supported, and elevated. The social process of valuing not only reinforces existing relations of power but also creates a grid by which to measure and evaluate the moral worth of a person. Being unvalued is equated with low moral status, hence justifying both state intervention and scientific scrutiny. Like thieves, rapists, or liars, the immoral behavior is attached to the person and the body becomes resignified as ‘depraved.’ They become dejected, isolated, and contained, not unlike the undervalued girls in my study who are repeatedly inscribed as ‘abject.’ There is, in other words, a significance in examining how value is assigned and withheld in relation to young people: a way towards changing the relations of power requires a form of revaluing or bringing into value those who are either undervalued or not valued at all. In this way, the remaining elements of this chapter are not only *analytical* in the sense of offering a lens through which to describe

how the girls resist their inscription. It is also *political* to the extent that I can demonstrate how the girls acquire value for themselves. The chapter therefore, offers a contribution to the revaluing of those who have been cast aside and marked as unworthy.

Reclaiming Value

To begin I want to articulate the meaning of ‘use-value’ as I am using it in this study. In the conventional capitalist economic model, use-value (the personal or social value attributed to objects) is collapsed into exchange-value (how much something is worth in relation to other commodities). Following Skeggs (2004) and Strathern (1992), I am attempting to recover use-value as separate from exchange-value. This shifts attention away from the object being exchanged to the associations of authority that sanction the exchange and is particularly relevant for trying to understand how class, as a form of classification, works to bestow or deny value. For example, those whose cultural dispositions have been deemed valuable, hence exchangeable (middle class, high achieving white girls for instance), can garner resources in the service of exchange (not least of which is economic capital), while those marked as un-valuable (working-class, non-white girls who use social services) are not in a position to mobilize resources for themselves. In this model, value is generated not through the commodity, but through the power that makes particular exchanges possible.

The inability of the girls to find paid work despite their struggles to sustain themselves and often children, provides an example of how ‘use-value’ becomes hidden when considering value only through the dominant lens of exchange. The situation of Riley, an Aboriginal Center regular, demonstrates this process. Her story also highlights how some of the girls’ attempts at redemption and to be seen as valuable in mainstream society (enhancing their exchange-value) ultimately failed.

Riley, who is twenty-one, left high school in grade 10 and was not employed during the time I knew her. Over the past three years she had participated in numerous skill enhancement programs all of which were connected to government funding in some way. Often a certificate of completion was provided at the end of a program, but the training never materialized into an actual job:

Stephanie: Have you had any jobs over the past couple years or gone to any training programs?
Riley: I did the Baristas program here in March and that was pretty good. I did a couple pre-employment programs with Youth Spot and Pre Anderson Circle Program, which was down at Friendship Centre, and another one through United Native Nations. I went to BCIT to get my call

centre training through Telus and stuff... most of them [give] certificates, I have my Super Host, my first aid, my Food Safe, and my traffic control.

Stephanie: Wow, you have a lot.

Riley: Yeah, it's pretty good.

Stephanie: Did any of these turn into any decent jobs?

Riley: I did a telemarketing job for charities with my experience with telemarketing through BCIT. I did that for a while and then I got kind of sad because everybody kept on saying no... That is really all.

Riley's experience with work is typical of economically marginalized young women who are receiving government financial assistance (Bottrell & Armstrong, 2007; Maschi, Hatcher, Schwalbe, & Rosato, 2008). Youth who have been in the care of the BC Ministry of Children 'age out' or are no longer the responsibility of the State upon reaching age nineteen. To aid in the transition to independent living these, 'Former Youth in Care' are eligible for other assistance programs like Agreement with Young Adults (AYA)²⁶ or the Student Assistance Program. The goal of these plans is to eventually become financially independent, either through immediate full time employment or through skill enhancement which is thought to lead to employment.

Consistently pursuing employment is a requirement for receiving income assistance through the BC Ministry of Housing and Social Development. Financial eligibility is dependent on the individual, "pursuing all other sources of income or support" through seeking employment or pursuing education as a means to achieve financial independence (BC-Govt, Housing, & Soc-Dev, 2007). Recipients have yearly reviews or in the case of young people, bi-monthly meetings where they have to report on their efforts to seek employment. For those young people who chose to pursue income assistance, a large portion of one's time is tied up with work seeking activities. In terms of exchange-value, Riley possessed little: she did have certificates indicating the completion of training programs, yet, without a high school diploma, the worth of these programs (their economic value in terms of securing employment) was diminished.

Riley's story, however, produces a different outcome when use-value is considered and highlights the significance of considering use-value as separate from exchange-value when trying to understand how value is generated for, or withheld from, economically marginalized young people. Being that Riley did

²⁶ Agreement with Young Adults, or Youth Agreement, is a legal contract between a person under age 19 with the Ministry of Children and Family. Young people under a Youth Agreement are in government care but live independently.

not have a job and that she was beyond high school age, she had time, and the conviction, to pursue volunteer activities (this alone is an asset with value). Over the summer she had the idea to organize a youth sports day as she wanted to do something to “help the youth” whom she observed as “not having anything to do all day” and no outlets for physical play. She had gone so far as to meet with two organizations that agreed to sponsor and host the event (she showed me letters from the agency’s directors confirming this) and had met with a local day-care and workers there implied they would be interested in participating (I have no outside confirmation of this). By summer’s end, however, the sports day never materialized. I saw this happen a lot. The girls wanted to be active, to get a job, start a career, or organize a community activity for their children but did not possess the connections or social capital to move outside of their routinized day.

Looking at Riley’s situation in terms of economic value and exchange, we see that she had a *potential* asset of productivity. Had the asset been publicly recognized through the creation of a community project she would have acquired exchange-value and had something to put on her resume, would have gained recognition in her community, and could have met potential employers. Yet, since her idea did not materialize, she was never able to acquire exchange-value or move beyond her current social location. Considering use-value, however, we see that there is value in the activity regardless of whether or not it was completed. Planning a youth sports day provided Riley with a sense of purpose and intention. Talking to others about her idea took initiative and perseverance and was a way of presenting herself to others as helpful, capable, and creative. She met community members who saw a concerned young person, which challenged negative stereotypes about youth. All of these attributes have use-value as they are necessary to obtain economic value (i.e. a job), yet their value is hidden when looked at through the traditional economic model as they do not have economic worth in and of themselves.

All of the ‘Center regulars’ who were not in the ABE program had, at some time, participated in either a provincially funded training program or workshop or classes offered at The Center. These included a class to learn how to be a barista, training to become a flagger at construction sites, a female empowerment program for young women, Aboriginal cooking classes, chef assistant training, youth leadership training, and public speaking as a ‘youth expert’ as part of a speaker’s forum. The conclusion

of each activity was marked by the presentation of a certificate. Many youth, particularly the older girls, also participated in one or multiple conferences. Generally a staff member invited them to attend. The market may not find value in holding a certificate of completion from a two-month baristas education program, but the girls I spoke to were very proud of the numerous training programs they had completed or conferences they attended, even if these activities did not materialize into regular employment. This passage from my field notes attests to this occurrence:

Ramona went to some workshop on how to be a youth worker for Aboriginal people in Kelowna. She was very excited to talk about. Said she liked it a lot and hopes to get a job as a youth worker. ... This is like Tracey who I met when she was coming back from a social justice, social work type conference. She was very proud to have attended the conference and brought in a poster on the 'U.N. Declaration on the Rights of the Child' for Steven to put in his office (May 14, 2009).

With certificates in hand one could claim accomplishments; they also had documents that have been deemed necessary to acquire legitimate employment. Use-value is therefore an asset, a set of dispositions, and perhaps relationships that are meaningful to an individual but may also have prospective economic value. The 'potential' economic value (it does not have economic value in itself) and the personal worth of use-value means it has to be regenerated frequently to retain its value. This process of use-value generation explains why many of the girls in this study attended workshops, public talks, and training programs repeatedly. The value received from such activities is short lived and requires attendance at another program to gain more.

The young people in this study acquired value in many ways through their daily activities and the relationships they fostered. Being marked as un-valuable, however, conceals their assets and cultural worth. In the next section I'll describe the process the girls go through to recover use-value for themselves and in this way reject their inscription and marking of worthlessness.

Stories of Self and Imagined Futures: Class, Race, and Gender Distinction

The lives of the working-class girls in this study are bound by past histories of pain and present moments of crisis. Time, in this way, is a concentrated accumulation of negative affect as one's *time* is perpetually spent anticipating, if not preventing, the next catastrophe. Being on guard like this requires active work and an acquired familiarity and comfort with instability. One must be vigilant and prepared to leave, to go anywhere, in a hurry. This demands that one not acquire much in terms of property or things

or to develop a rootedness to place. To envision and plan for a future is, in and of itself, a gesture of risk: it is emotionally and physically dangerous. Such a gesture takes energy away from the primary task which is to stay alive and prevent the onset of the next midnight raid, the next crisis. There is also an emotional toll that comes with the future always being projected as ultimately worse or as bad as the present that each girl is living. How could anyone ever be expected to feel hopeful in such a situation?



The futures plotted out for the young women who appear in this research are not planned futures like that of middle-class youth where each extra curricular activity, summer internship, and sports trophy is calculatedly acquired and assembled for résumé-padding on college applications. For these girls the future is more utopian in scope (Jameson, 2004). As each girl struggles to leave her past behind and get hold of the present, she maintains and curates an imagined future of how she'd like her life to be. This place of storytelling is a place that comes *after* history. It is through stories of the future, expressed as stories of redemption, that each of these girls rejects her inscription as worthless and in this way begins the long process of acquiring value for herself (or rather, her future self).

A common theme among the girls' narratives took shape out of the discussion of their past: namely, the recurring claim that they are now different and better than before. Everyone had a redemptive tale to tell and had supplanted a 'fallen' past with a 'new self' that they were attempting to be. Various scholars studying young people have addressed the issue of redemption. This includes work demonstrating one's capability and power to make one's own choices (O'Sullivan, 2008), as well as studies describing how sexualized girls and young mothers reveal their uniqueness compared to their peers (Lesko, 1990; McMahon, 1995; Nathanson, 1991). These studies explain how young people draw on particular resources to seek out recognition. What I am calling a redemption narrative, however, is

different. It is less about identifying the resources that the girls are utilizing and more about describing a process of redemption as part of a future vision.

As Bourdieu (1984) and others have explained, tales of redemption are about distinction, that is, the practice of distinguishing oneself from others (Lauder, Brown, & Halsey, 2010). Distinction was enacted in different ways but in each case it was about separating oneself from those other ‘bad’ youth of one’s class, one’s race, and one’s gender. Class distinction was therefore paramount as a redemption tale, and some of the girls’ attempts at ‘middle class’ performativity were central to this process (Skeggs, 2005; Walkerdine, 2003). This took the form of taking on the hobbies and interests of individually oriented consumers as well as middle-class cultural displays, like dressing and speaking in a certain way. A key strategy of working towards distinction and a redemptive tale of its own was the performance of ‘being good.’ Bianca’s story is somewhat representative, but also unique from the other girls. I draw upon her account here to demonstrate how narratives of redemption emerge²⁷.

Re-Narrating Redemption through the Language of Individualization: Achieving, Deliberating, and Trying to ‘Be Good’



Bianca is a seventeen-year-old Aboriginal youth who, along with her twin sister Veronica, was enrolled in the ABE program. She encountered a series of obstacles in high school and from her descriptions these obstacles had become a source of torment and fear. The way she coped with being taunted and teased was through what was expected of her for her age, class, and race—drinking and

²⁷ The photographs on this page and the previous page are representative of images the girls took of “things that are meaningful to me.” This distinction was made evident through the photo-elicitation interviews. I have placed the photographs here as visual examples of how the girls claim value for themselves and specifically use-value.

partying. When this didn't suffice to ease her pain she moved on to avoiding school and life all together. She slept a lot, spending most of the previous two years either at home or in bed. When I met her she was coming out of a self-described depression and had set out on a "self improvement program." This involved reading a lot of non-fiction (primarily because her uncle had told her that she was "ignorant"), working in retail at a popular women's clothing store in the 'nice mall' downtown (so she could be around fashion—an extension of her modeling and fashion design career goals), and seeking to improve her physical and spiritual self by eating organic food, exercising, and doing yoga.

Yeah, I'm trying to live a healthy, good life... And I would like to become a designer, I love designing. I also want to be a public speaker to express whatever about environment and stuff and I'm also into volunteering and like traveling and then volunteering to help little, remote places, like animals and just the people, building schools and libraries for them. So I'm into that, so hopefully I can travel around the world and help places.

Bianca's interests and future vision read like a laundry list for the typical high achieving, middle-class girl. Part of her middle-class performance is established through style. She typically dons a 'mall' style of dressing; for example, skinny jeans and a sweater, or a skirt and blouse outfit with a coordinating, fitted jacket. Bianca knows what activities and skills will bring her value later in life, and she showcases her hopes to acquire (or at least access) some measure of cultural and economic capital. Bianca's overt middle class performance was somewhat unique among the research participants. As I will detail throughout this chapter and the next, many of the girls attempted some form of middle-class performativity, but what makes her situation stand out, is how she was able to convincingly perform and almost 'pass' as middle-class through particular cultural displays.

Bianca's expressed desire to "be good," however, was a sentiment frequently voiced by other girls as well. "I'm just trying to be good now," said Alice a Chinese Canadian girl in the ABE program. Or this sentiment from Sam, a Center regular: "I used to be a bitch, I used to be majorly depressed all the time you know. I used to freak out when things didn't go my way, but I've changed. I know where my boundaries lie with people, I'm learning what I can and can't do..." The desire to 'be good' coupled with the ideals of self-improvement (a Foucauldian 'care of the self') (Foucault, 1977) are the requirements of the redemptive story of striving to be a 'good individual' (or a 'good subject') (Althusser, 1971). Despite its shortcomings and roots in the discourses of morality (which is not how I am using the term here),

'redemption' is an accurate word to use to describe the affective registers through which many of the girls would speak about their past. To put this in simpler terms, the girls would frequently talk about this past not as part of the formation of their own self or community, but as something to put behind them, something that was therefore only to be addressed in a shameful tone. The following statement is from Alice who had a sordid history of excessive drug use and had worked as a teen escort: "Yeah, I used to go partying. I barely go out with my friends now.... some people would do Ecstasy. I'm over that, I used to do that... I just want to finish school, make my mom happy." For many girls the past was imagined as their time of transgression and sin, and the present and future, in contrast, had begun to signify a time when 'being good,' and improving the self was crucial. One mechanism for striving for this 'good' was enrolling in the ABE program, as Veronica, age seventeen, describes below:

Veronica: When I was in grade 9 and grade 10 [I partied], and then I kinda stopped.

Stephanie: Why did you change?

Veronica: I just stopped drinking and I don't do hard drugs, of course. I just got my act together and tried to concentrate on school. I think I was kind of depressed a little bit because I never went to counseling at all from my friend's death.

Stephanie: How did your friend die? You don't have to answer.

Veronica: No it's okay. She used to live and she was like a really good girl, and then she moved away to the Island I guess she was like, a rebel, and came back and then started hanging out with the troublemakers, so I stopped hanging out with her. But, we were still friends and I guess she was doing a lot of drugs and she overdosed on Ecstasy. Her body was found in a dumpster. It's really sad. On like, skid row [Hastings Street in the DTES].

Stephanie: Did they ever find who did it? Who dumped her?

Veronica: I don't think so, but they just know that she overdosed ... And then my auntie, she overdosed on drugs too. So I have trouble with them. I guess that's why I don't like to hang out with troublemakers.

Being a 'good individual' is all about distancing yourself from the other girls of your class and/or race, or the "troublemakers" as Veronica refers to them. Performing an imagined middle class-ness by taking on mainstream hobbies and interests and dressing according to mainstream fashion rules was important but not imperative here. What was most important to be a 'good individual' was the excessive work involved in improving the self and showcasing one's individuality. This is similar to the requirements of the neo-liberal subject. What is both interesting and surprising about this seemingly innocuous way of thinking and acting are the specific discursive markers that surfaced as it was acted out. The girls who adopted the 'good individual' narrative took on the self-sufficient, personal achievement language of 'New Times.' They attributed their successes and their failures to the *choices* that they themselves made and rooted

these choices in their own individual capabilities. However, their attempts at redemption through ‘being good’ according to dominant expectations would ultimately fail. As negatively inscribed working-class girls they are (always) already marked as unvalued. This supercedes any attempts at becoming the ‘proper’ neo-liberal individual. Of course, we cannot predict Bianca and Veronica’s futures. Yet, as they work towards making a class shift (by enrolling in the ABE program or working at the mall) I would argue that they are not really performing middle-class but rather expressing an affective desire for middle class-ness which may represent some semblance of a utopia. They still remain stigmatized (by being in an alternative school and going to The Center) and remain in a working-poor economic sphere (for example, their mother receives income assistance).

Lilly and Veronica embraced the narrative of individual choice as well, two Aboriginal girls who sought redemption through a redemptive tale of the ‘good individual.’ Their stories further demonstrate how stigma and inscription ultimately prevent acquiring recognition through the ‘good individual’ narrative. Veronica, like Bianca, overtly performed a version of the middle-class self in her dress, attitude, and interests. She was very focused on doing well in school and talked of becoming a doctor someday. Lilly graduated from high school (something that sets her apart from many of her Aboriginal peers at The Center) and is now a stay-at-home mother of two children and a foster parent to her sister-in-law’s two children. She is known among her friends for being responsible and focused. Sam, another mother who participated in the study, said “Lilly is the best mother I’ve ever met. She is my role model.” Being a little older than the others at the age of twenty-three, Lilly was viewed almost as a wise elder among the other young mothers at The Center.

Both Lilly and Veronica spoke in highly negative ways about their Aboriginal peers who were homeless, jobless, and drank too much, expressing little sympathy for what they saw as self-induced problems. Lilly explains: “I think a lot of the young Native kids bring a bad name to us, so it’s hard, and a lot of my family are alcoholics as well. It’s hard being Native, especially in this neighborhood.” Since they had not succumbed to these challenges in their community, they regarded themselves as unique in comparison to other Aboriginal youth. Interestingly, they attributed their success not so much to their own

abilities, but to their family's positive modeling. I asked each of them why they thought some youth face particular challenges.

Lilly: I think it's more of a home thing like even though my mom wasn't really close to me she always tried her best to, you know, encourage me and give, you know, 'you can do this, you're strong.' I think if other kids were getting that they would push themselves, like I can really do this, I can overcome alcohol and stuff.

[...]

Stephanie: When you see Native kids hanging out, why do you think...

Veronica: They do that?

Stephanie: Yeah.

Veronica: I'm just guessing they don't have real role models in their life and they kinda go down the same road as their parents.

As they give credit here to their mothers, I had learned from other conversations that both girls grew up with single mothers who drank excessively, were enmeshed in social services, not very present during their early years, and, in Lilly's case, emotionally unavailable. It is significant that despite having taken on the neo-liberal individually oriented 'I' imperative, they have not lost sight of the palpable influence of their familial history on their own behaviors. This kind of acknowledgment demonstrates an accurate recognition of historical influence on personal success. Such recognition stands in contrast to the dominant mainstream ideology of hard work and individual effort void of inherited support. Still, despite their efforts at being good by declaring their distinction and working on themselves, they are not *seen* as autonomous individuals according to the 'liberal' state because they are not resourcing and asserting themselves in the *right* way. As I will continue to show throughout this chapter, ethnic and class distinction, group alliance, and accommodation are all utilized by the girls as they struggle to gain recognition and visibility, and seek redemption for a past that clearly was not solely of their own making.

Redemption through Ethnic Distinction: Separation with Pride

A story of redemption about the 'good individual' and corresponding middle-class performances suggests that some of the girls understood the requirements of a culture of self improvement and knew what was necessary in order to gain recognition and to be seen as legitimate. On the surface, this may appear to support the 'end of class' conjecture of the new postmodernist theories of class (Beck, Brannen & Nilsen, 2005; Giddens, 1996). Scholars like Nikolas Rose (1996), for example, maintain that 'the social' is giving way to 'the community' as the terrain for collective and individual existence,

suggesting that the world has become too particularized for large-scale concepts such as ‘class.’ I argue that affiliations to communities of interest, in particular cultural communities that bind people together, are evident among the young people as a form of self-governance; but, unlike the project of self-making described by Rose (1999) where the importance of kinship and shared social responsibility are replaced by individual associations and personal affiliations to particular communities, the girls here engage in a class-specific form of self-making that is informed by racial solidarity. It is here that we must recognize that regulation or governance can never function without a material context. The girls recognize that they are born into an unvalued place (based on their class and ethnicity) and that in order to be valued they must separate from that place (MacDonald, Shildrick, Webster & Simpson, 2005). This is different from some middle-class girls who express their individuality through aligning themselves even *more* with the cultural requirements of their group.

Yet, as the girls separate, it is important to recognize that they do not always give up their home culture entirely. As Walkerdine (1997, 2003) and Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody (2001) have so eloquently demonstrated, there is a loss that occurs while attempting to make a class shift: “...narratives of upward mobility are lived as success and failure, hope and despair, for some young women entering the labor market” (2003, p. 237). Attempts at upward mobility, successful or unsuccessful, are therefore never a complete accommodation, nor are they a complete break.

Many of the girls I encountered addressed this conflict through fostering a deepened attachment to their ethnicity. Almost every girl who was an ethnic minority expressed some form of resistance or criticism towards her ethnicity, but also expressed pride in her culture and a strong sense of ethnic identity. The quotes below are representative of this process yet they also reveal the forms of ambivalence that are associated with wider beliefs about ethnicity and associated racisms:

Bianca: I used to not want to be First Nations, now it's not that bad, I don't care, but before it was. Like I don't understand, looking at me, I didn't know why, I was like doing non-Native or something. I would come home and I would cry, tell my mom that people were looking at me weird or telling me things like, ‘why you look like that,’ or ‘why you look so sad, smile’ or whatever. And like, when I have no expression on my face, it looks like I'm sad, and that's just the way my mom and my sisters faces are, like some people's faces are. And like I would always feel ashamed, or like sad and scared to go out because I didn't know why people were always looking at me.

[...]

Donna: I'm El Salvadorian, Guatemalan, and African and grew up on the Sunshine Coast [of British Columbia] in a small town and went into a few foster homes. With one of them if me or my brother spoke Spanish we got in trouble. So I lost most of it, unfortunately. I wish I knew more Spanish now...What do I consider myself?

Stephanie: Yea, ethnically.

Donna: Nothing. I say I am nothing.

[...]

Stephanie: Are there any places [around the city] where you won't go?

Veronica: I don't really like going to the Friendship Centre [a local community center for Aboriginal people] because there's a lot of Natives there.

Stephanie: Among your friends, or your family, do you see pride in being Native or not?

Veronica: Before I tried to hide it, I am proud now, before I did think of it as a problem. I thought I would have a much harder time to get through life, to get where I want to go, but I do think they do have their advantage to show people that it is possible to do good, if you want to do something.

Stephanie: Okay, so now you can be the exception?

Veronica: Yeah, I find it both ways sometimes, I don't know.

Donna's narrative suggests she recognizes the value that comes with speaking multiple languages in a multi-cultural state, despite the fact that, personally, she has experienced segregation and isolation for being a visible ethnic minority. In Veronica's voice we can discern ambivalence towards her heritage but also a transformation in her position. She used to be ashamed of her ethnicity but has now learned how being Aboriginal and coming from an unvalued place can bring certain advantages, namely providing a means towards acquiring greater economic capital. Yet, a distance or disconnect remains between where she came from, her history, and the new self she is trying to become.

The quote below from Ramona further reveals the socio-cultural contours of this ambivalence: her account alludes to a recognition that Aboriginal youth must break away from their ethnicity but in so doing may simultaneously acquire a renewed reverence towards their culture.

Ramona: My youngest sister is a stripper. My other sister is a geek. It drives me crazy because she came right to my face and said, 'I don't like being Native' and it's like, thanks, it's like, whatever, I don't care, I love being Native, but they don't, it's because [of] the white foster home.

Ramona's story more succinctly reveals the ambivalence of this process. She and her two sisters grew up in foster care among white people. Accommodation to the dominant white culture for Aboriginal youth in these situations is an endless and effortless response given the circumstances. Yet, Ramona has rejected this white culture and she, like Veronica and the other Aboriginal girls I came to know, are able to contend with racial and cultural abjection by finding camaraderie and use-value in being Aboriginal in the

urban context of Vancouver. The non-white girls in my research—particularly the Indigenous girls—recognized that they would never be fully accepted into the hegemonic (white) middle-class group, (as I will show later, there were ample expressions of middle-class disgust), but by continuing to align themselves with their own racial group, they are able to protect themselves from racist assumptions and actions through their group affiliation and through shared recognition of their abject status.

On one level their ethnic solidarity, as a reaction against the imperialism of white culture, signals an interesting form of class conflict in the Canadian context. Working-class strategies of protection and self-preservation are certainly at play here, but if it was only about middle-class resistance then girls of color would try to ‘be’ white. This didn’t occur in my reading. Moreover, they did not oppose the values of middle-class culture. Girls like Bianca are trying to forge a middle-class self, specifically by drawing upon an ethnically specific, Aboriginal, middle-class subjectivity. This provides perhaps the strongest evidence that the narratives of redemption are about envisioning a more positive future. Still, we are left with the question: how did positions of Aboriginal solidarity and ethnic pride become viable subjectivities for youth who are socially and structurally positioned as abject in large part because of their ethnicity? To explore this question, we can look to the circulation of ‘ethnic pride’²⁸ as an affective economy within the multi-cultural milieu of contemporary Canada.

An ‘affective economy’ circulates the use-value of particular hegemonic affects such that they intervene into the dominant modes of feeling and thinking that occur within a given social context (Ahmed, 2004). In an officially proclaimed multicultural society such as Canada, assuming a place of ethnic distinction as a visible minority is one of the few subjectivities available to girls living on the fringe that can be used to obtain use-value. This is why it was not just the Aboriginal girls who expressed ethnic pride as the statements below by Lareina (who is Filipina) and Charu (who is South Asian) demonstrate:

Lareina: I do take pride in saying, you know, that's a Filipino beauty, and when we say Filipino, there's always a talent associated with that.
Stephanie: It sounds like you have pride in being Filipino.
Lareina: Yes, I do, I definitely do.

[...]

²⁸ ‘Ethnic pride’ refers to an analytic code I developed from the data to refer to expressions and behaviors on the part of the girls that demonstrated confidence, satisfaction, and joy in claiming their ethnic identity.

Stephanie: Who do you hang out with?

Charu: I know all sorts of people but my best friends are brown girls.

In the contemporary moment of a 'culture of the self' the development of agency is, in large part, based on one's emotional commitments. Affect becomes central to how one forms one's ideas about self (epistemology) and to explorations of the self (ontology). Young people, in a sense, 'look around' for viable communities of interest to which to attach based on affective affiliations. In a post-colonial society where political dominance is still taking place at the cost of Indigenous culture and labor, ethnic pride develops from Indigenous communities as a corrective or counterbalance to cultural genocide. It emerges within an affective economy within the multi-cultural Canadian state. Thus, 'Aboriginal identity' or 'ethnic pride' becomes central to developing a form of identification which provides some starting point for moving forward.

The circulation of ethnic pride as an affective economy within the milieu of neighborhoods surrounding The Center was elaborated through another race affect that I found to be omnipresent among non-Aboriginal girls in particular: prejudice towards Aboriginal people. Most of the girls expressed overt racial discrimination, particularly as directed towards Chinese and South Asian persons. Often this racism would emerge unexpectedly as we were talking about something unrelated to perceptions of other people:

Sam: ...I think everybody goes through a day where they're kind of racist. And I go through the days where you know it's just people, like Asians when they get on the phone, like come on, it's like they're going through this weird 'aaahh...' on the phone and I'm like, I turn around in a restaurant and told a bunch of Asian guys who were just yelling and screaming at each other, 'My kid is sleeping.' I turn around and I said shhh! And they shut up. Like they talked lower. And I think sometimes it's just public warnings. But I think everybody gets racist. I do towards Asians and East Indian people. I won't be afraid of them. I love them, I love their race, I love their culture. I just hate how loud they can get.

Statements like this surprised me whenever they were expressed as the girls were particularly accepting of what mainstream society defines as 'unusual' people in circumstances other than race. The prejudice towards Aboriginal people, however, was expressed as a form of jealousy and a sense of threat. The following excerpt from a conversation with Cali, a white girl who was a Center regular, demonstrates this:

Cali: I honestly, I don't agree with what the Government did to Aboriginal people and other people.

Stephanie: Like the Residential Schools?

Cali: Yeah. I don't agree with that, but what I fucking hate, is that I hate how so many people use that as an excuse to treat other people that aren't in the same way, like shit.

They're blaming this generation [of white people] for generations long ago... They [Aboriginal people] need an excuse to hate on other people, be stupid or to do this or that. Stephanie: I see.

Cali: And I just, honestly, I think I've learned enough, talking is good . . . but I think in some ways the Government is compensating them too much, because then they're like, 'well you should be just like us' and now all of a sudden they're the special people and they're more important than everyone else. Okay, yes, your culture and beliefs were important. Yes, what happened to you was wrong, but for Christ's sake, let's move past it. Let's not keep living in the past and using that as an excuse for repeat bullshit.

Cali, like most of the youth at The Center, had grown up in foster care and had lived on the streets, and now had no biological familial support. Her reaction towards Indigenous people reveals a form of anxiety about the limited resources available to young people like her, and the fear they will be taken up by the 'other.' In one sense, her sentiment is racist scapegoating as a result of class inequality in a capitalist context. However, this is not in any way a new phenomenon but rather a colonial narrative of loss that many white working-class people express (Walkerdine, 2003). The loss of, and nostalgia for, nation is a class relation. The limited education and work opportunities available to poor, white people in an era of deindustrialization are often blamed on people of color (Weis et al., 1997). Here Cali is no exception and cannot stand outside this narrative completely, even if she points to knowledge about the oppression of Indigenous people in Canada.

At the micro-level of The Center and the surrounding neighborhoods where Cali lives, her fear has immediate visual and emotional resonance. There was a particular racial hierarchy that developed in The Center and in the area of East Van where Indigenous youth held a perceived status above other visible minority groups and at times over white people. There is a clear sign here that some cultural capital emerges from being identified with Indigenous communities in these urban, poor neighborhoods of Vancouver. Tight familial bonds are formed among Aboriginal young people where a sense of inclusion is automatic on the streets and in the neighborhoods of East Van. Additionally, since the 1980s, official provincial policy of Aboriginal sovereignty has been in effect along with federal government reparation funding since 1990 (AANDC, 2008). Part of sovereignty means Aboriginal control over social services through provincial funding. Visibly throughout Vancouver there is an abundance of services, special

programs, youth centers, and scholarship monies specifically created for Aboriginal people (Aboriginal Canada Portal, 2010)²⁹.

In this highly charged multicultural atmosphere, it is easy to see how a white abject girl would feel ignored, lost, and placeless. The privilege of whiteness does not come to working class, abject girls. Cali's situation provides a poignant case of how the impact of a diasporic group, away from their origins, moves in more than one direction. The narrative of 'ethnic pride' is a new narrative within multi-cultural Canada where Aboriginal identity is not celebrated or even included within the understanding of multiculturalism (Gunew, 2004). This situation is specific to the political and demographic configuration of Vancouver and challenges the normative understanding of who is a 'legitimate citizen' in the Canadian context.

Still, despite her surroundings, Cali conveys a similar ambivalence towards Aboriginal culture that the girls themselves expressed. At times she, too, reveres Indigenous culture and aligns herself with an Aboriginal community:

I have Aboriginal in my family, but it's by marriage. I think if I go far back enough, I might actually have some in there by blood, but I haven't been able to do my family research that well. However, being that I've never really had family, and I've grown up on the street, and taking care of myself, usually. Like, everyone around you is Native, and is like, my husband was Native, and it's only [Native] people in my life that have been like teachers to me, elders, like it has such a strong impact in my life that really that's what I practice.

Cali, not accepted as a member of her own group - middle-class, white girlhood - is left with no cultural narrative for how to escape poverty, yet she reports *feeling* an affiliation with, and a longing to be included in, the Aboriginal community of her friends. She recognizes that 'ethnic pride' is a narrative with value. Yet, in being white (or African Canadian, or Latina - the other girls who expressed this same resentment) she will never be fully accepted into her friend family. This results in an unwinnable conflict that culminates in affective pain that is expressed as racial prejudice. It is this process of the circulation of ethnic pride as an affect that plays some part in contributing to forming one's understanding of selfhood. Sara Ahmed (2004) writes, "...the individual subject comes into being through its very alignment with the

29 The following is a sample of Aboriginal specific programs in Vancouver, BC: Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, Vancouver Native Health Society, Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society, Aries, Urban Native Youth Association, Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Society.

collective. It is the very failure of affect to be located in a subject or object that allows it to generate the surfaces of collective bodies” (p. 128).

It is at this juncture that I wish to argue that I’ve provided evidence to support Rose’s (1996) claim that in ‘New Times’ an allegiance to a particular community is central to forming a sense of self based on individually sought and chosen alliances. This practice does not mean that class, as an organizing concept and cultural distinction, no longer matters. For example, we can examine how racism, as a new form of working-class solidarity, is used by the girls in constructing notions of the legitimate self. Historically, racism among urban working class youth was confined primarily to white working class male youth whose identity was dependent upon the construction of a racially defined ‘other’ with which to contrast the self (Fine & Weis, 1998). Weis and Hall (2001), however, have identified an emergent working class female racism as a product of the post-industrial economic decimation of a subordinate labor market. In the contemporary moment, working class solidarity across race is discouraged among white young people who are a generation removed from factory-based working class life. And as the current low skill labor market is pushed offshore and increasingly feminized and racialized (McRobbie, 2007; Walkerdine, 2003), poor and working class girls across race in North American urban centers are equally harmed. Construction of the ‘other’ through racial discrimination becomes a way of acquiring value when one is on the fringe; like Lareina, a Filipina immigrant youth in the ABE program who was particularly vocal in her discriminatory comments: “...I prefer to be with people like me.” This sounds very much like the white working class youth sub-cultures studied in 1970s British industrial towns by emergent cultural studies researchers (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Willis, 1977). Now, however, this sentiment is visible across race and gender lines and provides evidence for how the idea of working-class works through the practices of racialization to inform the girls’ social commitments.

A second indication of the significance of class as an organizing concept is that it is the abjection of working class ideals as a daily cultural experience that unites the youth in collective understanding. The youth at The Center came together as friends across racial difference because of their working class status; and here we witness the interface of race and class and their significance. This was so even in a post-industrial moment when the idea of the death of class continues to be announced

unabated in much theoretical and empirical discourse about youth on the margins. The divisions along racial lines that then follow (expressed as prejudice) are not of the girls' own choosing. Hence, as Rose (1996) maintains, allegiance to a particular community is based on "individually sought and chosen alliances" and the individual is made aware of these alliances through publicly circulating narratives and symbols; these are constrained choices if we are to use the term choice at all.

Consequently, the rhetoric of 'New Times' which often declares that class no longer matters as an organizing principle in one's life, largely because it is assumed that cohesive group identities have all but disappeared (Beck, 1992; Brannen & Nilsen, 2005; Gibson & Graham, 2006; Giddens, 1996), is itself a classist, albeit still persistent, notion in sociology. The particular form of working class collectivity of the past may be gone but the girls in my study were impacted in every way by their classification as working class. Their visible minority status became one of the few resources they could use to acquire value. This was a creative and resourceful utilization of abject positioning that was most clearly demonstrated through a strong First Nations identification. A collective solidarity around class in the contemporary moment, thus, looks like an ethnic collectivity.



Redeeming Oneself through Class Distinction: Performing the Good Mother

A third narrative of redemption that is more precisely connected to class was observed among the young mothers at The Center. I was pregnant when I first started volunteering at The Center, and then had my baby immediately preceding the start of the fieldwork. The mothers in particular gravitated towards me and I got to know some of them quite well. Sam is one mother I became rather close with. She is a

white, twenty-three-year-old, single mother of a one-and-a-half-year-old. She lives on her own and was not formally employed during the time that I knew her. She was receiving income assistance from the province and also had disability status from a mental illness diagnosis five years ago. This distinction means she receives a higher monthly payment and the usual work requirements of public assistance are waived. She grew up primarily in foster care but is now associated with her birth family.

Her primary narrative of redemption is that of the ‘good mother.’ This is an identity she eagerly claims since having a child has given her an enormous amount of pride and happiness. However, it is in this role where she is confronted in new ways with working-class disgust and the stigma of being poor. She speaks frequently of the discrimination she faces for being a “single parent” (her preferred moniker which is a stand-in for the word poor) as she tries hard to be a good mother.

...everybody kindof looks down on you, you know....Like you know as a parent I can only do, as a single parent I can only do so much. So sometimes people go down on you because you’re not necessarily always you know, I’m a parent that likes to fit in....They definitely give you a look like, ‘oooh you’re a single parent ah, ok.’

Sam is aware that her mothering is unfairly questioned because of her working-class status, which in turn mars her identity as a ‘good mother.’ She attempts to resolve this tension by visibly comforting her son through material means. She makes sure he has nice clothes to wear, new toys, and her distinctive mark is to habitually buy new strollers from Craig’s List as her son changes developmentally. Acquiring strollers often requires making a bus trip to the West side (the wealthy neighborhood in Vancouver) to pick up slightly used, contemporary carriages from more well-to-do mothers.

On the surface, this need to possess the right ‘stuff’ as the defining mark of a good mother may appear materialistic or superficial (an assessment that contributes to her re-inscription as abject given the historical view of the working class as unduly attached to objects, slothful, and collectors of junk) (Skeggs, 2004c). However, Sam understands the cultural requirements necessary to be seen as a ‘good mother’ because the good mother image dates back to the idea of benevolent philanthropy and is a deeply middle-class notion tied to the nuclear family and the history of empire (Plant, 2010).

The ideal 21st century mother stemming from hegemonic Western ideologies of womanhood and family constructs motherhood as natural and necessary for all ‘adult’ women in order for them to be normal and dictates precise expectations for the behavior of good mothers (Kline, 1993). This includes

being primarily responsible for the care of her child, even if she works outside of the home, and to operate within a heterosexual nuclear family form. Thus, a good mother is a white, heterosexual, middle-class, married woman who not only selflessly attends to her child's basic needs but is central in her child's play and intellectual development (O'Reilly, 2004). The good middle-class mother emerging from decades of feminist theorizing and feminist political activity is an empowered woman who has achieved autonomy from the patriarchal institution of motherhood to *choose* mothering as a valued practice (Plant, 2010). Once again, the subjectivity of 'good' (mother, woman, girl) is equated with individuality – the good neo-liberal subject working to perfect herself.

It is to this representation of motherhood that Sam is forced to compare herself. She quite accurately recognizes that to be seen as a good mother necessitates performing the particular gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality of normative constructions of motherhood. However, since her casual appearance and style of dress subvert dominant views of femininity, she fails in each category (except for race). Furthermore, she looks like a 'teen mom' and even if her age is made apparent she is a single, low-income young woman who apparently *chose* to have a child without possessing a job or a free-standing house, or while in a legally sanctioned heterosexual relationship. In all of these ways her gender and sexuality are a startling affront to the dominant mother schema of feminine, married, Holly Home-maker. Buying the accoutrements of middle-class mothers is one step she can take in an attempt to be seen as legitimate. Ultimately, however, the material element of class, Sam's own economic deprivation, impedes her from ever being the ideal 'good mother' as her class position intersects with gender, rendering her *counter-feminine* and hence *counter-mother*.

Centering one's good mother narrative around middle class consumption practices such as Sam did was common among the mothers at The Center. I never saw babies who weren't well-dressed or adorned with developmentally appropriate toys. My field notes are filled with observations from the resource room of young mothers showing off new baby clothes or shoes they had purchased for their child. In the parenting group, too, while there was always an activity planned, invariably the discussion



would gravitate towards detailed accounts of who purchased what baby item where and mothers sharing news about the usefulness of a new baby gadget³⁰.

Middle class performances of motherhood were also expressed in more culturally specific ways. Tracey, for example, who is Aboriginal, a Center regular, and the mother of a two year old, would push her stroller into The Center and talk about the 'event' she had just taken her daughter to. This included over the course of nine months (according to my field notes) story time at the public library, a theatrical play for children, the play-gym at a local community center (that was frequented by middle-class families), swimming lessons, and a visit to the dentist. Donna, a mother of a one-year-old and a good friend of Sam's, provides another example. She would go to great lengths to make sure that the adults in her life were aware of the healthy, sugar-free diet she fed her baby: "I don't even give her fruit because of the sugar. I grew up eating a lot of sugar, and now look at me." One of the first mothering stories Donna shared with me when we initially met was how she had a doula present at her birth and had breast fed "for a long time" until her child refused it. Here she was referring to midwifery birthing practices and breastfeeding that have been customary for non-Western women for generations but have assumed popularity among middle-class North American mothers over the past two decades with a decline in use for their working-class and particularly youthful counterparts (Krane & Davies, 2000). I did meet other young mothers who breastfed their babies but, as it is not the norm for young moms, it seemed to be reserved for the more confident, older young mothers. As a sign of middle-class mothering, using a midwife or breastfeeding had significant weight in forming a good mother identity and transporting a girl into a future different from her own childhood.

Running throughout the narratives of 'good mother' was a declaration that these mothers were going to be different and better than their own mothers and the mothers of their past. Changing a child's diet, or engaging in other middle-class parenting practices represented steps in this direction. At a First

³⁰ The photograph on this page is the sleeping child of one of the research participant's. The mothers in the research took many pictures of their children with their disposable cameras.

Nations blessing organized by The Center for all of the new babies born in the past year, the organizer, a First Nations elder, asked the mothers and the one father in the room to share what they wished for their children's future. Every mother present, except for myself, said they wished for their child a future better than theirs and a childhood free from abuse. This kind of declaration is a fitting statement for the first generation of mothers in post-colonial Canada to follow the end of residential schooling and the attempted ethnic genocide of Indigenous people. Being a good mother was proof that they've not only survived, but are here for tomorrow. They haven't succumbed to the depression of growing up aware that society doesn't want them and, perhaps worse, that they are not expected to do anything. Being a 'good mother' is part of a process towards an imagined future, a rejection of a deeply unfair history not of their own making, and a recognition of the power of the present and future.



Expressions demonstrating middle-class parenting habits distinguished the girls performing good motherhood from other mothers whose redemption narrative was less tied to class distinctions and seemed more about resisting the dominant cultural expectations of failure placed on them by enjoying motherhood differently: by taking pride in their mothering and working to fulfill their child's basic needs. In this way, the good mother narrative reads as a form of accommodation to the societal expectations of working-class young women to have children at a young age. But as McRobbie and McCabe (1981) describe it, accommodation is an act of resistance that still seeks to reject the past. Of course these young women are expected to have children, but they defy the dominant script of working-class youth that ignores and dehumanizes poor girls and implies that they'll never be 'normal' by finding happiness and love in their mothering role.

This kind of defiance was expressed by Lilly, the Aboriginal mother of four whom I introduced earlier. After being on a low-income housing waiting list for seven years, she was finally moving in to a three-level town home large enough to comfortably house her entire family. She told me, "...it even has a porch on the first level so we can have barbeques outside. And John [her husband] and I are looking into financing a car." "Wow, Lilly, everything is really coming together for you," I remarked. "Yea, it's perfect," she replied. Having a house and a car not only allows Lilly to claim the good mother identity as a middle-class performance, but it also means that she has succeeded in making it as a working-class mother by providing for her children's basic needs—an important goal usually taken for granted by middle-class parents (Collins, 1994). This further reveals how the narrative of good motherhood functions as a redemptive narrative emerging out of the past. Lilly has not only survived as a working-class mother but is living out the imaginary of a 'good mother' by possessing the objects that constitute a 'perfect' life.

Lilly's story also suggests that the act of motherhood for these working-class young women, rather than being straightforward accommodation (as defined by the dominant paradigm), is connected to the particular histories and collective imagination of working-class mothers. This complicates their mothering practices because as some of the mothers reject their working-class past through the adoption of middle-class practices, they also maintain a connection to ethnic and class specific mothering traditions of generations past that have been used for resistance and survival in the midst of colonization and empire building in Canada. For example, Donna would often speak about how she wanted to have a second child. "Being a mom was all I ever wanted to be." Having a partner or getting married wasn't important to her as she saw herself as a single mother: "My mom was single and that's how I see myself."

The current archetypal mother sits in contrast to the mothering practices of North American working-class women and women of color. For these mothers, the patriarchal dichotomy of work and family were never spheres that one had to escape from. Rather, the center of conflict has always been economic and racial oppression (Glenn, 1994). For working-class women, mothering has more to do with familial and collective survival, which produces a wider array of mothering practices than those found in the dominant ideology of motherhood. This includes extending childcare beyond the mother to include

relatives and neighbors as significant figures in the child's life (Krane & Davies, 2000), and a focus on meeting the child's physical and material needs (McMahon, 1995).

These same mothering objectives were apparent with the girls in this research as the young, white and non-white working class mothers engaged in collective child rearing as a matter of habit in a way that was understood by everyone in their communities. Particularly within Indigenous communities, the responsibility and importance of child rearing is especially keen, as attempted ethnic genocide and the absence of mothering because of residential schooling occurred less than one generation ago in Canada. At The Center, mothers would bring in their children and the other non-parent youth would care and look after them. You could always hear 'auntie' and 'uncle' and 'cousin' being called out in the resource room to refer to the (non-biological) familial connections that were formed among the youth. The Center understood the cultural significance of community child rearing and created a child friendly and family inclusive space. One corner of the resource room was devoted to children's play, furnished with a large fold-out shelf unit filled with toys, and there were always a few high chairs on hand so youth with babies could participate in evening activities where a meal was generally served.

Arguably then, the 'good mother' narrative can be read two ways. First, it can be seen as an attempt to gain recognition—a way out from the past—through a middle-class mothering performance and as an example of a generative resource of worth which in turn brings value to the girls. Sam's story reveals an attempt at distinguishing herself from the other young, poor mothers (whom she recognizes carry a negative stigma and hence, *she* is burdened with that stigma) through a middle-class performance of consumption and morality. Her story is also, however, an example of how mothering works to provide use-value to the girls. Having and raising a child provides an enormous amount of value to young women who have little in the way of social and economic capital and have nothing to claim as their own in order to be seen as worthy (Plant, 2010). Sam's story and the similar tale of the other 'good mother' narratives provide a celebration of mothering that rejects the imperative of the archetypal white middle-class mother. The mothers here work collectively, free of heterosexual attachments and with a vision for the future. In this way they are creating new lives for themselves and their families that look different from where they've been and what they've experienced.

Through these good mother performances the girls are generating and cultivating value for themselves. They are not only creating a future (in the midst of being positioned as having none) but are establishing connections and developing their own pool of resources that will assist them concretely as they move towards creating a new life. This is the advantage of identifying ‘use-value’ as distinct from exchange-value: It allows the recognition of what are otherwise hidden personal assets and reveals the importance of human relationships. It is in this way that the girls are reclaiming a form of value they already possess.

Imagining Future Selves

If redemption is examined as a process, particularly if it is seen as part of the creation of new futures, the stories of redemption suggest a demonstration of agency among the girls. Their stories showcase the girls’ recognition of their social position as unvalued and their efforts, as a form of class and race conflict, to gain value. The temporality of these narratives provides a future orientation as the girls are in the process of becoming their imagined ‘new’ selves. Even as they are inscribed as abject, their redemption narrative invites a method for saying, ‘I want to stay in the game. Listen to me for I am not the bad person you see me as.’ Reading their stories in this light offers an alternative to what could be seen as a moral plea for forgiveness, as the term ‘redemption’ suggests an acknowledgement of wrongdoing, or of committing sin. On the contrary, however, the girls’ narratives and redemptive performances are a social and cultural response to being seen and marked as unworthy. The girls are in some sense feeling as if they are afloat, yet at the same time seeking a stable place of belonging, and a sense of home. This is an ideal of home or a projected utopic site of perfection. Many women, across class and age, share such desires as they struggle to find a place that no longer exists, the quintessential nuclear family. Yet, unlike the middle-class woman who is searching for a sense of calm while living an acceptable middle class life, the girls here provoke disgust as they seek out home. The redemption story suggests one way that those who are unvalued make sense of their social placement. It also reveals the feeling or expression of class struggle thereby suggesting once again that class matters in the lives of girls on the fringe.

The redemption narrative is the first step in the girls' attempts at acquiring value for themselves and they do acquire use-value. Yet, as I've sought to highlight here, acquiring value was sometimes a futile endeavor as their classifications prevented the acquisition of worth within mainstream society, or the acquisition of exchange-value. This 'failure' traps the girls in place, re-inscribing their abject status and re-circulating their histories. Thus, as they envision the future they remain in part stuck in the present and the past; the redemption narratives serve as imagined ways out of their past and a collective history of inscription. The histories of inscription that lead to abjection will be discussed next. In the following chapter I will shift to the past to explore the historical processes of surveillance, control, and labeling that work through institutions to pathologize the young women in this study. As I argue, these institutional practices continue to mark the girls as unvalued in the present.

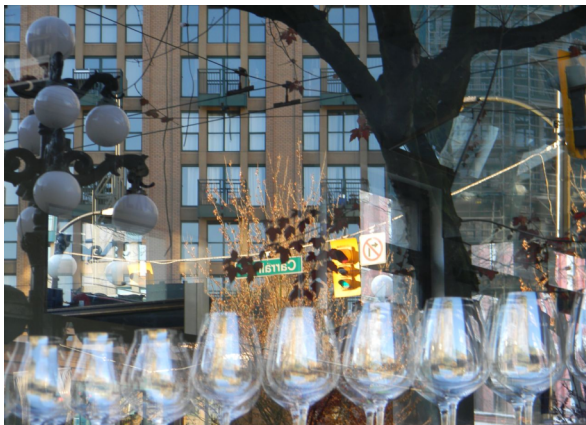


Photo by: Megan Low 2011



Photo by: Megan Low 2011



Photo by: Megan Low 2011

Making Abject Social Identities

Inscription cuts or scars the body in the process of assembling it into composite forms, segments and habitual modes of behavior.

To describe someone as ‘abject’ is perhaps one of the lowest forms of insult or vilification there is. This chapter’s title, as it seemingly refers to a group of youth as ‘abject,’ may sound victimizing, derogatory, or simply judgmental. However, my purpose is not to *describe* a category of young women, but rather to detail how the ‘other’ comes to be and how the process of ‘othering as abjection’ is tangible. Inscription represents a marking and a categorization placed upon certain bodies deemed unworthy of a successful narrative in the nation state. This distinction is made by actions carried out in the state, yet coded in ways that mask their true functions. Since the social services and academic youth studies industries establish the criteria for its application, abjection is ‘our’ word; how it is applied, however, is kept secret. This becomes apparent when the protective veneer shielding the abject category with terms like ‘at-risk’ or ‘disenfranchised’ or ‘less fortunate’ to describe those young people whose behaviors and very beings are the most unsettling to the middle-class viewer are exposed. It is why when I asked the youth workers at The Center to describe the young people they work with, a grimace of discomfort spread over their faces as they skirted the question with responses such as “they’re just people.” To say anything else would mean acknowledging that their job is based on maintaining clear rules regarding how the young people are ‘different’ from them. This response also points to the moral imperatives that rest uncomfortably behind the label of abject.

138

to gain social, cultural, and economic capital. Thus, as Skeggs argues, those cultural characteristics related to class that have been designated ‘abnormal’ are reinforced, re-inscribed, and normalized through the inscription mechanism.

In the previous chapter, I described the girls’ daily lives and the stories they live as a means to imagine a way out from the past. These are their visions for the future. In this chapter I will explore the history they are escaping from as I highlight how the process of inscribing young people is a repetition of the historical fear of, and disgust felt towards, working-class and racialized female youth. The making of the abject girl, as she emerges as a social identity, serves to consolidate narratives of youth abjection from past time. The historical construction of the adolescent and the history of child saving are two arenas that provide the seeds for the contemporary execution of inscription practices and will be discussed in this chapter.

Classifying Structures and Embodiment: Gender, Value, and Youthful Inscriptions

As Skeggs (2004a) and Bourdieu (1984) attest, inscription is part of the process in making bodies that matter. To inscribe a body is to interrupt the libidinal flow or energy in the body (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977). Inscription scars the body and assembles it into particular modes of behavior and ways of being read. In this way subjects are produced and value is assigned to particular bodies based on their markings. Gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality are classifications or categorizations that result from the inscription process. These resulting categorizations reveal how value is produced through the process of marking or inscribing. Gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality are resources that one does or does not have access to which can or cannot be deployed in various ways to realize value in the ‘self.’ Some people use the classifications as resources while others are denied their use because they are positioned as the legacy of these subordinate classifications in the history of the state.

One example of how cultural dispositions function to accrue value can be seen in the stylistic performance of doing ‘ghetto’ – sagging pants worn far below one’s waist, baseball cap tilted to one side, sneakers untied, oversized jacket. The look originated with young, working-class, African American male gang members in the late 1980s and early 1990s and has been taken up by young people of all ethnicities, classes, and genders within and beyond the borders of North America (Bennett, 1999). When middle-class

and, more importantly, white youth 'do ghetto' (see Kennelly, 2011) there is a certain amount of cultural purchase that can or might be acquired within particular youth subcultures (as is demonstrated by the marketing of ghetto style to youth by clothing manufacturers, music companies, and video game makers) and no one mistakes the youth as an actual gang member (Muggleton, 2000). By contrast, working-class youth of color are not afforded the same resource as they are already inscribed as classed, racialized subjects. When such youth perform 'ghetto' they are deemed unworthy and conflated with the actual ghetto.

Each of the more specific agents of inscription that the girls in this study moved through functioned because they were re-inscribing the girls into gender, class, and ethnic classifications. This process prevented the girls from exerting an identity separate from their body. A situation that clearly articulates this process is the girls' inability to find a job. Girls would frequently talk about applying for every job vacancy they could find but never being called for an interview. As Michelle, who is white and in the ABE program explained:

Michelle: Yeah, I've been looking for over a year now [for a job], I just can't find anything.

Stephanie: Like you apply for stuff and they don't call you?

Michelle: Yeah, I've handed out at least 20 or 30 resumes and no word.

Or in some cases, girls would meet with an employer but then never be called back. "This will be my first job, if they ever make my reference calls." This statement is from Krista, a white girl in the ABE program who had positive interviews in the past but then never heard back from the employer.

The girls' inability to secure employment was, however, strongly linked to a poor labor market, especially for youth. The second summer that I conducted fieldwork, Statistics Canada released a report showing that the unemployment rate for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 was 15.9%, the highest rate in eleven years (CBC, 2009). The unemployment rate in B.C. was 8.1 percent, which put the province in first place for the highest rate in Canada for the month of June, 2009. High youth unemployment has been the case in B.C. for the past decade (Statistics-Canada, 2008).

The girls' employment challenges also point to the class markings they wore on their bodies. Jessica, for example, who is white and a high school graduate, spoke about how she was repeatedly denied jobs, which she attributed to being negatively judged for being a teenager. She told me about a

positive phone interview she had for a job at Starbucks; however as soon as the employer saw her, she was not asked back. Jessica wore thrift store clothes, had a pierced lip and nose and presented a creative affront to the wholesome, neutral image portrayed at a major chain retail store. Mary too, an Aboriginal girl who is 19, said she felt discriminated against because of her age:

Mary: As a teenager, I can't get certain jobs that I want.

Stephanie: Like what?

Mary: I've applied for jobs, like I've applied for a lot of jobs. I applied for one in particular that I knew I couldn't get but it was for a Downtown East Side shelter, or whatever. I just decided yeah, I'm gonna, like I had all the requirements and everything, but I didn't get it. Maybe because of my age.

Other girls would describe how they were scolded for their appearance or demeanor when applying for jobs. As Michelle put it: "I finally got an interview and I failed it. I didn't know how to talk. I didn't answer her questions in the right way." Or as Sam, the young mother I introduced in the previous chapter remarked: "...I know how to talk in those [job interview] situations. I just don't look the part." These kinds of events reveal how working-class girls who display a distinct gender performance that challenges middle-class norms of femininity, yet are still confident and articulate emerge as demonized girl powers of the state. It is interesting to note that Bianca (who I introduced in the previous chapter) was the only girl out of twenty-one who had regular employment during the time of this research, and she quite overtly performed middle-class in her style. Thus, in Michelle, Jessica, and Mary's stories we see how the symbolic elements of class, when they are combined with other classification systems such as age and ethnicity, inhibit the movement of working-class girls (prevents them from acquiring value). Their classification as working class marks them as abject.

In an era of a culture of the self, the true marker of selfhood is the ability to distinguish the self as distinct from the body such as the 'can do' girl (Harris, 2004), who is defined as an individual through her acquisition and presentation of the *correct* bodily characteristics. Skeggs (2004) traces the current display of the neo-liberal self back to the seventeenth-century possessive individual: The person who has the capacity to own property in *his* person as demonstrated by maintaining a proprietorial relationship to *himself* (Strathern, 1999). A masculine imperative seems obvious here; however, this historical concept is relevant as a way to explain how the girls are made abject by their failure to utilize their gender, class, and race in the ways that are deemed correct and legitimate in relation to wider social class expectations.

In the next section I'll show in detail how appearance, cultural norms, institutional practices, racialization, and space function as inscribing agents, marking the girls as abject. All of these modes work together to reinforce the social process of categorization. In this way we can see *how* gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality work as categories to bestow or deny value.

Not Performing Normal: Culture, Style, and Challenging Middle-Class Femininities

I think they judge us by the way we look, so they think something bad is going on or something.

-Veronica, 17 First Nations

...she would just look at them in such disgust and like, I'd be there with them and she just looks at me weird.

-Charu, 17 South Asian (East Indian)

The cultural practice of 'style' has always been of great importance to youth and particularly teen girls (Driscoll, 2002; Harris & Fine, 2004; Kearney, 2006; McRobbie & Garber, 1976; McRobbie, 2004). Catherine Driscoll (2002) has even gone so far as to suggest that while style is "subject to regulation and limitation...it is always an articulation of girls' cultural identities" (p. 245). The limitation that Driscoll is referring to most notably involves financial resources, which is one of the reasons why I've resisted equating consumption with self expression³¹. Still, cultural objects carry "cultural codes of meaning" based on their use and social circulation (Jefferson, 1976). In this way, appearance and style function to categorize which bodies are normal (girl-feminine, boy-masculine) or abnormal.

In this study, style and appearance played a significant role in denying girls' access to gender and class as resources as such performances were read as intrinsic to their body. I witnessed a variety of styles being performed among the youth, but as I describe them here, in most instances I am the one defining the parameters and assigning the style a name. It was rare for any girl to talk about her appearance or her style and when I would ask someone to define her look, I usually got some sort of "I don't know" or "I don't have one" reply.

Some girls performed 'ghetto' or presented a tough 'street' demeanor. The cultural codes attached to this shout 'unfeminine,' indicating that this is someone to fear, and signify both urban and working-class. Other girls were 'thrift store chic,' donning a hodge-podge of interesting styles and patterns from

³¹ My resistance to equate consumption with self expression results in a full scale critique of postmodern girls' cultural studies. I outline this critique in Chapter Two.

second hand shops. For the middle class, this represents hip, popular urban style, but for young people who are poor and living counter to mainstream expectations, this can signify 'low class' or disadvantaged street youth. Many of the more slender girls and the three Asian girls in the study dressed in a hyper-feminine and overtly sexualized manner, not unlike young women celebrities on TV or in music videos. Here I refer to hyper-feminine as a highly feminized gender performance grounded in the heterosexist notion that girls exist for the sole purpose of being objectified by boys (Renold, 2000). As Skeggs points out, there has been a long history of sexualizing working-class women (Skeggs, 1997). Tight clothes worn by teen pop idols are trendy, but when young, low-income girls wear them, trendy turns into 'slutty' or the more demonstrative category often used, the 'whore.' Most of the girls, particularly the Aboriginal girls, wore plain clothes not donning any distinct style.

I looked for additional signs, beyond dress, that would reveal the girls' association to style and appearance. The clearest indication that the girls had a class-mediated relationship to fashion came in response to our viewing the film *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (Bruckheimer & Hogan, 2009) at a Girls' Group meeting. The film is about Rebecca, a young, white, and stylish blond woman who has a shopping obsession. As a recent college graduate traipsing the most fashionable districts of New York City, she takes a job in publishing to support her addiction and in the process falls in love with a wealthy entrepreneur. The film reads like a 90-minute commercial for youthful haute couture with one high-end fashion product placement after another. In every way, the world portrayed in the film is the exact opposite from the girls' reality. Thus, when the Girl's Group facilitator selected this film (an indication of her inability to see how the girls lives are shaped structurally) I was curious to see what their reaction would be.

Ramona, an Aboriginal girl who had already identified as a 'ghetto' girl and a self-defined 'gangster,' said very matter-of-factly: "I didn't like the movie. I'm not even like that when I shop. I'm just like 'oh it's on sale' and grab it." All of the girls who watched the film were Center regulars and collectively expressed an outward, but still tempered, dislike of the film. I say tempered here because usually they would quite expressively declare their distaste if they didn't like a movie that was playing in the resource room or someone's music preference. In this case the soft rejection to the film came from

recognition that as young women they were *supposed* to identify with the flighty, superficial, wealthy girl in the film although they clearly did not. And unlike working-class girls who have more cultural and economic purchase, such as the girls in the ABE program, the Center girls knew that they were excluded from mainstream femininity and thus marked their femininity with a different, non-dominant set of codes (what that register looks like is discussed in Chapter Five). Knowing they could not display the consumer driven, white, wealthy gender performance portrayed in the film, they rejected ‘style’ altogether. Hence, they were not intimidated by what they saw.

The girls’ reaction to the film also reveals the limitation of performing gender as well as the regulation that is involved in such performances. The dominant, middle-class feminine³² performance of the girl in the film is distinct from the one available to, and presented by, the girls who displayed an overtly sexual, hyper-feminine style. For working-class girls, the options for gender displays are limited where their only cultural capital is the feminized body (Skeggs, 1997). For working-class women a hyper-feminine style is really the only option for obtaining value through gender (Davies, 1990; Smith, 1988). For example, in Skeggs’s (1997) ethnography of working-class women, she found that the women’s displays of hyper-femininity brought them value within their own communities, where the use of their body was one of the few assets available to them. Working-class girls also have used hetero-normative feminine style performances and looks as a way to escape their place in a class hierarchy (McRobbie, 2004; Walkerdine, 1997). When you have little material wealth (or assets) your body is one of the few resources you can use to acquire social capital, and in some cases, financial capital. However, for the working-class girls in this study, displaying a ‘trashy’ sexualized gender performance served to mark them as working-class and in this way precluded their ability to display a respectable form of selfhood capable of acquiring exchange-value.

The selection of gender performances was even more restricted for the girls when class intersected with race, with options perhaps being the most limited for the Asian girls. Asian young women

³² I refer to ‘dominant femininity’ as the dominant discourse of emphasized femininity that includes heterosexist subordination to men as a way to accommodate men’s interests (Connell, 1987; Thorne, 1993). This is a middle-class feminine gender performance enacted through respectability (not being ‘trashy’), politeness, and docility (Thornton, 1995).

are confronted with the stereotype of submissive, sultry temptress as the most accessible role available to them (Hijin, 2010; Mythili, 2006). Many girls experienced this as a conflict; the desire to be seen, yet recognizing the few options available to a young, low-income Asian woman. In the quote below, Lareina, who is Filipina, expresses this dilemma as she talks about the style among her female peers that she disapproves of:

Lareina: ...very fake [the look she doesn't like], just really not strong but unnatural.

Stephanie: Like too much makeup?

Lareina: Yeah. Like, I wear makeup myself but what I'm talking about I always get in trouble for, really, really fake like long eyelashes. I've never personally liked the blond hair look on Asians, just because it's so obviously fake. And I don't like the cake face, you know what I'm saying, the cake face and I also have stereotype names of my own like TNA girl.

Stephanie: TNA girl, like tight clothes?

Lareina: Yeah, and they would usually wear TNA pants [a trendy sportswear brand], you know jogging pants, they're just supposed to be jogging but they wear them every day. Yeah, I call them that.... Not that I say I don't like them, I just find them very intimidating, or very unapproachable because their look comes off too strong and, you know, it's not the 'hey, you can be my friend' kind of look.

Here, Lareina suggests that she has learned what not to do in terms of appearance. It is important to dress up, wear makeup, and look good but one must do it tastefully so as not to be associated with the unapproachable or 'fake' Asian girls. She always adorned her small five-foot frame meticulously, her hair and makeup were tastefully done, and she wore slim clothes depicting the current popular fashion trends.

Alice, a Chinese-Canadian girl in the ABE program, also spoke about feeling the expectation to perform a sexualized version of herself as she described her experience of working as an escort when she was fourteen.

Alice: I don't know, my friends started doing it, it was like easy money and it's fast so I was like, oh, can I start doing it too.

Stephanie: So, you go into a bar, like there's a group of you...

Alice: People actually pick you up, from my house, and you have to like wear revealing clothes.

The retelling of this story is part of Alice's self-incriminating past that she is trying to purge. Her story, along with Lareina's narrative, suggests that the girls recognize the rewards that come from using their gender and ethnicity in line with dominant societal expectations, but also the risks. The compromise is to assume a feminine style that is 'tasteful,' and one that is in line with mainstream middle-class expectations.

Unlike the working-class women in Skeggs's (1997) study, for the girls here, a hyper-feminine display did not provide any personal reward. Interestingly, the girls who performed the sexualized hyper-feminine style were all girls of color. In a racialized society where a white person is seen as race-‘less,’ for a person of color to dress in a hyper-sexualized manner brings forth racist imagery of the exotic other (Prasso, 2005)—a sign with less value than even the working-class sexualized woman who is white. The popular, hyper-feminine girl or young woman in mainstream media is a white woman, so many of the girls of color felt locked out of this category.

Within girls' cultural studies there has been a trend over the past 15 years to theoretically utilize the temporality of identity to expand the discursive possibilities for girls. As I outlined in Chapter Two, researchers have highlighted the unconventional femininity performed by female youth sub-cultures, such as riot grrls (Driscoll, 1999) and zine makers (Harris, 2003, 2004; Schilt, 2003), particularly as a way of presenting resistant forms of femininity or non-dominant female subjectivities. As I wish to argue here, how girls are socially positioned in the larger social order clearly influences the many girl positions available to them and can function to dictate the sanctions or rewards that come with assuming various locations (Jones, 1993). The girls in my study appear to confirm this. Options for resisting femininity aren't the same for racialized and classed girls. Thrift store chic or ghetto hip-hop style performances can be part of a non-hegemonic feminine expression, *unless* you are working-class or a girl of color, in which case the girl is inscribed *as* the sign the style signifies. In other words, she is already projected as abject in a dominant representational form; the idea of presenting oneself as ‘different’ to this position affords these girls little cultural capital. It is interesting to note that the three girls who self-identified as ‘alternative’ (either as punk, hippie, or indie) were all white, in the ABE program, and living with a parent. This suggests that they may have had other resources beyond the classed body to exchange for economic and cultural value, and they were in a better position materially to purchase and enact an alternative style.

Another example of the girls rejecting dominant femininity as a classed response occurred in their articulation of the reasons for their overt and declarative dislike of other girls. *Every* girl mentioned that she had more friends who were male and many flatly reported that they did not like girls (this included other girls at The Center as well as girls in their lives more generally.)

Stephanie: Do you get along better with guys or girls.

Ramona: Guys. I don't like girls.... Like there's like two girls, me and Andrea living in the Annex, [the house she lives in] but I can't even stand her. Just the things that she does, when she's drinking, I'm like, 'don't be a whore,' you don't come home and rub on the guys shoulders and stuff.

[...]

Riley: Girls don't like girls because of their boyfriends and looking at their boyfriends or something, or somebody slept with them, it's drama, especially when they drink.

[...]

Cali: Oh, I've always had more friends that are guys because excuse my language, but I can't stand girl's bitchiness. They're so catty.

[...]

Charu: Yeah, it's like a competition with them [other girls], they look at what you're wearing, they look at you from head to toe, like what is she wearing, or I'm looking at her like what the hell are you wearing. Something like that, just little things just don't work.

[...]

Jessica: Aside from Teresa, and like my best friend Arianna, I mostly hang out with guys because I just, I feel like they're easier to get along with and they're not like, they don't bring as much drama and you know, I feel like they're more real and they don't really have to pretend to be who they are.

As the quotes above attest, there were differences in the explanation for the girls' dislike of other girls that tended to oscillate around the distinction of what I call 'Center girls' and 'ABE girls' (the girls enrolled in the ABE program at the center who tended to have more social and cultural capital). The first three quotes are from Center girls, and the last two quotes are from ABE girls. The latter group's dislike of girls may be founded in a preliminary understanding of sexist gender role expectations. In their view, to be a girl means to be restricted, tied down, and expected to perform the subject positions of dominant femininity that call for subordination to boys (Hey, 1997a; Thorne, 1993). This quote from Charu, a South Asian girl who is seventeen, suggests a rejection of female subordination:

Charu: I see lots of young girls meeting older guys and lots of girls growing up to, just degrade themselves into something, you know, they degrade themselves. I'm just like, 'what are you girls doing with your lives,' I've just seen lots of girls go downhill in life.

As these quotes attest, many of the ABE girls don't like other girls who they see as the source of gender specific restrictions (enacted through other girls' judgmental policing of their behavior). But for the Center girls (who aren't in a school program and don't live at home, and hence occupy a more 'abject'

gender subjectivity), they reported cattiness, being slutty (overly sexual), and a proclivity for drama as the reasons for disliking girls. They didn't express feeling societal pressure to perform dominant femininity, but rather articulated a dislike of girls for their expression of a sexualized hyper-femininity. The Center girls, therefore, rejected dominant forms of femininity because they know there is no place for them in that narrative as classed and racialized girls. Rejecting all girls is a denunciation, in part, of what they cannot be.

This rejection of dominant femininity may in part explain why when the Girls' Group facilitator brought in fashion magazines to have the girls make collages, the images were approached with a foreign sense of unfamiliarity—pleasure was absent. Further, the photographs the Center girls took to represent what was important to them (in contrast to the ABE girls) were void of popular culture references or traditional adolescent feminine artifacts. (Examples of this are below.)



I also noticed that while some of the Center girls did have boyfriends, the girls I came to know well exuded a strong sense of independence, free from male attachments. As Sam put it, "I don't have time to worry about guys right now. I'm focused on myself and my kid." Surviving on your own wasn't necessarily by choice; still, each of these examples points to the influence of class in shaping one's relationship to other forms of classification like gender.

The rejection of dominant femininity among the girls in this research, represents an interesting variation from feminist ethnographic accounts of working-class girls in which hetero-normative, feminine-style performances and styles were used as a way to escape their place in a class hierarchy (McRobbie, 2004; Walkerdine, 1997). These accounts of working-class school girls suggest that some girls are well-attuned to the reality that embodied power is not permitted to a working-class girl and may

therefore reject school cultures to focus instead on heterosexual feminine performances that will enable them to become adult feminine subjects.

The variation among the working-class girls in the present case can be understood through spatial processes. Structured forms of power are constituted and articulated differentially in space. In the Canadian context of intensified liberalism, female empowerment and feminist attitudes (particularly the reclaiming of femininity as gender power) are bourgeois notions indicating one's capitulation to, and acceptance into, middle-class ideology and culture. I personally experienced such hostile suspicion from the girls early on, due to what I imagined they assumed was an attempt at a feminine, 'pretty' gender performance. Furthermore, in working-class communities less emphasized femininity for girls and more androgynous gender displays are accepted as symbols of strength and personal control (Weis & Hall, 2001). This is particularly true in urban communities where economic devaluation and social retrenchment has meant an absence of men as partners, providers, or parents, yet mainstream sexist perceptions toward the working-class woman still remain (McRobbie, 2004; Walkerdine, 2003). In this setting, working-class and racialized girls have taken on the North American social imaginary of gender and class that devalues working-class women and girls. Second, youth living on the fringe don't want to be identified with girls (who to them means a mainstream, feminine girl) who might threaten their feelings of success as girls. Regulating the femininity of others through various policing behaviors, then, can be understood as an attempt to gain power, and in the traditional subcultural context, an indication that, "I'm ok, it's those 'other' phony, girly girls who are weak and wrong" (McRobbie, 2000; Shildrick, 2006)³³.

Some of the girls in this study sought in part to accommodate dominant forms of femininity either as a way of survival or in an attempt to be seen (Skeggs, 1997). Considering the importance of dominant or mainstream feminine gender performing for working-class girls, those who most countered this image (for example, the 'ghetto' girls and overweight girls³⁴) would seemingly be most disadvantaged in terms of appearance. What is interesting, however, is how such girls utilized alternative, non-

³³ See (Griffin, 1985; Llewellyn, 1980; McRobbie, 1980; McRobbie & Garber, 1976) for descriptions on researching girls from a subculture perspective.

³⁴ I reference body weight as a factor in hegemonic (heterosexist) femininity, because being overweight can be seen as a transgression, particularly for young women, to dominant femininity (Gill, 2007).

appearance-based strategies to acquire value. For example, the three very overweight girls in my study overtly rejected the presence of ‘girly girls’ and adopted counter feminine identities. One was a tough ghetto girl, another was a ‘leader’ and a good friend, and the third girl deeply embraced her role as a mother serving as a guide to other young moms. Size and toughness, as they served to mark the girls publicly as un-feminine (not girl), produced a different response within the girls’ own social circle. Among their peers, being overweight did not pose any consequence because girls from different style groups intermingled at The Center. This intermingling of different style groups is a notable distinction compared to girl peer groups studied in school contexts (Bettie, 2003; Hey, 1997b; Pomerantz, 2005).

Ramona is one girl who embodied both distinctions as a heavy-set, self-identified ‘gangster.’ Her gender performance was not traditionally feminine; she dressed very plainly, not wearing any of the red and black colors that her male gangster friends wore or the tight-fitting clothes that some of the other ‘ghetto’ Aboriginal girls wore. She had long hair but did not adorn her face or body in any notable way. Something about Ramona’s stylistic performances spoke the words “don’t mess with me.” All of the girls presented some version of this same demeanor, especially towards adults, but this style was particularly apparent in Ramona’s performance. If you didn’t know her, she appeared unapproachable, harsh, and mean. I was volunteering at The Center for over a year before I felt comfortable enough to assume that approaching her to talk would not be read as an authoritarian intrusion.

Despite this outward presentation, Ramona was more traditionally heterosexually oriented than most of the girls I spoke with. She talked about boys a lot and would make joking references about the attractiveness or sexual acuity of particular boys when talking with friends. When I spoke with her individually, she would frequently discuss the dating activity of her ex-boyfriend and how they were trying to work on their relationship. Also, she was one of the most popular girls at The Center. Both boys and girls looked up to her and respected her in ways similar to that of a wise elder. Thus, Ramona’s gender performance worked among her peer group to bring her respect and value. This is one example of how use-value was obtained for the girls. Mainstream, middle-class forms of femininity that were denied to the girls were rendered unnecessary to be valued within their friendship circles.

Indication of the broader cultural reading of appearance came when Ramona talked about the adults in her life. She recognized that she was seen as a problem, saying, “I don't talk to them, they hate me because I'm a gangster,” and this helped to form her identity as a ‘bad’ girl. Her quoted response here was to a question I asked about her older siblings. Shedding the distinction as bad or gangster was not something that would come easily to her; a body cannot be inscribed as bad and good simultaneously, nor was there any indication that she was particularly concerned with changing her image, as it brought her value among her peers. The problem results when the reading of her gender and class performances is in the form of abjection, which ultimately makes her unavailable for exchange-value.

What I have attempted to highlight in the first section of this chapter is how style and particular classed gender performances worked as cultural agents to re-inscribe the girls into a young, female working-class classification. In order for a young woman to use gender as a resource, to receive recognition and value from being a girl, she must perform gender in culturally acceptable ways. In North America that means being skinny, feminine, and fashionable according to mainstream marketers. The girls in this instance were not able to access a form of legitimate gender because they were counter feminine – sometimes too feminine and at other times not feminine enough. In the neo-liberal moment, the responsibility for producing the right look falls upon the individual. Those who don't have the cultural purchase or resources to acquire the acceptable appearance are, correspondingly pathologized and essentially a non-girl; and hence invisible socially, politically, and economically. ‘Invisible’ is an accurate word to describe the girls in this study as I repeatedly saw how most of the girls, particularly the Center girls, really did not fit into any specific sub-group or popular group labels for girls.

The girls’ lack of participation in mainstream (and alternative mainstream) gender performances provides additional evidence that they are, in many ways, distinct from the notions of the dichotomous girl presented in much of the recent girls’ studies literature. They do not represent a consumption oriented, middle-class ‘can-do’ girl, nor do they align with the highly performance oriented subculture girls like skaters, punks, or goths. Their mode of identification is not tied to consuming a particular look, which could suggest that they occupy a peripheral cultural space within youth culture. This could be distinct to this particular group of girls, but I maintain they are more representative of the large majority of Canadian

working-class girls who, because of their lack of affiliation with a subgroup or style group, remain off the radar of popular culture and academic interest. Further, they are not living as dependent children – the second requirement of becoming a teenager. These elements combine to keep them on the fringe of dominant society. Their peripheral status, however, also reveals an important form of use-value. The girls create their own value systems for identification, based on friendship, shared history, and interests. They may not be recognized as ‘appropriate’ female youth but they create highly functional social economies that present a different reading of seemingly recalcitrant young people. This also suggests the continuing significance of class as a cultural concept for group identification.

Being inscribed with a particular kind of categorization begins with appearance, but because looks also incorporate racialized and classed ways of seeing, to be targeted because of your looks incites racial and class profiling. In the next section I show how class as culture, in tandem with gender and race, work together as systems of categorization operating through the institutional spaces that the youth traverse.

Policing the Disadvantaged and Invisible Girls: Social Services, School, and the State

Towards the end of May, in honor of Mother’s Day, staff took the parenting group out to dinner. I was attending the group that day and so the two facilitators, Joni and Rujuta, invited me along. Sam and Donna were the only consistent attendees to the parenting group, in addition to myself, and on this particular day it was once again just the three of us. The girls picked their favorite restaurant, *Red Robin*, a burger chain popular with teenagers.

After we had been at the restaurant for about an hour, I remarked on how calm and quiet Sam and Donna’s babies were. “My baby would be screaming by now,” I said. Sam replied, “that’s because our babies grew up with a different set of circumstances. They have to be out and around people. Your son probably stays at home more and isn’t used to so many people around.” My child was, in fact, at home in the care of my partner. I had brought him to The Center for parenting group but he was acting fussy and I was exhausted so I dropped him off on my way to the restaurant. This occasion of having the luxury to get free time away from my five-month-old baby to enjoy a meal alone would stick out in my mind for months to come as emblematic of how class had an impact on our mothering experiences and infused

differences in our ways of relating to each other and our children. Sam's reply encapsulated this difference with its eloquent description of the experience of social-class stratification: Those who are economically disadvantaged or seen as the 'underclass' are publicly visible out of necessity and from a lack of options for private space. The middle classes have the luxury of deciding when to make themselves seen and have the freedom to decide under what circumstances.

I asked Sam if she felt any stigma from others for being a young mother, and she replied, "...uh, yes, they stare. I say take a picture it lasts longer." Donna chimed in and said people comment to her all the time as to what she should be doing, "I was on the bus giving her [her daughter] just an o-cereal and someone said something about it. That I shouldn't be giving her that." Sam and Donna, as they appeared to be school age youth who were on the city bus during the day, were violating the first social norm of childhood, school attendance. Not attending school represents a taboo that gives the public license to 'parent' such seemingly wayward girls. The Western ideology surrounding youth suggests that young people should be in school, at home, or if over sixteen, at part-time work (Woodhead, 1997). The girls in my study violated each of these beliefs and since they weren't in one of these child appropriate institutions during the day (not employed and not enrolled in school) were more visible and hence easy targets for public ridicule and surveillance, once again fueling their abject status.

The social significance of surveillance on youth, the poor, or the 'other,' is to bring order and control to the population through the deployment of discipline. In one of Foucault's most seminal works, *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he describes discipline not as brute force but as a type of power exercised through particular institutions such as medicine, law, and education. Discipline over society, stemming from state apparatuses, is achieved through a set of techniques, unannounced surveillance being one, which instills self-regulation or self-governance in the subject. Nikolas Rose (1990) extends Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' to describe the disciplining or self-regulating capacities of subjects initiated through the rise of 'expertise' like the psy-sciences (psychology, social work, and child development). The invention of technologies of the self, such as therapy and confession, serve to bring the self – or aesthetic self, to use Foucault's term – into existence. This is a self formed through the very discourses of self making which require the person to constantly be working on him or her-*self* (Skeggs, 2004c). Value

is generated for the person through the appropriate attachment of the self to particular practices and cultural objects that are intended for self-improvement; that is, to make the person psychologically, physically, and socially capable for work and consumption.

Surveillance is an integral part of technologies of the self, such as social work, school, and policing intended to garner self-governance in the subject. In the next section, I'll describe the influence of each of these institutions in marking the girls for categorization, and thus reveal how inscription is institutionalized. The disciplining that is to come from the surveillance inherent to these institutions, however, failed in each case. Such failure highlights the persistence of the class structure and its success at reproducing class divisions. It is this failure of self-governance that most fiercely marked the girls as abject.



Social Service Surveillance and Modern Day Child Saving

When you think about special programs you think that it kinda has something to do with people who failed or are, I would say, people who are very, very, bad.

-Lareina, Filipina, age 17

Being publicly visible as part of one's daily routine subjected the girls to a barrage of surveillance and assessment. This occurred as they went about their everyday activities; as they rode the bus, walked down the street, talked to shop keepers, and for many the largest portion of their day, hanging out at The Center. All of the girls were experienced social service consumers, with the ones who had been in foster care or who didn't live with their birth families even more so. Being involved with social services for any amount of time produces a profound stigma and mark on the body that is nearly impossible to shed

(Besley, 2003). The provincial Ministry of Children and Family Development uses terms such as ‘former youth in care’ and ‘aged out’ to refer to young people who are no longer in government care (no longer in foster care), and it is this way that young people become permanently linked to the state. As adults, these young women’s childhoods will have been documented and archived by the state, only leaving a historical record of scrutiny.

While this type of surveillance happens to all low-income young people who are forced to look to the government for survival, what is particularly damaging for economically marginalized youth is their often unwitting connection to social services early in their lives, which sets the stage for a future of being watched. Young people who come from economically disadvantaged families where their economic and social needs can’t be met will encounter the state either willingly or by force through the judicial system if they choose to live on their own or on the streets. Youth’s dealings with the State often subject them to formal rules and procedures that have the potential to marginalize them even further based on their class status. For example, parental abandonment can be cited for youth who go to school infrequently or are left unattended while their parents work, and homelessness and vagrancy are criminalized and used as grounds for state intervention (Boyden, 1997). The main reason provided by the girls in this study for being homeless at some point in their life was fleeing familial abuse, and this was often from State directed foster homes – a situation confirmed repeatedly by youth homelessness research (Crawford, Whitbeck & Hoyt, 2009; Mann, Senn, & Girard, 2007; Thompson, et. al., 2008). In all of these ways, youth’s economic and familial status positions them to be marked with the label of ‘welfare recipient’ or ‘delinquent’ early on, securing their abject status for years to come.

Positioning the youth at The Center as bodies under study is recorded as soon as they enter the space and they must each sign in on a computer stationed at the front desk. The stigma is developed as the youth encounter the social work philosophy guiding the activities in The Center. Social work practice in B.C. is premised on traditional child welfare thinking grounded in the concepts of distributive justice and individual empowerment (BCCSW, 2009) and in the ideologies of psychology and law (Barker, 1999; Boyden, 1997). Under these perspectives, broad structural influences in shaping social phenomena are downplayed in favor of individual treatments and reform measures (Woodcock, 2012). All of this is

practiced through a medical model where certain behaviors (those that run counter to the requirements of capitalism and middle-class norms) are deemed unhealthy, immoral, or inappropriate for young people (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) and it is the responsibility of the clinician to identify, diagnose, and treat the unhealthy manners or deeds (BCCSW, 2009). The Child and Youth Care (CYC) Association of BC code of ethics (most of the staff at The Center were certified CYC workers) states the following:

Child and Youth Care Practitioners provide or facilitate the provision of supportive supplemental, substitutive or re-educational care to children and youth, for whom the usual agents of development have proven to be inadequate or inappropriate (CYCABC, 2010).

Thus, the assumption is that all people who seek care (as indicated by walking into The Center) are in some way sick or flawed. Pathologizing certain youth as ‘ill’ suggests that a cure is possible through the application of proper treatments such as drug rehabilitation, stable housing, and high school graduation. These are all programs provided within The Center and typical social work ‘treatments’ for undisciplined youth. In this way social work functions as a technology for self-governance. If the individual works on the self, that is, she learns to value and adopt middle-class ways of being, then she is praised. These procedures are also highly classed, emanating from the history of child saving (Lesko, 2001). The idea of the delinquent as the object for child savers was invented as a kind of technology of the self (Sangster, 2002b). In this way, class and self-governance are closely linked as processes for empire building. It is therefore at this juncture that I turn toward briefly reviewing the history of child saving as it relates primarily to the invention of the problem girl. It is through a brief account of this history that we can identify where abjection, as a symbolic narrative from the past, emanates.

The emergence of the problem girl. As we look at the history of the adolescent and the invention of the delinquent, both fermented during the rise of empire and the nation state in North America and Britain at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. To ensure the appropriate moral and behavioral outcomes for boys and girls, the young person had to be turned into something that would necessitate social and scientific management by the State. Hence, the adolescent (the concept and the body) became housed within the medical and psychological domains. A litany of juvenile experts emerged to attend to the troubles inherent to people in this stage of life (Lesko, 2001). Defining adolescence as a biological, developmental stage justified state intervention and management of the lives

of adolescents to ensure a successful transition to adulthood. Psychological discourse provided the platform for government and community monitoring of the ethical and social development of young people, and to actively promote the type of patriotic citizen that would maintain the existing hierarchical social order (Woodhead, 1997): “By the 1940s, ‘normal’ childhood sexuality, and family life were the ones created by numerous child psychologists and psychiatrists, sexologists, and sociologists” (Chunn, 2003, p. 192). This was a childhood of dependence, chastity, purity, and play all linked to a particular white, Western middle-class family form (Strong-Boag, 2002), and functioning in the service of the particular model citizenry envisioned by the growing industrial nation.

The problem girl has emerged out of this narrative largely because poor, immigrant, disabled, and/or non-white youth were not part of the representation of ‘teenager.’ Such young women became the foray of the child saving organizations and were labeled delinquent. Sangster (2002b) puts the beginning of defined delinquents acts, and hence the identification of delinquents in Canada, at 1908 with the passage of the Juvenile Delinquents Act. From the late 19th century onward, the juvenile justice system was assigned the task, not simply of locking up youthful offenders, but rather of reforming the values and behavior of children who had strayed from the prescribed norms of child-like behavior. The imperative was to turn such youngsters into respectable adult citizens who would uphold the moral, social, and economic demands of the state (Comacchio, 2006; Sangster, 2002a).

Identifying delinquents was the work of the child experts and the cadre of ‘child savers’ – social workers, medical doctors, clergy members, and concerned middle-class female volunteers – who based their diagnoses on innate pathologies indicative to the individual, despite ample evidence by the 1930s to the role of poverty and community decay in promoting delinquent acts (Adamoski, 2002). For girls, the label was most often assigned for displays of truancy, running away from home, and above all else sexual promiscuity – including prostitution, early pregnancy, and even ‘lewd’ interactions with boys (Sangster, 2002b).

As psychological and emotional abnormalities were presented as the primary cause of girls’ delinquency, the instigation was often described as family breakdown leading to improper supervision and teaching on the part of parents. Demarcating domestic origins worked to reinforce clear class and

gendered familial norms because it was most likely the girls from families where both parents worked outside of the home and whose financial means were tight who were charged with offenses and watched for future infractions (Woodhead, 1997). Geographical location was also a culprit, as delinquency was most prevalent in the growing urban centers where girls and boys had more freedom to explore city streets and discover the dark side of capitalist expansion – poverty, crime, drugs, and early employment. Invariably the lifestyle of urban youth was in sharp contrast to the prevailing modern image of the ideal child: dependent, protected, segregated, and care free (Strong-Boag, 2002).

Defining delinquency as an individual medical condition worked also in the service of treatment and reform. If wayward, immoral behavior was seen as a disease, it could then be cured. Such treatments for girls took the form of personal guidance and care outside of their home by a morally upright, dignified woman who could teach girls appropriate passive, chaste, modest feminine ways. State-sponsored organizations like Big Brothers/Big Sisters (which are still in operation across North America today) and the Vancouver Children's Aid Society in British Columbia emerged to provide delinquent girls with wholesome recreational activities and supportive maternal mentorship (Sangster, 2002a). Finding so-called delinquents a job or putting them into a skills training program was another part of reform efforts. As working-class young people, they were thought best suited intellectually for manual tasks, which for girls was domestic, clerical, or retail work.

The invention of the 'delinquent' was the counterpart to the construction of the ideal modern adolescent in the 20th century. Further, the actions of child saving organizations demonstrate a capitulation to, or furthering of, capitalism in the early part of the 20th century to create a compliant underclass (Adamoski, 2002). Young people who were marginalized because of race, gender, class, or (dis)ability and were primarily living in cities, were targeted for 'saving'; which meant assimilation into their appropriate lower status role in society. Being the focus of such intervention throughout generations has fueled youth's unequal social position and reinforced hegemonic scripts for appropriate gendered and classed conduct.

The contemporary Western welfare and juvenile justice systems function very much like those of past structures, perpetuating inequality and breeding individualism as the visible effects of broad

structural problems (poverty, racism, poor health, homelessness, addiction) are reduced to individual shortcomings of particular youth (Baines, 2007; Chesney-Lind, 2004; Fine, 1995). Even the same treatments for ‘problem girls’ are in use today by social service and liberal-oriented helping organizations, such as stressing moral behavior and sexual purity along with the trusting care of adults (Chesney-Lind, Morash, & Stevens, 2008; Swadener, 1995).

The erasure of history. In examining the history of child saving we can see where the medical model of care employed at The Center may have originated. It is also evident how the current application of welfare processes inscribes youth as these processes hold up the demands of the nation state. The abjection of young people thus reflects the erasure of this history. In this way social work practice is an example of a New Imperial practice because it takes on its own lived ‘imaginary’ (Anderson, 1991). I say ‘imagined’ because the practitioners execute the rules and policies of their job, yet their guiding philosophy for doing their work is shrouded in mythical, collective and public understandings of ‘doing good’ to help the ‘other.’ This imaginary is of the same vein as the imagined community of the Nation necessary for the rise of imperialism. In that instance, a hegemonic set of ideas bound to moralism and reproduced through affective responses to ‘otherness’ created the belief in a sovereign Nation that needed to be protected from outsiders (Ahmed, 2008; Anderson, 1991).

An example of how the social work imaginary played out at The Center is revealed when looking at the staff’s relationship to the youth. Under the medical model it was very difficult for staff to see the young people as anything but problems. When I interviewed staff members I would frequently ask them to describe the youth with whom they work. Only one person used victimizing language and no one ever called them ‘at-risk youth,’ but their words highlighted the young people’s deficits and challenges, even if the source was explained as structural, which was more often the case. The following quote by Madeline, one of the Youth Transition Workers at The Center, reveals just this sentiment:

The kids that come here, they’re low income, they’re under-educated, they are struggling with substance abuse, they are dealing with racism, and the majority are homeless but they’re the blinded homeless, as so many often are, you know, couch surfing... They’re under nourished or they’re malnourished. I’m sure a lot of them have criminal records, but it’s nothing more than just being drunk in public, it’s those kind of records, it’s not for stealing or breaking and entry...

Madeline presents the politically liberal and empathetic understanding of the environmental factors

contributing to the young peoples' 'problems' that she learned through her social work education. On the surface this is the seemingly correct position to hold, but it actually serves to reinforce power relations inherent to the workings of child welfare between 'us' (the staff) and 'them' (the youth). Such a structural view serves to distinguish social workers from the dominant public who are likely to blame the young people for their situation. Several staff members revealed to me (on different occasions) that when they had spoken to others about their line of work they themselves had faced just this sort of a 'victim blaming' response from them. These staff members added, that in such situations, they often then found themselves compelled to defend the very young people they served. (See Krinsky (2008) and Schissel (2006) for examples of the public condemnation of, and moral panics surrounding young people in North America.) Thus, by holding a sympathetic and structural perspective in regards to the challenges young people face, the social worker is made to be the 'good' individual who has a unique and more informed vantage point with which to assess and explain the 'problems' of the 'other.' In this way his or her politics and choice of profession that function as a form of regulation within the Nation do not need to be questioned.

A second example of how social work functions as a 'New Imperial' practice is how the young people's connection to The Center (i.e., the state) functioned to inscribe them. Walking into the stigmatized space of the social service agency instantly marked those who entered; but in an even more incendiary manner, the interpersonal relationships that developed between the staff and the youth would serve to re-inscribe them as a problem by marking the youth as dependent.

Getting free food and connected with resources was usually what attracted the youth to The Center, but what kept them coming was the companionship, support, and sense of family they received from the friendships they developed at The Center and especially with the adult staff. A desire for connection is a common need, but for youth who are separated from their birth families because of incapability or emotional abuse it takes on extra significance as a necessity for survival. This importance was highlighted repeatedly at The Center whenever a staff person went on leave or took a job somewhere else. I heard many stories from youth about former staff members who, "said they would be there for me but then they left."

Some staff did tell me that they recognized the strong impact they had on the lives of the youth, most of whom had abandonment issues, and said that they didn't want to contribute to those issues. Yet, given that the staff/client relationship is predicated on their employment, this was often unavoidable. When Steven, a very well-liked staff member, was away on sick leave for six months, he remarked to me how surprised he was to have received over twenty cards and letters from youth saying how much they missed him. He said, "I never really realized before that for many youth I was the most important adult in their lives. That really made me think. I should be the least important person in their life."

Social work practice is predicated on the 'workers' building rapport with their 'clients' through creating an environment where the client feels comfortable opening up verbally and emotionally (CYCABC, 2010) – a technology of the self known as confession (Foucault, 1977). Girls repeatedly told me that they were only comfortable talking with a particular staff member, or would name the staff person who had "helped me a lot, brought me out of my shell." To the youth, the experience of sharing private events and emotions to a caring adult *feels* like a friendship bond has been created. Even if the ethics and parameters of the client/worker relationship are spelled out for the young person at the beginning of an association (no one ever told me that they actually did this) affectively, once this happens that person is a friend.

In psychology and social work parlance, developing this type of attachment to a clinical practitioner can be read as dependency (the psychological term is transference (Racker, 2001), and is a disorder that is to be actively avoided by clinicians. This is why rules governing 'ethical' social work practice prohibit staff/client interaction outside of the work context and also impose prohibitions against what a staff member should disclose of their own personal life. These kinds of safeguards are intended to prevent transference or an 'unhealthy' emotional attachment. However, the entire social work model is predicated on the client creating just such a bond. An impossible situation is created: the youth at The Center develop friendships with the staff, which keeps them coming back to The Center, but they are then stigmatized for this by being seen as dependent on the system.

Being positioned as dependent or reliant on the system is one of the final indicators marking the abject working class from the high-achieving, or worthy, working class. Modern-day child saving

institutions operate to ensure that the distinction between the healthy ‘us’ (the middle class) and the sick ‘them’ (the poor) is clearly designated through sanctioning any friendly, human, ‘natural’ affiliation with the ‘them’ by pathologizing human attachments. This arrangement in the most profound sense inscribes the young people who use The Center as pathological. Correspondingly, the paradox begins: the trust the youth put in the staff keeps them coming back to The Center but by continuously going to The Center, they are constantly re-inscribed as psychologized subjects – a subjectivity which often was internalized as a real identity by many of the girls. My field notes are peppered with observations regarding the frequency with which a conversation with a girl would be about her ‘problems’ (their word), despite my efforts to steer the conversation in a different direction. Thus, even as most of the young people who had been going to The Center for a couple of years or more talked about how their lives had improved, they would never shed the abject status as long as they kept going to The Center.

Another way that the close relationships the youth formed with staff reinforced their abject status (and exemplifies New Imperial practice) was that by opening up to the staff and disclosing personal information, the youth subjected themselves to potential intervention by the State. The evening at the restaurant with Sam and Donna that began this section reveals just this process. I’ll continue describing the event where I left off above to showcase this account.

At the restaurant, an interesting moment occurred when the server came to our table to take our orders. Sam and Donna both ordered hamburgers with all-you-can-eat french fries, Joni ordered a sandwich, I had a dinner salad, and Rujuta ordered a small cup of soup. The girls took note of what we were eating but didn’t seem uncomfortable that they were the only ones ordering hamburgers and fries. “Is that all you’re going to eat?” Sam asked Rujuta and I after we had placed our orders. One of the primary reasons why any of the young people attended one of the programs offered at The Center was for the free food. The opportunity tonight to eat out at their favorite restaurant was going to be savored to the fullest. Plus, as I would learn later, it was often the case that the only meal youth would have all day would be one they received at The Center.

Since the staff and I had smaller meals, we finished quickly and essentially watched, and chatted with, the girls while they finished eating. The conversation was typical of what any group of young

female friends who are out for the evening might talk about; small details about each other's lives, what our friends were doing, and Sam's and Donna's favorite topic - their children. At one point Rujuta seemed to remember that she was at work and switched the conversation to a parenting group planning meeting/one-on-one counseling session, asking the girls for topics for possible guest speakers and what kind of resources they needed. The girls responded, describing the current problems in their lives, but the shift in tone from casual girl banter to staff/client interaction was notable.

The conversation turned to nutrition at one point as Sam talked about how there was never any food in her house to feed her son and noted that she was anxious to move out on her own so she could get the kind of food that she wanted. "What would a healthy meal look like?" Rujuta asked her. "Just food. Eggs, rice, fresh stuff, carrots and celery. I want to portion it into serving sizes so when Alex (her son) starts going to daycare he will have his food ready," Sam replied. "Are you feeding him dairy?" Rujuta asked. "I give him yogurt, eggs, cheese. He likes it," Sam replied. "You're not supposed to feed babies that until they're one [year old]," chimed in Rujuta. While the official doctrine according to the BC Ministry of Health used to be to refrain from feeding babies dairy until their first birthday, many pediatricians and nutritionists say that a complete abstinence from dairy is not necessary after six months of age as long as allergies do not run in the baby's family (Health Link BC, 2010). This was information Donna brought in to the conversation. As the mother of a child just a few months younger than Alex, I had had this conversation with many mothers around this same time. Yet for me to disclose that I was feeding my baby dairy would not subject me to potential censure by social workers as it did for Sam.

What began as a night out with the girls during their leisure time, eventually turned into a surveillance session. The girls' dietary habits, mothering, and peer associations were all up for dissection and inspection by employees with connections to the State. And while Rujuta and Joni were friendly or 'friends' with Sam and Donna, the option to spend money on a dinner out with the girls' 'real' friends was not always there. A meal at their favorite restaurant would not be passed up, but events like this had to be negotiated with the mediated relationships the girls had with the staff. All of the girls who frequented The Center were adept at staving off the close scrutiny that comes with being young and in need, a form of self governance. Girls would tell me that they knew which staff members were more permissive of

particular activities and, thus, who could be confided in. They would also avoid The Center if they were not in an optimal physical or mental state, that is, as hung-over or drunk. Both at this dinner and at The Center, Donna would often make a point of talking about the healthy food she fed her daughter, saying, “I don’t feed her any sugar. Not even too much fruit.” She was quick to respond to any outbursts or temper tantrums for fear that she might be seen as an inept mother. Still, the dynamics of being poor complicate the development of friendships with people outside of one’s class.

It is important to remember that the surveillance mechanisms carried out by the staff are forms of ‘governmentality,’ but they come from the professionalization of social workers as agents of the state. Rujuta and Joni were fulfilling the role that the structure presents (the social work imaginary), which is predicated on believing that their work ultimately is ‘helping’ the poor and the disadvantaged, and thus not questioning their day-to-day practices. The weight of maintaining the performance of ‘social worker’ was, however, always omnipresent among the staff at The Center, and the actual person, out of character, would seep out, like Rujuta’s behavior as described above, when she switched from being a ‘young woman out with friends’ to a ‘youth transition worker on the job.’ I had many conversations with staff members who reported feeling the burden of carrying out constant surveillance, but failure to comply with the requirements of the job (such as socializing with a youth outside of work) would result in either colleague censure or job loss. Steven, a youth transition worker, for example, talked about how on several occasions young people had been to his house if he was driving around with them and had to stop home for some reason. Morgan, another youth worker, discussed how she and many of the young people she worked with had similar tastes in music and that she would like to be able to go to shows with them at night, saying, “...it would be nice if we could do things together. Not as staff and youth on an outing, but just as people, hanging out.” This form of regulation within the social work profession functions as its own form of ‘governmentality’ as it carries out the social work imaginary.

Some months after this dinner, I was at the same *Red Robin*, again with Sam and Donna. This time we were all without babies or Center staff, celebrating Donna’s 20th birthday. As we were leaving the restaurant, Sam commented on how she wished other people at The Center [besides myself] would be casual and hang out with them, saying, “...Like Rujuta, if she had a baby it would be totally different.”

Donna remarked, “that’s because we know Ruj through work, she can’t hang out with us.” Sam said that they know me through work too, but as a volunteer and so she didn’t think it was very different. At that point I thought it was appropriate to remind them that I was also a researcher and that I was much older than them. “You don’t seem that much older. I don’t see a difference in our ages,” replied Donna. The conversation turned to the weekend and their plan to go ‘clubbing.’ They invited me along.

School as a Disciplining Agent

I used to be like wallpaper in school. You know, kind of blending in.

-Bianca, First Nations, age 17

As I just described, practices within modern day child saving institutions position young people as subjects of the Nation who are observed in ways that are often hidden in some form of apparently normal parenting or social work discourse and then expressed in more visible forms such as form filling and observations at The Center. Disciplining occurs through the giving or withholding of resources, or through the practices of surveillance. If a youth follows the rules (signs the right forms, shows up to appointments, behaves in an orderly manner) financial and emotional support is dispensed. However, the intended disciplining function of youth oriented institutions—the self-regulating of one’s behavior in line with mainstream social norms, developing reverence for authority, and preparation for the adult world of work—did not occur with the girls in my study. In a profound sense, the very techniques of governance outlined by Foucault had failed to exercise their influence. This failure to discipline and govern was most notable in one of the primary disciplining mechanisms for youth: the school.

Almost all of the girls I interviewed had either left early or were pushed out of high school. This is how Lareina, who is Filipina and sixteen, recalled her experience with a traditional high school upon moving to British Columbia two years prior: “I wasn’t accustomed to making friends or more like I didn’t feel like I was welcomed, or I just felt very alienated and different and so I had to drop out after a week.” Just three of the 22 girls I came to know well had graduated from high school and only two completed school in the traditional four-year cycle. I heard cases of extreme racial discrimination by teachers, bullying by classmates, and academic neglect by the system. One girl who did accomplish this was Lilly, the Aboriginal youth who was now a mother of four, whom we met in the previous chapter. Graduating from high school made Lilly’s situation unique but her schooling experience was typical of the girls I

spoke with, in a word, horrible. Every girl had a negative story to tell me about school. I asked Lilly to tell me about her school experience. This is how she began her story:

My teacher actually told me, my grade 7 teacher told me that I wasn't going to amount to anything. He told me that I wasn't going to graduate, I was going to become an alcoholic, I wasn't going to have a job, I was going to end up on welfare, and I just wasn't going to go anywhere....

Racial discrimination was the norm in the accounts of school the Aboriginal girls retold.

Kimberly, an Aboriginal girl from The Center, for instance, reported: "I was singled out [in school] and I don't know why. The teachers would always, like laugh with the other kids and stuff, at one of the schools like, they didn't like Native kids." The legacy of school being a source of emotional abuse for Aboriginal young people in Canada is long and heavy (Hare, 2003) and it is well documented that working-class youth suffer in mainstream schools (Hey, 2003; Reay & Plummer, 2001; Walkerdine, 1990). Thus, it may not be a surprise that the youth I came to know at The Center, who could all be labeled as 'at-risk' for academic failure, would all see school as a source of pain, frustration, and anger. Their rejection of school in one sense can be read as a form of resistance to middle-class norms and expectations, not unlike Willis's lads in *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1977). But unlike the traditional resistance theory put forward from ethnographies operating in schools, where youth agency is sometimes observed as obstinate behavior or class protection (Fine, 1991; Giroux, 2003), or through an accommodation to the school's classed, raced, and gendered expectations of students (Miron & Laruia, 1998), the girls in the present study sought to recount and resolve race and class conflict from the past. Agency for them meant that attending school was of little interest to them. Since they were already positioned outside of mainstream expectations in most aspects of their lives, rejecting school was one more trouble-inducing event from the past that had already been dealt with. In other words, they did not have to actively work to distance themselves from a middle-class student identity because they were already marked as abject.

None of the girls referred to themselves as a high school dropout and even for the ones who did graduate from high school there was some pride in that accomplishment, but it was not paramount in their self-definition. And while many of the girls reported wanting to go back to school to learn more skills in a particular field, they rarely mentioned college. Finishing high school (it was unusual for anyone to use the word 'graduate') was the extent of most girls' academic aspirations. For example, I asked Tisha in the

ABE program: “Do you think you will finish high school?” She replied, with a shrug, “I guess so, eventually.” Riley, who is Aboriginal and twenty-one, shared a similar unenthusiastic sentiment: “I completed grade 10. Eventually I figure I’ll take some night school or something and finish grade 11 and 12.” School was viewed as an annoying necessity, something that had to be dealt with at some point in the future.

Here again, we witness the significance of conducting an ethnography about girl culture outside of the usual school setting. I was able to observe the girls’ daily lives, which, unlike their same-aged in-school peers, did not revolve around the school day. The girls had different ways of relating to one another outside of the usual high school cliques. They crossed style and age groups, had more interaction with adults, managed their time themselves, made decisions on their own, and had a non-glamorized view of authority (recalcitrant is what teachers, and social workers might call it). In a word, the girls were more adult than youth in school are often permitted to be. What I seek to argue here, however, is that by rejecting school these girls violate the dominant ideology of childhood and once again may be resisting disciplining mechanisms.

Appropriate youth behavior is a fiercely classed concept. Ruddick (2003) recounts how modern notions of childhood are being reframed in the West in a political economy of reflexive accumulation and increased globalization of labor. Privatized costs of social reproduction mean that working-class and poor youth are leaving childhood earlier, while an absence of middle level jobs in times of recession means an extension of childhood for their middle-class peers because they cannot support themselves financially. ‘Youthfulness’ for this latter group extends into their 20s and in some venues a 30-year-old can still be considered a youth (see Boyden, 1997 for examples).

The indifference to school showcased by the girls in this study can be understood within the cultural milieu or habitus³⁵ of working-class subject formation. The girls who lived at home or had contact with their parents revealed a working-class, intergenerational skepticism towards schooling. Michelle, a white girl who was enrolled in the ABE program and had started and then left many schools in the past, shared this sentiment. I asked her if her parents would be upset if she didn't finish school? Her reply was:

³⁵ See Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice* (Trans. R. Nice). Cambridge: Polity.

“Probably not, if I had a job and I was doing something...” Plus, most parents had their own troubles with school as a youth, either leaving school early or dropping out and finishing later. Michelle remarked: “Well both my parents dropped out [of school], and then went back. But they never went to college or anything like that.” This was also the situation for Veronica, an Aboriginal girl in the ABE program:

Veronica: I went to Van Tech, and then I kinda just stopped going to school at the end there, again, so I felt I needed a new, a fresh start. That's why I think I went to so many different schools, and my mom just allowed it. I think if she just said no, she was more strict, I don't think I would be in this spot right now.

Stephanie: Did she finish high school?

Veronica: No.

Stephanie: Maybe it was hard for her to understand.

Veronica: Yeah, I think she gets afraid of school, sometimes.

Veronica's narrative also reveals how class influences parental comfort and skill at negotiating the institutional requirements of school. Working-class parents who may not have the cultural capital necessary to succeed in the middle-class milieu of schooling are not in a position to advocate on behalf of their children (Lareau, 2003).

Many youth researchers have identified that working-class young people put less significance on a formal education because the cultural requirements of the school environment are not available to a working-class youth performance (Archer, Hollingworth, & Halsall, 2007; Bettie, 2003; Walkerdine, 2003). As a consequence, this neglect ultimately emerges as an embodied form of school rejection shaped largely by an opposition to the meanings and values of dominant ideologies that stress mental over manual labor (see Willis, 1977). Further, privileged classes are in a position to make long-term plans regarding their futures, such as investing many years of young adulthood to higher education. Working-class communities, however, burdened by economic insecurity, are tied to the present and limited to short-term goal setting (Giroux, 1983). The result of class differences expressed culturally is the transmission of disadvantage to working-class young people whose failures with formal schooling become internalized and read as a disinterest in educational success.

Failing to attend school and, more importantly, showing little interest in the idea of school, plays a significant role in positioning the girls as a problem: it is the collapse of self-governance which marks them as abject. Unlike middle-class youth or 'future girls' who are defined by their high grades and extra curricular activities in preparation for college applications (Harris, 2004), the girls here don't appear to be

bettering themselves at all for a future adult life of work. A lack of interest in school is read as a failure to work on the self, which at a time of aesthetic self making³⁶ is read as a sign of pathology, a failure to access the proper cultural resources (Skeggs, 2004c). It should come as no surprise then that the girls would generate reactions from strangers such as disgust; the view being that even working-class girls, if they stay in school, are at least trying to improve their situation. However, if we are to follow a progressive narrative, the girls in this research may appear, at least on the face of it, to be doing nothing. This appearance may hold true for the ABE girls as well given that they attend an ‘alternative’ school that meets for only two hours a day.

There are additional ways that past school experiences worked to deny the girls a sense of value. Early negative experiences with schooling prepared the girls for their marginalized social status, as public school is the first place where a child’s worth is measured beyond the family. Racism and classism set up barriers for the girls that made it difficult to learn and led to poor grades, poor attendance, and uncooperative behaviors. The quote below from Bianca encapsulates this process:

Stephanie: Why do you think school is working now and it didn’t work before?

Bianca: Well because all the other students [at my other schools] were smarter than me and sometimes I wouldn’t have time to do my homework, I would have to baby-sit or something like that, or I would be just too tired to do my homework or something. Or it would be too difficult for me and there would not be anyone around to help me, or sometimes I would be too shy to ask for help and so I think the work was too advanced for me. But, sometimes on my good days, I would do really good. I think switching from school to school, at Lincoln High I was just learning about essays and at Sylvania I was supposed to know about essays already, you know, things like that.

Girls like Bianca were, in many ways, forced to accommodate the bad student identity early on and would continue to pathologize themselves as dumb and incapable of learning after they were out of school.

Michelle, in the ABE program, described her ‘learning disability’ matter-of-factly as the reason why she was pushed out of traditional high school: “I have difficulty paying attention and staying focused on long assignments.” Clearly she had learned this explanation for her poor school performance and used a medical dysfunction to form her identity as ‘not academically inclined.’ Whenever math topics or issues involving numbers would come up, like figuring out one’s finances, I would frequently hear girls capitulate to a ‘I-can’t-do-math’ mantra. For example, I witnessed Sam discussing with Girls’ Group

³⁶ Foucault in *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* (1979) discusses the different models of the self. The aesthetic self is formed through discourse. This is a self that is not formed until the language exists to talk about it.

whether or not she would be able to afford moving out on her own and asked the group facilitator to figure out how much more a month it would cost her: when the facilitator said, “It’s an extra \$150 a month,” Sam replied, “Oh, when you break it down like that it’s not so much. I can’t do math.”

The girls’ negative school experiences and self-perceptions as ‘dumb’ played a major part in setting out a path for their public inscription as unworthy, which in turn contributed to their marginalization and eventually secured their abject social position. Ramona, who attended school until grade 10, said in talking about her childhood: “I hated school... I don’t know, school went good for me, but high school didn’t, that’s when I turned bad. I know that. That’s when I started smoking weed and partying.” Ramona, taking on the ‘bad student’ identity, places the burden she feels about her disadvantaged social status on herself. Here we can see the regulating and material role of schooling, as part of an ideology of normativity and an exemplar of middle-class expectations, profoundly shaping these young women’s early experiences of abjection as a highly coded signifier of selfhood.

It is interesting to note, however, that many of the girls who did poorly in traditional high school because of overt racism from students and staff, the rigid structure of the school day, or the curriculum, were thriving in alternative school settings. This is how Michelle talked about her experience in the ABE program:

Michelle: ...it’s good though, the school’s good here.

Stephanie: What’s good about it?

Michelle: Well I’m actually learning it, learning the stuff that I’m doing, and I’m doing good and not like the other schools that I went to, and I’m getting it, and it’s self paced.

For girls like Michelle, their opposition to the regulating mechanisms of school was necessary in most cases for their cultural and emotional survival. I didn’t hear one story from those who left high school early that indicated they felt that staying in school would have been a good thing for them psychologically. Doing well academically in an alternative school provides little exchange-value where graduation upon four school years in a row is the only acceptable path to acquiring the full status of high school graduate within the labor market (Entwisle, Alexander & Olson, 2009; Ou, 2008). When this achievement is viewed in terms of use-value, however, it takes on a different meaning. Since the girls’ working-class background places less importance on school, and disparages outward intellectualism, finishing school at all is what counts. There is a class and, at times, a form of racial solidarity that came

with rejecting the oppressive and hegemonic school setting (even if it wasn't always articulated as such).

Mary, an Aboriginal youth who had left high school and was now enrolled in an alternative high school, talked about the isolation she felt as an outwardly intelligent Aboriginal teen:

Mary: I really hated high school.

Stephanie: What did you hate about it?

Mary: Well, all my friends used to be in school with me when I was younger. But then in high school they all started dropping out so by my grade 11/grade 12 year, I was the only Native in the class. Or they were in Essentials [remedial classes], they're not in – like I was in Physics 11, there aren't any Natives in that.

She went on to talk about how even now, at nineteen, she doesn't have many Aboriginal friends. As a confident, self-assured and articulate young woman, it seemed unfortunate that she was finding it difficult to make friends with other Aboriginal youth. For Mary, and the other girls who were enrolled in the ABE program, alternative school settings proved very useful and almost preferable for maintaining one's status and cultural value. By attending an alternative school, girls could maintain ethnic and cultural recognition as insiders within their social context (being that they left traditional high school and rebuffed formal schooling), and could present themselves as 'not too smart.' However, attending any school program meant they were working towards a high school completion certificate that could be used to gain economic and social capital later. Thus, alternative school enrollment affords considerable use-value to young people beyond what is recognized in traditional exchange economics.

In summary, the conflation of the concept of 'student' with that of 'child' means that when a young person rejects school they are left with no positive social positions to seek. The girls in this study did not identify as students and had to actively resist the negative labels thrust upon them, once again making it nearly impossible to present a self with value. Being a non-student (non-child) led to the social practice of inscription and the 'problem' label. Further, by escaping the primary disciplining institution of childhood the girls are seen as uncontrollable or not in control of their lives, and hence subjects to be feared. Not being contained by hegemonic norms was the central mechanism by which the girls were positioned as abject. It is tragic really that the assertion of independence from disciplining mechanisms is forced upon working-class young people because of the racist, classist, and sexist practices they encounter from institutionalized school and their associated histories. Yet if the use-value of these practices is considered, leaving school is a sign of strength, perseverance, resourcefulness, and cultural preservation.

In this way the girls *are* working on the self in ways that challenge the middle class imaginary in operation in traditional school contexts as they themselves carry the burden of an archaic historical tale. It is, however, like their style performances and attempts at friendships with adult staff, an alternate or peripheral form of self-making.

Police Encounters in Space

Actions by the police bring together all of the modes of categorization that were previously mentioned. Surveillance techniques by the police are compounded with racialized, gendered, and classed notions of youth. The girls were targeted because of their appearance, their age, their non-student status, and their class and racial performances. Classism and racism worked through police encounters to prevent the girls from separating themselves from their bodies and in this way reinforced their abject subjectivity. How gender, race, and class intersect in the framing of young people by the police is demonstrated in this police encounter reported by Veronica:

Stephanie: Have you had any run-ins with the Police?

Veronica: Yeah, just like walking down the street, late, at home with my friends. They would like pull over, cop cars, like five of them, question us and be like, 'where are you going' blah, blah, and take our names, just for walking down the street. I think they judge us by the way we look, so they think something bad is going on, or something.

The girls frequently reported incidents such as the one described above. All of the girls expressed dislike or heavy caution about law enforcement; but the reactions of the Aboriginal girls were particularly fueled by anger and an intimate familiarity with police processes. Every Aboriginal girl had detailed stories to share about police abuse, if not directed toward themselves, then towards other Aboriginal peers. I asked Riley if she or her friends had had any encounters with the police:

I've had bad experiences before...And boys, boys, they get handled pretty rough. I mean a couple of my guy friends have actually got really beaten up, and then they were dropped off in Stanley Park, left there, by the cops. They manhandled me one time, in front of my friend and I was yelling at them, it was actually in the statement that they [the police] wrote themselves.

I heard several stories about Aboriginal young men being beaten up and driven outside of the city and dropped off, although when it came to dealing with the police, being a girl did not offer any protection. Riley went on to describe the prelude to being picked up at a SkyTrain station by the police for public drunkenness (a false charge, she maintained):

[I was at a pay phone] and then these cops are yelling at me from behind, 'get over here, get over here. Hey you.' ...and as soon as I turned around, they kick me across my face, and I go to the ground and they start kicking me while I was on the ground. As I look up, I realize that there's four cops all kicking me.

Episodes of gender specific police misconduct, particularly directed towards Aboriginal and visible minority youth, are widely reported in British Columbia, but difficult to officially charge (Justice-for-Girls, 2009). A report published in 2005 by a B.C. based youth advocacy organization evaluating girls' experiences in prison found that girls are routinely subjected to strip-searches while incarcerated in B.C. youth detention centers (Dean, 2005). Girls are also regularly patted-down by male police constables both while in prison and during police encounters prior to arrest. Riley's story above concluded with just this type of behavior:

...I was like, 'you guys are not allowed to do that, that's a woman's job,' and he's like 'yup, yup, okay.' So, he keeps on doing it and I'm like, okay, this is really uncomfortable, I don't like an old guy patting me down, going through my pockets.

The inseparability of class and race from the female body means that the ethnic and gender performance of 'Aboriginal girl' encompasses all that is to be feared, avoided, and contained in a person, and it is just this intersection of social positions which serves to justify police intervention as a form of 'governmentality.'

Importantly, there is a spatial dimension to this form of policing. The girls' encounters with the police always took place in a public venue, such as a street corner, bus stop, or outdoor park. Hanging out on the street, unattached or boisterously socializing with boys erases any chance of seeming respectably feminine. The working-class performance is enhanced by an outward appearance of tough and dirty (for the 'ghetto girls'), or brash and slutty (for the hyper-feminine girls). Either way, a public reading by default aligns the girls with women of the street – drug addicts and prostitutes. The permissiveness of police intervention is secured by the reading of Aboriginal; this identity position is one of the strongest signs of disgust and has been built from a collective racist and colonialist conscience but is often internalized by the girls:

... there was like a Native sister and brother and the kids would run after them and because they were like really poor, and dirty, and they'd smell like pee and stuff like that, they were kinda like homeless, but not, and so the kids would make fun of them, like the whole school.

This quote is from Bianca who is describing the perception of a First Nations family in her elementary school. The public visibility of the young people, being that they aren't in traditional school during the day, together with the girls being marked as a danger, meant they were positioned to be high targets for police intervention.

It is little wonder, then, that in British Columbia, Aboriginal youth are eight times more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers to be in custody³⁷. Youth have always been targeted as suspect by police since the invention of the delinquent at the turn of the last century (Ruddick, 2003) and an oppressive relationship between Aboriginal people and the police is well documented in Canadian history (Satzewich & Shaffir, 2009). Aboriginal youth make up 6% of the youth population in Canada³⁸ (persons aged 12 – 17) but account for 36% of sentenced youth and 27% of youth held on remand (awaiting trial) (Statistics-Canada, 2008; Stats-Canada, 2008) In British Columbia specifically, the rate is even higher at 44% and 45% respectively with Aboriginal girls surpassing their male counterparts on both measures³⁹. Since the implementation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) in 2003⁴⁰, most Canadian provinces reported a decrease in the youth incarceration rate at the 2008/2009 census (Bala, Carrington, & Roberts, 2009); British Columbia, however, was one of five provinces reporting an increase in rates for Aboriginal youth.

These numbers appear to suggest an increase in female youth violence among Aboriginal girls. However, numerous authors report that youth violence in Canada for both genders and across race has been decreasing over the past decade (Chesney-Lind, 2004; Corrado, Odgers, & Cohen, 2000). The high

³⁷ In 2003 the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) was implemented with the intent to address problems observed with the previous *Young Offenders Act*. These included overuse of incarceration, disparities in sentencing, and difficulty leaving the system prior to adulthood. Since 2003, the police-reported youth crime rate has generally declined, and, although youth court statistics are currently only available up to 2006/2007, these data also indicate declines in youth court appearances since the implementation of the YCJA (Dept. of Justice, 2009).

³⁸ Based on 2006 statistics.

³⁹ Female Aboriginal youth account for 44% of youth admitted to sentenced custody and 34% of youth admitted to remand. Both of these figures are up from 2005 with the remand figure representing a 26% increase for Aboriginal female youth, compared to an 8% decrease in the number of non-Aboriginal female youth admitted to remand. For male aboriginal youth the numbers are 34% sentenced to custody and 25% of youth admitted to remand based on 2008/2009 Statistics Canada (Juristat-Statistics-Canada, 2008).

⁴⁰ These high rates of imprisonment remain despite changes made by Canadian parliament to the sentencing provisions of the criminal code. These changes to the criminal code were designed to address the issue of overrepresentation of First Nations within the sentenced prison population. s.38 (2)(d) of the criminal code states the following: "all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal offenders" (Bala et al., 2009).

incarceration rate for Aboriginal girls instead suggests patterns of law enforcement that are deeply racialized and which may include a relabeling of behaviors once considered status offenses as criminal offenses, and the high remand rate can be attributed to a perception of visible minority girls as worthy of extra police attention and holding (Bala et al., 2009). All of this is happening within a police culture that openly professes to racial profiling and refers to it as 'criminal profiling' (Satzewich & Shaffir, 2009).

It is very difficult to find any confirmation of race or gender specific police misconduct in official police reports. Racism and sexism tend to be codified in institutional practices, as I learned from talking with a police constable who frequented The Center, Constable Mike. Constable Mike was the Aboriginal liaison as part of the City of Vancouver's community policing program. His goal was to build relationships with Aboriginal youth and he had been visiting The Center every Friday for the past two years to help with the daily free breakfast The Center provided. Mike agreed to conduct an interview with me and I brought up the issue of police abusing Aboriginal young people, whereupon he claimed not to know what I was talking about. He did acknowledge that there was racism and discrimination on the force, but prefaced this by saying the police department was just like any other organization with a variety of individual perspectives, saying, "We're as diverse as the general population on some things..." He went on to say that crime and violence among Aboriginal youth that was gang related was on the rise in Vancouver: "...there's 12,000 [Aboriginal people] just in Vancouver alone. The majority of them are youth, or 25 and under, and there's a huge, exploding birth rate as well. You know half the women in the Federal Penitentiary are Aboriginal? Twenty percent of men in Federal Penitentiaries are Aboriginal. I mean something is out of whack." Given these numbers I asked him how many Aboriginal police liaisons there were on a force of 1,300, to which he replied, "I'm the only one." This is indeed a revealing fact about the force's position on institutionalized racism!

The history of stereotyping, violence, and abuse directed towards young people was understood by the girls and expressed as a well-developed geographic awareness as to where to be and not be in order to avoid the police. One of the problems the youth encountered was a lack of places to just be and hang out:

Ramona: They asked me [the police] 'what do you want to do so youths aren't getting up to trouble and hanging around right in front of businesses and stuff.' I'm like, well, first of all,

we go to parks and the cops bug us there, and then we go back to Broadway station [a SkyTrain station] and you're pushing us back to the park, you just kicked us off the park. That's what I don't understand.

Stephanie: So have you had bad experiences with the cops?

Ramona: Yeah, always.

The situation Ramona describes demonstrates how racist stereotyping, gender profiling, and embodied class distinctions come together spatially to position the youth as abject and hence, worthy of surveillance. Ramona is talking about the common places on the East Side where working-class young people hang out. Being economically disadvantaged means that having places of their own to hang out in were usually not an option. The youth designated the street and particular SkyTrain stations as central meeting spots where they could count on running into a friend or where they would meet before going somewhere during the day or out at night. Further, the high importance placed on friendship among economically marginalized youth who don't have their biological families to rely on, and an ethnically specific emphasis on collectivity as opposed to individual self-centeredness, meant that the youth, and especially Aboriginal youth, often traveled in groups. This produced another impossible juxtaposition for many girls; they relied on their group for security, but being in a group put them at risk for more interference because the group was often read through the lens of racial-profiling police (O'Connor, 2008). Riley put forward this dilemma as follows:

None of my friends are part of a gang. We don't consider ourselves a gang, we're like a group. Though, to the police, because there's so many of us, we're considered a gang, even though we're not a gang. Yeah, cause if it's over more than five people, then you're considered a gang.

All of these cultural elements came together to mark the girls as suspect and needing to be watched. The interplay of the girls' cultural displays and actions with police practices demonstrates how the formation of the abject girl is spatially constituted. The gendered, classed, and racialized social divisions that inform police procedures and actions play out in the spaces and places where youth are permitted to be. However, 'youth' only function as a sign of otherness if they're emptied of their historicity. Thus, the Aboriginal girls who carry the legacy of familial poverty and ethnic genocide on their bodies, who have been pushed out of school and denied employment, and who then by choice and from necessity travel together, outside, and in public are made to be the bearers of civic fear. These forms of fear emerge in ways that propagate the idea of a people to be cast out or expelled, in the service of the

state (Ahmed, 2004), which is surprisingly and highly reminiscent of the colonial era. In this way we can see how poor and working-class urban girls in Canada, and especially Aboriginal youth, are *made* and remade as abject by the state, and particularly through the institutionalization of inscription.

Refusing the surveillance techniques of the police was not the only way the girls resisted their imposed categorization. The institutionalization of class inequality also regulates class performances. In order to survive as a working class, socially marginalized girls, the girls must accept the legitimacy of working-class inferiority while at times rejecting these constraints and displaying their working-class identity (Reay, 2001). The girls performed this type of rejection or resistance in different ways. One mode was an expressed solidarity with other oppressed groups. This quote from Riley suggests just such awareness as she describes one of her many incidents with the police:

Riley: there was a homeless guy sitting under a tree with his buggy, during the day, just sitting there, and they're (the police) trying to tell him to leave, and it's a park. I'm just saying, let him stay there. It's like, he's just sitting there. It's a nice day, you can't relax under a nice shady tree? So I started getting mad at them [the police], I was like, 'just let him sit there, he's not doing anything wrong, he's not buggin' anybody,' and so I asked the guy, I was like, 'what have they done to you?' He was like, 'they haven't done much, they were just telling me to leave, and I won't leave.' I was like, 'well, you shouldn't have to leave. I mean, if I come sit under the tree, are they going to tell me to leave?' He was like, 'yeah, exactly' so the next thing, you know, the cop's like, 'if you don't leave, I'm going to arrest you.' I was like, 'for what? Why, I'm just standing here?' He's like, 'it's none of your business.' I was like, 'he's just sitting there.' I was like, 'I'll go sit under the tree right now, are you going to make me move?' So, the cop was like, 'just leave.' Then he turned around and crossed his arms and he said something about being Native, or something, I didn't quite hear him, but I was so mad at him. So I was just like, whatever, I'm just leaving, whatever, because I don't want to get arrested, for nothing. Plus, I don't think they can arrest you for nothing either. They'd look kinda stupid bringing you in, 'oh what are they in for? Oh, I don't know, sitting under a tree!'

As she demonstrates her allegiance to this homeless man, Riley reveals her own identification as working-class, and a solidarity and alignment with those in her class position.

Riley: basically if you're at the bottom of the barrel, you get picked on all the time. Like if you're middle class, you know, it's okay, they'll let you go or whatever, like if you're buzzed, or whatever you're doing wrong, they're just like, "oh yeah, you can go." But if you're at the bottom of the barrel, yup, you're goin' in [to jail], that's it.

Like nearly all of The Center girls, Riley had been homeless at times in the past and had spent several years living in multiple foster homes. Even though she may now be in a better place materially (she lives on her own with government assistance) the affective response of being exiled in the 'new Global City' is a strong feeling of family and protection towards those of one's class.

Some girls would display class solidarity through a more subtle form of racial camaraderie by declaring they were “against racism.” This specific politic was voiced repeatedly, like this declaration from Donna: “...I don’t like racism or discriminatory, judgmental people. It really bugs me.” Or this statement from Alyssa, who identifies as mixed race, is another example: “I have a couple of other ethnic friends that are from different cultures. They’re really cool too. Actually, haven’t figured out where they’re quite from, but it doesn’t really matter, they’re cool people...” Charu expressed a similar view. She was explaining to me the circumstances surrounding her being kicked out of high school for getting into a fight with another student:

Charu: I don’t know what happened, like it just happened so fast. She was bigger than me, she was in grade 11, I was in grade 8. She’s just racist, I don’t like racism, I wasn’t down with it. I got really angry. I was like, ‘you can continue talking that, or you’ve gotta stop.’

Stephanie: She was white?

Charu: Yeah she was white being racist because I had a Native boyfriend. I was like, I don’t care, like I don’t care, I’m a people person really, I’m not really racist.

In addition to declaring her political views, Charu is revealing the class and racial politics of being a socially marginalized young person and how solidarity with the downtrodden functions as a symbolic representation of their own agency. Unlike in traditional resistance theory, however, the girls here aren’t opposing the meanings and values of the dominant culture. The girls’ class solidarity functioned as a form of resistance to the label of working-class inadequacy, thus gaining value for themselves and protecting their class interests. At the same time, solidarity also indicates an acceptance or accommodation to race and class inferiority. Aligning yourself with the underdog is an acknowledgement that you, too, were once part of the downtrodden, but identifying with those who have it worse off than you (as in the case of the homeless man of whom Riley speaks) provides a model with which to assess your own value (“I’m not as bad off as them”) and may serve for some as a crucial resource in gaining self worth.

The Making of the Abject Girl⁴¹: Politics and Power Relations

This chapter has sought to showcase the social and cultural processes implicated in the gendered production of the category of abjection, which is attributed to particular groups in the nation-state and

⁴¹ The title serves as a contrast to the metaphorical/symbolic accounts that are circulating about individualization and the modern girl. See, McLeod, J., & Yates, L. (2006). *Making Modern Lives: Subjectivity, Schooling, and Social Change*. New York: SUNY Press.

sedimented through the practice of inscription. As a reminder, one of the goals of this research is not just to *describe* the condition of how abjection is produced, but also to explain *why*, and *how* it works. How are hegemonic meanings of the girl made, circulated, and reproduced? How do girls become marked by the category of abjection? Here, I've attempted to show how the girls are inscribed for categorization in such a way that they are prevented from separating themselves from their bodies. In this way, I am highlighting the significance of classification systems (like gender, race, and class) functioning at a symbolic level in forming one's sense of self and in determining one's position within a dominant system of inequality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977). The inability to separate oneself from one's body, combined with a repertoire of non-conformist gender performances, meant the girls failed at the project of self-governance. Finally, in this chapter I've demonstrated the ways in which negative inscription was most pronounced and difficult to resist across the range of institutions that regulate the ideology of 'childhood,' such as education, child welfare, and police action. Understanding the processes of abjection helps to explain *why* some bodies and some cultural displays are unvalued while others are unwittingly privileged.

To say that someone is abject means that someone else exists who is not defined as abject and who provides the very foundation for their existence. As Raymond Williams (1977) describes, class "is a relation and a happening" (p.208) and can only exist in relation to other classes and experiences. The establishment of the abject other is essential for power relations because that which exists as a form of underclass – lower, deemed 'less than' – supports that which is above (Ahmed, 2004). In this case, the abject girl has her opposite; that is, the prosperous 'future girl.' The hegemonic girl needs the abject girl for her symbolic, as well as her material, existence. However, as Sara Ahmed (2004) suggests, it is not just about establishing who is above and who is below that is required in defining abjection, but rather that abjection is the affect associated with the below. It is the establishment of disgust towards, and the association of bad with, the abject other that justifies the placement of that other below. The notion that disgust resides below all else and is a representation of the non-human provides evidence of one of the class operations which keeps the power relations as hierarchical with a top and a bottom of the social order (Miller, 1997).

This is evident in how the proximity of abject bodies is read as the cause of spatial, local, and global degeneracy. The ‘invasion’ of others (usually couched as ‘immigrants’) is cited as the reason for the decay of communities, lack of jobs, and the breakdown of the family (Goutor, 2007; Zaman, 2006). Surveys of Canadians’ attitudes towards immigrants reveal that opinions go down and racist attitudes increase during times of high unemployment due to the belief that immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians (Palmer, 1996). In Vancouver, neighborhoods with high concentrations of visible minority groups have lower property values (BC Assessment, 2010), and the moral panic surrounding youth crime across Canada and in Vancouver, specifically associated with gang violence in recent years, targets young people marginalized because of class and/or race (Schissel, 1997). Thus, the symbolic and cultural undervaluing of the abject girl is normalized.

There is another outcome to the affective response of abjection: the regeneration of fear. In *Powers of Horror* (1982), a formative piece on the notion of abjection, Julia Kristeva describes abjection as an insecurity experienced at the individual level that the ‘not’ will come into the ‘I.’ To put this slightly differently, the fear is less of an invasion and more that the ‘I’ will slip into the ‘not.’ Kristeva’s perspective implies that there is a fear that the separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ will dissolve and ‘we’ will recognize our similarity to ‘them.’ The institutionalization of inscription ensures the categorization of the ‘us’ or the legitimate from the ‘them.’ What is seen as disgusting threatens the boundary lines, thereby reinforcing the need to reestablish who is ‘other,’ which serves to re-inscribe the abject. The innateness of boundary marking inherent to institutional policies serves to normalize this practice. For example, regulations governing social work and schooling policies make it not only a violation of rules to fraternize with clients or students outside of the work context but a stark taboo within these fields tantamount to an intergenerational intimate relationship. I experienced this first hand when a staff member who didn’t know I was there to do research scolded me for meeting with youth recreationally outside of The Center. What is the fear? Is it that the young person will physically harm the worker? Or is it that the youth will misunderstand the clinical character of their relationship, and become dependant on the worker? Or is the fear that the worker will discover that the youth are like his or her ‘own’ children? The ‘other’ is like us?

Fear functions to maintain the categorization, the power imbalances, the separation, and the commitment to the power of social roles.

Thus, we are brought to the question of value that Beverly Skeggs (2004c) asks: “How do we escape the dominant symbolic?” (p. 22). If power requires abjection, how do those trapped in the negative symbolic ever acquire value for themselves? In this era of a culture of the self, to be a person means to be recognized, and the display of the self is read as a display of value. The girls understand this imperative as they actively work to redeem themselves in an effort to gain recognition. Gaining recognition and being valued, however, is often a futile endeavor because their gender, class, and ethnic display of self is unvalued. Skeggs writes, “one has to have an identity that is visibly recognizable as having value and respectability in order to be recognized” (p. 30). The value attached to a young woman in contemporary Western society, as she is the symbolic representation for the future potential of the 21st century, does not apply to these young women. Since they can’t accrue exchange-value for themselves, they are resources for others and/or function as non-human boundary markers of what a ‘proper’ girl is. The abjection is the marking they carry from their collective past. The girls themselves are not abject. It is the manifestation of history in the present, yet the failed attempts at garnering value for themselves through efforts to be recognized are often expressed in the present through affect. The girls *feel* the failure of their shared histories. In the next chapter I will show how this feeling is expressed in the present, as place, the self, and affect come together as a historical trace to fix the girls in metaphorical and physical space. The ‘present’ for the girls is where history and class abjection come together in an affective response for recognition. It is to the present that I turn to next.



Photo by: Megan Low 2011



Photo by: Megan Low 2011



Photo by: Megan Low 2011

Chapter Seven

See Me Now! Feeling the Past in the Present: Space, Selfhood, and Affect

In this chapter I discuss the role of affect in the girls' attempts to be recognized in various aspects of their everyday life. I seek to show how what was generally viewed as inappropriate emotional displays were often very legitimate reactions to the experiences of class abjection. Considering affect as a reaction in the present to a history of Empire reveals the use-value the girls employed and a demonstration of their struggles for action and agency within an urban space of constraints. I begin this chapter by describing the emotional presence that was typical at The Center.

On one particular day toward the end of my fieldwork, I was sitting in the resource room waiting to go to a park with Sam and her son. The Center was sparsely attended with a few young people working on computers, and two young men were playing Monopoly on the large table. Staff would occasionally walk by going from the front offices to the back. The lights were off and only daylight filled the space. It was quiet and calm. Slowly, the smell of burning sage permeated the room, followed by a soft cloudy haze of smoke. A smudge was going on in the drug and alcohol counselor's office. This had become a familiar scent to me as the First Nations tradition of smudging was frequently practiced in The Center. A smudging ceremony of burning sage or sweet grass and fanning the smoke across people or objects is traditionally used to prepare and purify a person, place, or thing for a time of openness and truth (Palsley, 2008). A carefully chosen bird feather brushes the smoke through a person's aura, combing away any clinging, negative energies (Borden & Coyote, 2007). The practice of this ancient ritual in the contemporary space of an urban social service office reveals the recognition of Aboriginal traditions working in The Center.

Following the smell of burning herbs and lingering smoke, a wailing sound filled the resource room. A young woman was crying out in long, slow sobs. Sitting there, hearing her cries, I could *feel* her pain, so much so that after a few moments I had to hold back my own tears. A bit nervously I looked around to see what other people's reactions were and to get a guide as to how I should respond. No one reacted or seemed phased by it. Is everyone just being polite, I wondered? Or, a far more distressing thought, are they immune to the sight and sound of pain? Are they so accustomed to living with their own

pain that to hear unnamed cries from someone else would elicit no reaction? Or was I just looking for a socially acceptable – middle-class – empathetic reaction to *another's* pain? Yes I was.

The person who was crying was an Aboriginal young woman. I don't know her individual story or even her name, but as she emerged from the drug and alcohol counselor's office composed, her eyes dry, her face expressionless, it became clear: the smudging, the wailing, the seemingly flat affect from the other youth all signified that the young woman was releasing not just her own pain but the pain of her people – hundreds of years of cultural genocide, murder, and loss and as many decades following of invisibility. It wasn't that the youth in the room were unsympathetic, but rather that at that moment they were letting this person carry the load and speak for them, as they all had in the past and would do again in the future. This was the family that formed in The Center. Indigenous or not, all the young people shared common elements in their histories of oppression, and they all understood pain.

After this incident I was more attentive to the feelings circulating through The Center. The presence of affect was everywhere, and I realized that what was often read as recalcitrant behavior on the part of young people was actually expressions of failed attempts to be recognized. The effort towards gaining value that was exerted through the redemption stories, which I detailed in Chapter Five, were often futile. The youth's feelings were the present, their immediate reaction to ongoing invisibility; and it is invisibility that ties them to a particular space and place. However, this affect was not an expression of individual emotional states; rather, it functioned as a revelation of the past, a historical trace of Empire in the contemporary moment. Sarah Ahmed (2004), in her authoritative work on the subject of affect, suggests that we need to move away from considering emotions as individual, psychological dispositions, and consider how they work to mediate the psychic and the social. Affect functions as a bridge between the individual and the collective. That is, feelings operate by concealing or hiding the histories and social structures that played some part in producing them; however, these processes remain hidden and young women are not only negatively inscribed as abject but are seen as the individual managers of such emotions.

Post-imperial practices enacted through the language and politics of advanced liberalism, such as contemporary welfare policy, provide a space of 'tolerance' for the negatively inscribed girl but

inadvertently can also erase history by failing to acknowledge the history of the nation and the burden young women have to carry those histories. The feelings expressed by the girls, as they are perceived to be their own, are the moments when their collective histories seep out. The ‘present’ for the girls is where history and class abjection merge to form an affective response in a struggle for recognition. It is towards uncovering these affective economies as the present expression of the girls’ collective histories that I move to next. Affect also has a spatial dimension connected to time (Hattam & Zembylas, 2010). The lack of history or a silencing of history is often expressed affectively. Thus, in this chapter I demonstrate and reveal how space operates simultaneously as a place holder or container that holds or ties girls to a place and to a particular class imaginary, which leads to negative affective responses like anger, hopelessness, fear, and loneliness. Remembering that space is a social *and* material relation (Massey, 1999), and that affect moves through space (time), by considering space and place and their relationship to identity, constructed meanings of ‘the girl’ are revealed. In this way, a deliberation on affect not only sheds light on the formation of class emotions and the associated role of particular urban spaces but also provides a way to explore use-value and formulate alternative understandings of working-class girls that challenge the hegemonic conception of them as ‘a problem.’

Anger as Power, Working-Class Rage, and Challenging Emotive Norms: Practicing Girlhood in a Context of Exclusion

Riley: I don't like [foster] care, it wasn't my choice or my mom's, well it was my mom's choice, she just made the wrong choice. I was angry at her and most of the families, some of them were just really a pain. We used to rebel against them and I'd move, keep on moving to different ones until somebody actually cared and was trying to get past why I was rebelling.

[...]

Veronica: I'm kind of fed up with all the problems, everything, about our family, or whatever, I have to go through, I just want to be free. ...problem free, and everything. I feel like it's one problem to the next to the next.

For working-class girls who are marked as a problem and left on their own to struggle for survival, there is a lot to be angry about. Anger was always swirling through The Center, but was rarely ever expressed as such. It would come out in sudden bursts, such as “that’s not right!” in response to the actions of a staff person, or seemingly unexplainable government housing rules or the rare screaming match between two girls over a dissed friend. Most often, however, anger seemed to be interpreted by

Center staff as ‘obstinate behavior,’ particularly for the girls. Examples of behaviors warranting this diagnosis included: speaking too loudly, not showing up for appointments, missing scheduled meetings with social workers, not speaking ‘politely’ to staff, and dressing ‘inappropriately’ (wearing sexually provocative clothing.) The staff’s consternation at particular behavior suggests they could not always escape the social work objective of trying to transform working-class people into adopting the language, mannerisms, and values of the middle class. If we are to look back in time, social work has had an important role in shaping the post-imperial landscape by carrying forward an ideal of the middle class as a dominant group in the 21st century. Ultimately then, one could argue that the anger within the youth becomes the basis for the ‘retraining’ and reform that is the underlying purpose of The Center as a social service space. This directive is paramount in covering and pathologizing affect as an individualized expression. Anger is often seen as an emotion that is not permissible for girls and particularly girls who are subject to state intervention.

One story that articulates this point revolves around Becca, a Center regular. First Nations elders were visiting The Center for a special program and she had helped to prepare a big salmon feast for the occasion. After everyone had been served, all of the food was gone without Becca having received any. Becca became very upset by this and started yelling and crying in the kitchen. A couple of staff scurried to find some pasta in the cupboard to make for her in an effort to quiet her down and contain her outburst, but mainly people just seemed annoyed. A staff member remarked, “Sometimes we run out of food, she knows that she doesn’t need to cry about it.” This remark was uttered in the customary manner of a middle class adult whose child had embarrassed them in front of dinner guests. But in this reaction, the staff missed an opportunity to read her anger as pain—as an emotional display of class grief; that is, the pain of never having enough, the frustration resulting from not having control over your life, and the shame of having to rely on other people for basic sustenance because your ‘real’ family is just not there. It is in precisely this moment that we can witness directly what a history of abjection looks like when it is placed on a child or young woman. It is class affect emerging in the present.

Much of child psychology over the past two decades has been dominated by the dictum of diagnosing, treating and containing children’s anger (Smith & Furlong, 1998). Schools, juvenile detention

centers, social service arenas and those charged with policing the poor are taught anger management interventions in an effort to redirect this seemingly inappropriate affect. The following passage from a recent publication on child psychology is typical of the directive:

Anger and its expression represent a major public health problem for children and adolescents today. Prevalence reports show that anger-related problems such as oppositional behavior, verbal and physical aggression, and violence are some of the more common reasons children are referred for mental health services. . . . Commonly used therapeutic techniques include affective education, relaxation training, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving skills, social skills training, and conflict resolution. These techniques, tailored to the individual child's and/or family's needs, can foster the development of more adaptive and prosocial behavior. (Goldstein, et al., 2007, p. 2).

Clinical efforts are placed on managing the anger of youth, and containing, covering, and hiding the affect because their anger is something that *we*, the professionals, fear.

The explosive release of affect by an abject youth is not tolerated in polite company. Youth anger in the mainstream is presented as cause for alarm. Headlines like, *Skyrocketing Youth Crime Distressing* (Hookey, 2009), or *Youth and Random Violent Crime Appears to be Escalating* (CanWest News, 2007), conflate violence with youth and present anger as a personality trait that needs to be redirected, as in the common refrain: “she has anger issues.” This, too, is an extension of the history of class and gender oppression in the West. Holmes (2004) traces the Western discouragement of anger to the Victorian era where rationalization subsumed passions like rage and anger; this aversion was predominantly visible only in North America. Further, it is oppressed groups and particularly women who have been persuaded if not forced to suppress their passions. Like the ‘hysterical’ women in Victorian Vienna whom Freud diagnosed and ‘treated,’ (Peter, 1988) or the lewd, ‘overly sexed’ working-class women of the 19th century in North America who were defined as such to mark the distinction and hence the power of the upper-class women (Skeggs, 1997; 2004a).

In this study, the anger of the young people can be looked upon, in part, as a long and unending history of colonization in a post-colonial moment. Anger is a reaction to cultural imperialism and colonial discourse positioning working-class girls and girls of color as the ‘other’ and less than worthy (Hattam & Zembylas, 2010). In a post-settler society like Canada, where imperial gains in land, economic control, and cultural dominance have come at the expense of indigenous and low-income communities, anger among subordinate groups is a likely response. However, the girls rarely expressed anger towards the

dominant society (this may seem obvious given that expressions of anger rely on the power relations circulating in a particular situation) (Brown, 1998). Rather, the affect of Canadian middle-class cultural imperialism for these working-class girls was internalized anger in the form of pain. This is the feeling that results when history is erased or obliterated and all that one has to explain one's pain is what seems like unbridled emotion—or what some have called, working-class rage (Hey, 2003; Reay, 1997; Walkerdine, 1990). For even if a girl had an outburst, as in Becca's example above, it ultimately was redirected on herself even as it was initiated from past memories. Many of the girls' expressions of pain (through anger or sadness) were connected to their childhoods. These examples further suggest the affect of pain from the past coming out in the present:

Riley: And that's me and my daughter [who's now in foster care] on her second birthday. Look how happy I was. Now I look at it and I feel so bad, I always feel so bad.

[...]

Sam: I want to make it better for the youth, to grow up not so messed up and confused and mad and stuff like I was, because it - my cousin, he was in foster homes and he, I know the way he looks, it's really sad just to see that, I mean, he doesn't get out much and he's the active young kid, he skateboards.

[...]

Ramona: ...she [her older sister] said I looked scared of the foster parent all the time. I was like, 'you can see that'? She's like, every time he yelled, you looked so scared and sad. I was like, 'maybe because of his tone of voice.' I still don't like that tone of voice, or the grabbing on the face, I don't like that shit, and now I don't take it anymore.

This last quote from Ramona reveals how the pain of her childhood has been transformed into anger. Being 'tough' is a large part of her persona because she is one of the 'ghetto girls,' but as her quote demonstrates, acting mean is an expression of her pain. Such misrecognition of the meaning behind aggression or anger was true for all of the girls and is why wearing the badge of 'former youth in care' operated as a status symbol in The Center and being 'from the streets' (having been homeless) was a requirement for legitimacy. A considerable amount of social capital could be gained by being tough and street-wise.

Cali: I'm not just like some person who's sitting down judging other people, I walked in those shoes, I've lived on fucking Hastings [a notorious street in the 'bad' part of the city]. Like, I've been through the whole... I'm so hard-core, you know?

This quote is from Cali, who is white. Cali, not being an ethnic minority, had to exert her class affiliation with her oppressed peers. Associations of this sort functioned as a kind of working-class identity for the youth who were most positioned as abject, the Center girls. In the tangled prose of my field notes I have numerous accounts of young people having mild outbursts in the resource room, an occasional screaming match between two youth, and many accounts of complaining to one another (or to me) about some government bureaucracy. What I observed most frequently, however, was directives from the staff trying to convince youth to do, or say, or act in a certain way. This excerpt from my field notes reveals this situation:

I was in the resource room today and Monica and John were on the floor. Kimberly had just come out of Sandra's office holding some papers. Kimberly looked tired and exasperated. "Be sure you call her," Sandra said putting her arm around Kimberly. "Yea, ok," retorted Kimberly. It looked like Sandra had given Kimberly some government documents or forms that needed to be filled out. Then John was talking to two girls I don't know and to Edward. He was trying to convince them to go to a community event for National Aboriginal Day. They did not express much interest or enthusiasm... Sometimes it seems like all the staff do is try to get the youth to 'do' something, they try to 'mold' them. Sometimes the youth respond but usually they just seem annoyed. Each party assumes a parent/child role (June 16, 2009).

Thus, all of the recalcitrant attitudes expressed as irritation and disobedience, the "I don't give a fuck" posture that so many youth workers reported to me, can all be understood as an expression of pain stemming from a lack of history.

Anger expressed by the girls can also be looked at as a form of resistance. This was clearly the case in the one area where the girls did direct anger towards the state, their anger and frustration with social workers and the foster care system. It would come up often in my conversations with the girls and being 'in care' was frequently discussed as if it were a prison sentence or a rite of passage. "Yea, I did my 9 years in care. It was horrible. I don't know how many placements I went through. It was just endless," said Sam. Or, as Ramona recounted, describing what she was told by the state about her birth mother and her current experience of living in government housing:

Yup, they said she was dead, and I found her in Vancouver. It's crazy, that's why I hate care now. I hate it, that's why this house, the Annex [a low-income house operated by the province], it feels like care so badly, like notes everywhere and everything. We're like, this is supposed to be our house, let *us* learn to be independent in this house, we don't need signs reminding us anymore, it looks like a foster home. We actually said something, so they're listening to us now.

As Ramona expresses her contempt for the government's control over her life, she also reveals the camaraderie that developed among her housemates. The house is for formerly homeless youth who have been in care, so they all shared a similar history, and her use of 'we' in describing their actions suggests a sense of empowerment they found through coming together as a collective to demand a better living situation.

Ramona's statement also suggests that a critique of social workers and the foster care system can be read as a structural awareness and understanding among the girls' about their life challenges. The protests suggest elements of resistance in the accommodation and offer an example of the dialectic of working-class identity. Since the girls must rely on social services for their survival and in this way capitulate to their inferior economic status, disparaging the demands and expectations of social services and using state authorized help to their advantage is one way to restore agency. The objections also provide a way to voice their resentment at being dependent upon the system. As Mary, an Aboriginal youth living on her own under a Youth Agreement described, being impoverished prepares one for a particular skill set, "...you learn how to be poor. You don't learn how to get out."

Thus, anger on the part of the girls can be looked at as an affective expression of pain attached to the history of colonization and the cultural politics of working-class abjection and ultimately as a way of bringing the carrier of anger/pain into public awareness. Anger makes the girls visible. Anger is a demonstration of the girls' refusal to give in, and in this way functions as a form of use-value and a display of agency.

No History, No Affect

If anger is one side to the expression of pain, then the other side is no expression at all. This may be a troubling thought to the middle-class viewer who has been conditioned through the preponderance of confessional platforms (like the therapist's office and daytime talk shows) that expressing one's emotion is the requirement for sound mental health (McLeod & Wright, 2009; Peck, 1995; Skeggs, 2004a). For some of the working-class girls in this study, however, to feel nothing functioned as a form of survival. There is little to be gained for a girl who outwardly weeps from memories of her childhood. She is seen as vulnerable and weak and risks inciting more emotional pain as her calls go unnoticed. Perhaps this is why

the affect that was most prominent among the girls in this study was the lack of affect – what often seemed like a flatness, nothingness, or simply a blankness.

Michelle: ...if something makes me mad, I get really mad, but for the most part I don't really care about much.

[...]

Bianca: I would sleep all day and not go to school, to avoid things.

Statements like these were very common among the girls. There was a sense that they had conditioned themselves not to feel, or at least had learned the value in remaining controlled and tempered. Most girls, once I got to know them, would speak openly about their lives but without the accompanying emotional commentary that one would expect from a teenager eager to talk about herself. The guarded and measured way with which the girls would tell me stories took some getting used to, such as the time that Alice told me about her brother who had been shot and killed a month earlier in a high profile gang incident in Vancouver. It occurred in the spring of 2008 when several people had been murdered in the city during a string of gang-related violence, and the endless media reports had heightened the public consciousness and fear of gangs and guns. Alice said she never missed school (she was in the ABE program) after the incident and I asked her if they discussed her brother or gang violence in her class.

Stephanie: Have they talked about it here at your school?

Alice: About?

Stephanie: The shootings?

Alice: Just like, oh wow, another, you know, shooting, or something, because it's on the front of the newspaper sometimes.

She might have still been in shock related to the incident, but her tone and mood (like in all of our conversations) were measured, contained, and expressionless. Is this repression, or the response of someone who has been born into loss and has learned not to feel? As a working-class Chinese Canadian girl who grew up with a single mother and at seventeen had lived in four different places all within one square mile, Alice had learned that there was no narrative to explain her hard life or her pain. This is the sentiment of no memory, the affect of a lack of history: no feeling.

Most girls had large gaps in their memories of early childhood. For the girls who had been in foster care there was a sense that life began once they got out, as the stories they would share were generally after their time in care. Almost no one had photos from early childhood; I learned this when

they expressed excitement at being given a camera to take pictures that they then could keep. This absence, combined with being taken away from one's birth family, meant I didn't hear childhood narratives in the traditional sense: like, "on the day I was born..." or "when I was little I wanted to..." – the kinds of stories that older children and young adults retell to make sense of where they came from and who they are now. This is what it means to be 'born into loss.' From the beginning of their memories, most of the girls were trying to forget their past. They were starting from a place of exile.

Ahmed (2004) reminds us, however, that a lack of memory is not because one has simply forgotten or willingly chosen to repress one's recollections. Rather, it is the result of colonization and cultural imperialism, which erases history (at least the histories of working class, indigenous, immigrant, and ethnic minorities) and undermines our cultural memories as part of the project of imperialism. Through the public erasure of the history of empire the pain of being born into loss and abjection (which for the girls turns in to no feeling at all) is put on each person for her alone to bear.

The neo-liberal individualizing of affect means that to not display the 'correct' emotion signifies a failure of selfhood or an inability to become the proper individual (Skeggs, 2004a). To display a flat affect or no emotion is the incorrect response – and continues to mark the girls as abject – in an era of identity politics where the hegemonic discourse valorizes the expression of one's pain as the legitimate form of feeling. However, it is only the pain of the middle class that is permitted to be expressed (Gagnier, 2000). Skeggs (2004a) also recalls how the contemporary fascination with affect among the middle class, expressed as a form of resentment, is used as a way to reclaim power. Their pain is used for political recognition by creating a national affect of loss and sentimentality. Yet the pain is theirs and theirs alone. This is, once again, a form of class imperialism working through culture, because it is the middle class who circulates the use-value of this particular affective economy. It is the feeling generated by the class imaginary that gives the powerful their power (Ahmed, 2004).

A lack of history has spatial effects as well that are expressed affectively. Feeling 'out of place' can be connected to class disgust, spatial exclusion (no place to go), and a feeling of worthlessness. The young people internalize the feeling of being inscribed as worthless and it has a spatial outcome. Mary, who is nineteen and Aboriginal, is one youth in particular who stood out because of her recognition of the

past. Her story articulates the process of the history of empire coming together with space to produce an affective response among the girls. In the narrative below, Mary attributes the difficulties she encountered as an Aboriginal youth to Canadian colonization and classism.

Stephanie: What's hard about being a teenager, either for yourself or what you see among your friends?

Mary: Just not getting, I don't know, it's really hard, there's not a lot of things that you can't do. Like if they had an all Native high school, that would be perfect, then more people would graduate because there's just a lot of stereotypes, a hundred different reasons why they don't... I've been looking for a job since June. A lot of getting out of poverty is the biggest thing. It's really hard, it's really hard for anybody. I've been working on it for 2 years.

Stephanie: What is it about? Have you've experienced discrimination?

Mary: Yeah, there's that and there's things that they teach in school. Like, they teach it by the book and the books are really outdated and the knowledge that they have, it all glorifies Canada and what we've done and meanwhile they've got this whole skeleton in the closet. Like, there's a lot of people my age that aren't Native and don't even know what a residential school is. Why not? You know, that should be – like America has Black history month, how come Canada doesn't have Native history month? They don't know anything about Native people.

The fluency with which Mary articulates class and race politics was unique among the girls. For this reason, I was quite excited to meet her and spent a lot of time trying to discern what allowed her to have such a distinct political consciousness. She did not have more formal education than the other girls. She, too, had started and then left many schools and was about to enroll in an alternative high school to get her G.E.D. when we met. Like the other girls she left her birth family when she was young, 12 years old, and lived with relatives and friends. Currently she was on Youth Agreement with the Ministry of Children and Family, which means she is in government care but living on her own. What did set her apart from the other Indigenous girls was that she grew up in the Interior of B.C. on the Nak'azdli Indian Reserve. Her family is from the Dene tribe and members of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. She was very knowledgeable about her culture and even speaks some of her native language. This alone is a unique feat for young Indigenous people and specifically for “urban Indians” (the term frequently used by First Nations people to refer to Aboriginal people who are living in cities as opposed to reservations or on the land). I assumed that living on a Reserve would enhance one's cultural and maybe political knowledge. However, Mary corrected me that this was not the case. The overwhelming effects of cultural genocide present on the Reserve, like poverty, drunkenness and death, distract time and attention away from analyzing one's circumstances. What did not need to be taught to the youth on the ‘Rez,’ however, was the impact of residential schooling. Parents and grandparents on the reservation who had been subjected

to residential schooling received money from the Canadian government under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement⁴².

Mary: Our grandparents would wake up in the middle of the night and be really scared and just come downstairs. I'd say, 'what's wrong grandma, why are you awake so late?' She'd say, 'I just had a really bad dream about the school I went to.' And she'd tell me about the school she went to, and a lot of our grandparents did that.

Mary took pride in her culture and recognized that it set her apart from other youth her age. She attributed her success and political awareness to her cultural astuteness as she described her Aboriginal peers in the city living like they're still on the Reserve, "I consider East Van the biggest Reserve in Canada....There's a lot of Natives, a lot of them are on welfare and in trouble, it seems a lot like a Reserve." In describing the city as a modern day Reserve, Mary is illustrating the link between empire and space as a historical trace. She also articulates the feeling of worthlessness experienced by her peers, which comes from the space (the city as Reserve), when she describes the situation of Aboriginal people living in East Van. Thus, through Mary's narrative we can see how she feels less out of place and more emotionally in control as compared to the other girls and particularly Aboriginal girls because she is able to connect her affective responses of pain and frustration to their historical roots. The main idea that I wish to communicate here is that a lack of history has spatial effects that are expressed affectively, even if (and we can see this in Mary's case) the affect is no feeling at all – flat, nothingness.

Another result of a loss of history is having no connection to a space. The affective response might be no emotion or what Jameson (1991) describes as 'existential bewilderment' – the resulting feeling of loss at one's inability to position oneself within space. In the next section I'll describe this spatial affect as I observed it as a form of placeless-ness.

⁴² The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement is the product of negotiations launched on May 30, 2005, by the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to acknowledge the legacy of Indian Residential schools and to provide compensation to former students in the schools in recognition of the harm they experienced in the schools. The payment provides \$10,000 for the first year and \$3,000 for each additional year of attendance at a school. Those who were 65 years or older as of May 30, 2005, were eligible to apply for an advance payment of \$8,000 until December 31, 2006. Financial monies came from the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church, and the Federal Government. In 2003, the Federal Government and the Anglican Church reached an agreement that committed the church to a cap of \$25 million compensation. Then a new agreement was renegotiated in 2006 that put the church's maximum contribution at \$15.7 million. The Anglican Church operated 26 of 80 boarding schools attended by Aboriginal people from the mid-19th century into the 1970s. In recent years, hundreds of Aboriginal people have sued the Church and the Federal Government, which owned the schools, alleging physical and sexual abuse (Sison, 2007; United Church of Canada, 2010).

Spatial Affects: Loneliness, Anxiety, and Nostalgia for Home



Many of the girls maintained a unique ‘outsider’ relationship to the spaces they were from that became evident as I went on go-alongs with them. It ended up that I only went on go-alongs with girls who had lived in the same East Side neighborhood for most of their lives (see Appendix A). Rather than pointing out prominent city landmarks, the girls would take me to ‘secret’ locations (invisible to the casual onlooker) and spots that were personally significant to them, such as a playground where they used to play with their father or grandmother, or a current favorite park where they hang out with friends at night, or a side street with nice trees and a large painted mural (graffiti). The girls knew their neighborhoods well and moved comfortably and confidently as we walked around in the afternoon. Thus, I was struck when these same girls voiced fear of their home spaces:

Stephanie: Are there places in the city where you won't go?

Riley: Well, I kinda know the areas to stay away from... it's mainly by Victoria [a street in East Van.], like down that way, by after First [street], kinda area. There's a lot of cops down there.

[...]

Ramona: ...I still look around [after being beaten up by her deceased boyfriend's rival gang], I don't hang around in the areas I used to. It makes me nervous.

Stephanie: Like?

Ramona: Broadway station. [in East Van.]

[...]

Bianca: Sometimes it can be scary walking home. I take more public places to go home.

[...]

Cali: It's hard to find space in the city, it's really hard.

[...]

Alice: I don't go out as much. I don't think anywhere is safe, like not even home. Just gotta be more aware.

Each of the quotes above demonstrates the girls' experience of space in the city. Riley is talking about the places she felt excluded from, not the bourgeoisie spaces of downtown or the West Side, but the areas on the East Side, her 'own' neighborhood where police surveillance was likely to occur. Ramona and Bianca, too, mention places to avoid on the East Side, which for them are defined by how much fear they feel in the space, and Cali and Alice reference the problem of having no place to go, no home, and no place to be. Each of these representative quotes references the occurrence of placeless-ness and geographic exclusion that was experienced concretely as well as affectively for the girls.

In this section I'll attempt to tease out each of these spatial affects, which collectively work to objectify and abjectify the girls through space. Establishing the 'other' is the first step in spatial exclusion as it solidifies the categories of difference that are then spatially enforced (Sibley, 1995). Social exclusion for the girls was secured through a negative social imaginary about the urban, in this case the East Side of Vancouver, and what kind of people occupy that space. Stigmatized places become seen as containers or attractors for stigmatized people (Wimsatt, 1999), with young people (particularly teenagers) most often representing the pinnacle negative representation of the space (Aitken, 2001). This geographic exclusion becomes part of the spatialization of youth culture as it operates at a symbolic level.

To understand this process in the current case, we can begin by considering the dialectic of space as described by Lefebvre (1991b), which explicates how political and economic processes expressed through the establishment of public and private space construct the girls as 'other,' initiating spatial exclusion. In *The Political Economy of Public Space*, David Harvey (2006b), following a Marxist spatial analysis, discusses the 'embourgeoisement' of Paris during the Second Empire (the mid 1800s). This was a strategic urban design intended to conceal class relations and transform public space away from the body politic and make it reflective of imperial power, military domination, and bourgeois affluence. The city center was refashioned as a 'commodity spectacle' to reach these goals and the new boulevard, with its cafés, retail shops, and sidewalks, was key in this process. Streets would no longer be neutral public

spaces – with the potential for mass revolt – but highly decorated, architecturally pleasing, ceremonial spaces to display imperial might. In this way, private space (i.e., the café) and public (the street) became mutually dependent and supportive of each other and inherently operated to control what constituted the public.

From this Parisian example envisioned in the mid 19th century by Baron Haussmann⁴³, a model for the design of cities in the West was established that was contingent upon pinning public and private space together. Public space, now, only exists in relation to private and commercial space. This is why urban renewal projects, rather than inducing a greater degree of civic engagement across class, tend to instill class opposition as the working class suffers the continual engulfing of its space for middle-class interests. We can see this process happening in Vancouver with the redevelopment projects occurring in the DTES and high property values throughout the city that lead to increased gentrification of the East Side and a displacement of poor residents to South Vancouver and the eastern suburbs (see Chapter Four for a review of these policies).

The porous boundary of public and private space tied to the spectacle functions well as a means of social control both indirectly and through public and private surveillance mechanisms. The poor and social ‘undesirables’ are not permitted to lounge in the café or stroll the street casually window-shopping. Police, surveillance cameras, or private store security will arrest or at least hassle anyone who seems to be loitering in public without the possibility of making a financial contribution (through production or more likely consumption). Thus, who becomes the ‘public’ and has the right to occupy public space is defined along class lines. The result of the ‘right to the city’ being a bourgeois entitlement is the creation of a distinct ‘other’ who is ghettoized and stands in contrast to the ‘public.’ The mere sight of the ‘other’ in most designated ‘public’ spaces produces fear and anxiety among the ‘public’ (Wimsatt, 1999) such that

⁴³ Baron Georges-Eugene Haussmann was commissioned by Napoléon III between 1852 and 1870 to renovate and modernize Paris. His work became known as the *Haussmann Plan*. Though work continued until the end of the 19th century, it is often referred to as the "Second Empire reforms." The project encompassed all aspects of urban planning, both in the centre of Paris and in the surrounding districts: streets and boulevards, regulations imposed on facades of buildings, public parks, sewers and water works, city facilities, and public monuments. The planning was influenced by many factors, including the city's history of street revolutions (Art History Archive, 2007).

excluding the 'other' occurs almost naturally through the engendering of affect. The result of the creation of the city as a commodity spectacle for the interests of the wealthy is the reassurance of the 'public's' safety. This safety is exercised through the removal of the anxiety producing 'other' and is maintained as a top priority for the state for the continual operation of the economy. Disgust in the 'other' justifies the control over those who constitute the non-public (Massey, 1999).

This is how space operates as a form of exclusion and how the three parts of Lefebvre's (1991b) spatial dialectics interact to produce a political economy of space. Space, in this way, does two things in relation to youth spatial exclusion: it marks the youth as *other* for being the non-public in space, and then gives the *us* power in our conviction that *we* are the public by engendering the affects of fear and disgust at the sight of the 'other.' This is why the girls felt excluded not from the bourgeoisie neighborhoods of the West Side, but from the public places in their own neighborhoods where they knew that their mere presence would be met with extra police surveillance.

An example of this process and the commodification of public space is a site in this study called Broadway Station. Broadway Station is a busy street corner in the heart of East Van next to a SkyTrain (monorail) station. Broadway Station is a half-block area lined on one side and around the corner with fast food eateries, retail shops, and cafés. The street-facing side has two bus stops. The primary purpose of this arrangement from an urban planning perspective is to accommodate people riding the public, yet privately owned, mass transit SkyTrain system. As people exit the train and descend down an escalator they can run into a shop or grab food on the go and then wait for a bus. This area also receives a lot of foot traffic as it serves as the unofficial entrance to busy Commercial Drive in the East Side and is an intersection for two major Vancouver streets. On any given day at most hours of the day groups of people can be found gathering around this corner. Most of those who 'hang out' at Broadway Station, however, are not commuters going to and from work or shoppers out for a stroll, but homeless people, economically disadvantaged young people, and primarily Aboriginal youth.

For the youth in this study, Broadway Station had a long history as a meeting place. It's a convenient location to connect with friends before going off somewhere else or to meet people who are coming in from the suburbs on the SkyTrain. Nearly all of the youth at The Center utilized this area as

their gathering space, and it's fair to say that all of the Aboriginal youth did so at some time. From the young people, I heard various nicknames for this location such as the 'Indian Band Office' or 'The Welfare Office;' these terms served to signify the large presence of Aboriginal youth, or 'the Blenz Gang' because there was a Blenz Coffee Shop on the corner. Other people called it 'Commercial and Broadway,' referencing the official name, or just 'Broadway.' Here is Ramona describing the historical significance of the space for her peer group:

Ramona: Broadway Station, that's where you will find everyone who comes here [to The Center.]

Stephanie: How long has it been a meeting hub?

Ramona: Apparently it's been going on, like people have been hanging out there for, I know people, like adults, who I call uncle and dad all the time, they're like, '15 years, you guys weren't here, we were here, drinking our coffees, smoking our cigarettes.' I'm like, really? Yeah.

Stephanie: What do you think is the draw?

Ramona: I don't know, it's just a meeting place, that's where people go to meet but they could be drunk, sober, whatever.

Her last point suggests that for many young people, Broadway Station was an accepting, familial location where you could count on running into someone you knew and would be accepted in whatever condition you were in at the moment. This experience of the space, however, stands in stark contrast to the reputation of the area as a place with rampant drug use and drug peddling, violence and fistfights, and loud boisterous behavior. Here's how Carmen, an Indigenous social worker from another youth social service agency, described the public perception of Broadway Station:

Carmen: ...during the day, you see drug dealers out, you know, in broad daylight. You know, they're not scared any more and the youth are down there because, depending on what's going on in their lives, they don't know anything else, unfortunately, for those who do hang out down there, that's what they know. It's easy, it's a meeting place and then they go out and do something from there, parties, or whatever. I look at it and I see dysfunction, I see it as something that I turn my head to because it doesn't make me proud. The behaviors don't make me proud, I don't like being associated with you.

I spoke with shopkeepers in the area as well and they saw the site as the epicenter for all that is "bad in the city" and a place to fear, day and night. The city responds to these concerns with a visible police presence and/or private SkyTrain security personnel positioned around Broadway Station, and at night the police routinely patrol the area during their rounds.

The intended purpose of Broadway Station as a transportation hub and how it is actually experienced by the people who use the space stand in harsh contrast. To apply Lefebvre's (1991b) spatialized dialectics, we can see the distinction between the representations of space (the official

intention of the space) versus the spaces of representation created by the youth (the abstract re-imagining of the space as it is lived). To this we can also add ‘spatial practices,’ a phrase which incorporates the social imaginary about the space as violent and dangerous. The commodification of public space leading to social exclusion explains these differing views and the strong affective public response to the area. The youth as ‘other’ are essentially trespassing in the public/private space of a city street. The fear the middle-class public experiences at the sight, while seemingly produced from the youth themselves, actually comes from the sign of the Broadway Station youth. As Ahmed (2004) states, “...fear opens up past histories that stick to the present” (p. 126). The image of the dark-skinned ‘other’ loitering on a street corner causing trouble is a powerful sign going back decades in the North American urban story (Whyte, 1955). Thus, the affective response of fear is not linked only to Broadway Station, but rather Broadway Station comes to symbolize and project fear onto the inner city and its members. Through the circulation of signs of fear, or the affective economy of fear, the dark-skinned young woman becomes an object of fear to be gazed upon but not engaged with; however, she doesn’t have to be at Broadway Station for the affective response to be elicited. Or, to state this slightly differently, the ‘public’ doesn’t have to visit Broadway Station to be moved to fear by the presence of such youth in another place. This is the power of the social imaginary, it travels independently through affect and across places and through other interlocutors and flows of information. The youth’s presence here at this site simply reinforces the already ‘known’ condition that the inner city is a place to fear. This example also demonstrates how affect is used by the powerful as a way to remake themselves and to regain power (Skeggs, 2004a). The vast majority of urban policy and government agendas are geared not towards eliminating poverty or providing affordable housing, but instead towards easing the fear of the middle-class by removing – or displacing – the visible ‘other.’

It is important to consider, however, that in an affective economy of fear, that fear itself does not reside in the subject, nor does it travel in one direction (Ahmed, 2004). The youth were aware of the violence that sometimes occurred at Broadway Station (after all, they were often the source of it) and this resulted in some of them avoiding the area. Many girls would talk about how they *used* to go to Broadway Station but no longer did so because there was “too much drama down there,” or because so-and-so was

after them. Statements like this were usually connected to a redemption narrative of the ‘good individual,’ as the girls were trying to remake themselves by disassociating with spatial abjection. Some girls did express fear of Broadway Station and seemingly towards each other, yet this should not be read as straightforward fear of one’s peers, but rather a misrecognition of the resulting affect of exclusion and invisibility thrust upon the girls.

Being positioned as the abject ‘other’ in your ‘home’ neighborhood, and as fearsome as you are walking down the street or hanging out with friends, is made comprehensible through expressing one’s own fear of the same spaces. This is a way of deflecting the pain of misrecognition and invisibility, but it has its consequences. When the middle-class ‘public’ encounters a group of youth hanging out or acting boisterously, their fear is squelched by the reassurance that they have the right to be in that space and that the police are there to protect them. If it eventually gets too uncomfortable for the middle-class observer they have a place they can retreat back to where they will be ‘at home’ and feel safe. For working-class girls marked as ‘other,’ fear of one’s ‘home’ space does nothing to ease the discomfort of their misrecognition because there is no other place to go to. The result is that spatial exclusion for the girls was most often expressed affectively as loneliness and imprisonment. The following quotes suggest this kind of feeling:

Veronica: I'm kindof fed up with all the problems, everything, about our family, or whatever I have to go through, I just want to be free, problem free, and everything.

[...]

Bianca: ...usually I'll just stay home and, I don't know. I don't really do much. I don't really go anywhere to meet up with friends.

[...]

Stephanie: Where do you go from here?

Sara: I have no idea; I have to figure that out.

In addition to feeling alone, the lack of geographic movement among the girls indicated a spatial containment. I observed their daily travels within a very narrow East Van radius and the photos they took suggested the same limited travels during their weekend and leisure time. I frequently heard statements from the girls of feeling trapped, with no way to get out and no way to escape. And what does escape mean? For one does not have a place to go to even if one were to ‘get out.’ Consequently, the feeling of

being stuck can quickly move into fear. A fear of getting out and having to leave the spaces that you do know (Nayak, 2006). This is a class affect originating not with the working class or the ‘other’ but produced and cultivated by the middle class in an affective economy of privilege. As Ahmed (2004) states, “Fear restricts mobility of some and extends mobility of others” (p. 70). As the middle class construct the ‘other’ or ‘the poor’ through fear in ways that expand their use and taking up of space, fear among the working class operates to fix them in space and to immobilize. The following quote by Alice, and this photo that she took of her in a car “driving away,” reveals just this situation:



Alice: Sometimes I want to move out of here and start a new life somewhere else.

Stephanie: Where?

Alice: I don't know, maybe Toronto, just start a new life, somewhere.

Stephanie: You’ve taken a lot of pictures of views? What is it about views that you like?

Alice: I don't know, it's just really nice.

Stephanie: It seems like it might be an escape, in a way.

Alice: That’s true...I like to escape, that’s why I did drugs and stuff.

Actually, of all of the photos that the girls took, pictures of views and vistas (like the ones below) were the most popular subject. Alice’s statement clearly exemplifies a conflict. On the one hand she wants to get away from her current situation/life, but she feels tied to the place she is from, the East Side of Vancouver, and is afraid to move. Consequently, the *feeling* of being stuck is confirmed by the physical fact of *being* stuck in space.



Being ‘fixed in space’ works to construct a sense of self, which is the result of spatialization connected to youth identity construction (Aitken, 2001; Reay, 2004). The girls in this study strongly identify only with the East Side, rarely go to other areas, and actively avoid the middle-class West Side. Everyone has places where they feel more accepted, but for girls who are marginalized because of ethnicity, economic status, and ‘problem behavior,’ the spaces they are tied to are poor and stigmatized. This contributes to them being seen as ‘unvalued,’ as it is difficult to escape the associations of place and identity (Sibley, 1995). Further, staying only in poor and stigmatized geographic areas prevents the accumulation of exchange-value. Therefore, the space the girls move through functions as a class imaginary leading to feelings of being stuck. Space in this way becomes an extension of oneself. The girls, in a sense, become the stigmatized spaces.

Affect as Transformative Revaluing

In this chapter I’ve sought to show how the ‘present’ for the working-class girls in this study is where the historical trace of empire and class abjection come together, resulting in an affective struggle for recognition. The girl’s affective expressions work in multiple ways to re-inscribe them as abject. First, ‘inappropriately’ gendered emotional reactions (like anger, outbursts, or numbness) mark the young people as disobedient and un-feminine, fueling their categorization as ‘problem youth’ necessitating reform. Second, the commodification of public space that rejects the presence of working-class young people through their establishment as ‘other,’ functions to exclude the girls from public (their ‘home’) spaces. The affective result of such exclusion for the girls is a sense of fear, containment, and isolation. The youth essentially become ‘locked-in-space’ and in time, because of their abject positioning. This makes it very difficult to accrue the necessary exchange-value that would permit leaving the localized space; thus, the inscription process leading to abjection is continually reproduced.

Given this situation, it is imperative to consider the use-value of the girls’ activities because it is key to understanding the making of the abject other. In the traditional model of exchange, emotions are tied to the dominant affective economy, which states one way of feeling for young women based on middle-class values and histories. Considering the feelings expressed by the girls, not as their own, but as the moments when their collective histories of pain and struggle seep out, is a start to just this kind of re-

evaluation. Also, we need to always look at the young people's use of space outside of the dominant 'representations of space.' The meaning of space for the girls is created out of multiple interactions. Their real and imagined worlds come together at the interface of the history of class, nation, empire, and gender segregation: these symbolic interactions provide the horizon of possible directions where one can imagine going and clear messages about where one ought not go. Knowledge like this is often implicitly absorbed rather than distinctly taught. To only consider working-class youth spaces through the dominant lens misses the history that produced the space and the social interactions that continually construct and reproduce space. In this way, the meaning(s) of spaces will change from person to person and place to place. This sort of consideration provides room for different, non-hegemonic readings of the people who inhabit those spaces.



Photo by: Megan Low 2011



Photo by: Megan Low 2011

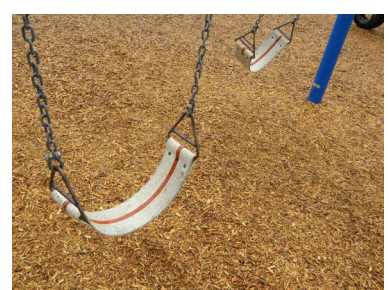


Photo by: Megan Low 2011

Chapter Eight

Ab/Ob-jection: Encountering Youth and the City

When I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable object. The object is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-ject, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire. What is object is not my correlative, which, providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous. The object has only one quality of the object - that of being opposed to the 'I'.

- Julia Kristeva, from "Approaching Abjection" in, *Powers of Horror* (1982)

My key objective with this dissertation has been to contribute to scholarship on the ways urban working-class girls navigate their daily lives and in the process bring value to young women and to practices which are un-valued, under-valued, and outright de-valued in our neo-liberal culture. I was specifically interested in exploring how negative symbolic markings curtail the historical paths and possibilities available to specific groups of young people. The stories that I've relayed here have been accounts of resourcefulness and friendship and have revealed the forging of familial ties in the midst of structural constraints and unyielding institutional practices set on disciplining and training the 'child.' Spatially the girls' narratives traverse future, past, and present. Through retelling what I've termed their 'redemption narratives,' I've sought to provide a glimpse into the girls' imagined escape from the past while simultaneously showcasing their attempts at creating value for themselves in a culture where use-value is obfuscated under exchange-value. Ultimately, however, the process of classification into raced, classed, and gendered categories prevented the girls from acquiring worth within mainstream society. In a sense, the girls remain trapped, a condition which reinscribes their object status and forces the (public and private) recirculation of their histories of abjection. Modern-day narratives of disgust toward the working-class girl emanate, in many ways, from the past. Historical processes of surveillance, control, and labeling continue to operate through contemporary institutions to pathologize the young women in this study. Finally, the present for the girls in this study, and for girls like them, is where their collective histories of class abjection, invisibility, and struggle unite in an affective demand for recognition.

I've also attempted to showcase in this research the processes and conditions whereby object youth subjectivities are formed (in the process recasting abjection from a Kristeva-like (1982)

semiotic/bodily process into a material one). The goal here was to explore ‘why’ girls are made to be seen as either problems or the ‘causes’ (material relations, structures, and conflicts that produce social meanings (Ebert, 1993) behind the marking of their own abjection, as opposed to simply describing ‘how’ the signifying of this abjection occurs. Toward this end social class as a material process and a cultural aesthetic proved to play a significant role in positioning the girls as abject. Economic deprivation meant the young women had to rely on social services to address many of their basic needs; thus, they were positioned as agents of the state and placed under a surveilling gaze. Furthermore, the fact that the girls were not in regular school or at work meant they were subject to scrutiny from an unforgiving public as they went about their everyday routine. In this way, the girls were pathologized through their daily activities that put them in institutional spaces which made shedding their abject marking extremely difficult.

Most importantly, perhaps, this study has demonstrated that research on the stigmatized, out-of-school girl who doesn’t fit easily into a particular sub-category provides an expansive lens with which to construct girlhood in a 21st century, urban, North American context. The girls who took part in this study challenge the categorization of ‘at risk’ which highlights the fallacy of the dichotomous ‘future girl’ versus ‘problem girl’ that is presented in much of the gender specific youth studies research. I hope to have demonstrated that to speak simply of ‘the girl’ as in girls’ studies or even when using the concept of girlhood is to reproduce normative gender categories that describe a hegemonic middle-class, white female young person.

In this closing chapter I will highlight the conclusions that can be drawn from responses to these three objectives. I will also consider how the results of this study can and may be taken up by future researchers. I hope that this will be the starting point for similar work undertaken by others. This includes the dissemination of this knowledge to external disciplines and academic fields where this work is relevant, as well as the operative knowledge that might occur through the hands of the readers and viewers of this text. Contributing to a field of knowledge or producing any form of inquiry results in a few achievements as well as many failings. It is possible to contribute (narrowly) to transforming a discipline in some regards but more challenging to move it or to change it in others. In this chapter, I will discuss the

theoretical and methodological challenges related to the study of the girl that I was attempting to address and to redress. What is the potential for change? And what is needed to bring about further work along the lines of what I have proposed?

I start this chapter by outlining the ways in which the girls in this study sought value for themselves. This was done through constructing redemption narratives as a way to move out of the past, as well as through the transformation of the spatial dimensions of their urban landscape. Understanding any of the girls' attempts at acquiring value requires considering the 'use-value' of their daily activities and social interactions. Thus, I begin the next section by summarizing how using the concept of 'use-value' provided an effective method for revaluing the pathologized, working-class girl.

Value Ex Nihilo: Bringing Something From Nothing

The process of revaluing subject positions and practices which are unvalued, under-valued, and de-valued has been a major objective with this research. I believe this objective can be more clearly conceptualized through theory. To do this I've deployed the idea of use-value as separate from exchange-value (Skeggs, 2004a) as a way to highlight the personal or social value attributed to objects and social processes. In this model value is generated not through the commodity (as in traditional capitalist 'exchange-value'), but through the power that makes particular exchanges possible. Consequently, making room to explore the power between groups and inquiring into the calculus of distribution and assignment of value as a significant component of any transformative knowledge.

If exchange-value is defined as an asset deemed valuable only according to the marketplace (such as knowledge, artifacts, labor, money, or property) then the girls possess few of the right kinds of assets for formal exchange. However, considering the use-value of a particular set of assets they hold produces a different picture. For example, I was interested in their 'assets' of knowledge as revealed to them by my request for their participation in my study and then sharing the information about their lives in this dissertation. Being that most of the girls are labeled 'high school dropouts' they don't possess the right kind of 'knowledge' that is valued in the market for traditional well-paying, high status jobs. However, as a university graduate student, my interest in them turns their knowledge into an asset of value. This same idea is the impetus for much of what is considered feminist research methods (Foley, 2002; McCorkel &

Myers, 2003). The girls still don't have exchange-value, but the use-value of personal communication, life experience, and oral tradition is reinforced.

In a sense, the girls' local community is akin to setting up a system for the exchange of use-values. The girls' life world becomes at times a counter-economy in which use-value circulates unofficially just as exchange-values might circulate in an official way. Their daily life is full of small moments of recognizing, sharing, claiming, and making value. One example is the way that friendships are established through longevity. Another would be the fact that having lived on the street or in foster care served to bolster a girl's credibility among her peers. The numerous training programs that girls attended, as a way to acquire a sense of accomplishment is another example. And of course, each of the redemption narratives that the girls' retold served as a potential source of value. As they lived out the narratives—claiming ethnic pride, laying claim to being a good individual or mother—they accumulated worth and meaning for themselves.

Another significant source of value for the girls in this study was their transformation of private and public urban spaces into productively meaningful places of their own. Their recoding of the government-run Center into a collective space of family and fun is my key example. Another example is their use of and presence at public parks as a way of reclaiming the commodification of public space (as opposed to allowing it to become simply an act of loitering). And finally, the young people's transformation of the retail space of Broadway Station into a community meeting site provides additional evidence for how the girls were able to rebuke their lived spatializations to create new meanings and uses of space independent of state directed ideological impositions. Recognizing the 'spaces of representation' inherent to the spatial practices of stigmatized, urban, working-class girls highlights that space is produced dialectically through contestation and struggle (Massey, 1995). This suggests that urban space is constructed, and conceived, in a way that excludes the 'other.' Looking at these spaces, however, through the image that the girls have created, is a way of valuing stigmatized young people.

In each of these ways, considering the use-value of the girls' activities and relationships challenges the conception of them only as 'a problem' in need of a 'solution.' It suggests that it is not the actions of young people that dictate who is laudable versus who is abject, but it is the process of

classification that deems certain symbolic markings as worthy or unworthy. This process was informed by the girls' social location with class contributing a prominent, if not dominant, role. Thus, this research has demonstrated that social class as both a cultural taste and a structural determinant remains significant in shaping the everyday practices of the girls in this study. I will now elaborate in a more in-depth manner on this very topic.

The Persistent Burdens of Class

Class remains not just a factor in the girls' personal lives but in their public lives as well. The young people in this study are socially, spatially, and economically marginalized because of economic inequality and not because of cultural exclusion based on a failure to self perfect (Gilles, 2005). In the contemporary neo-liberal moment individualism and self-sufficiency are touted as the only acceptable models for engaged citizenship (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005). The observations I've made here, however, are significant in order to demonstrate the continuing significance of class and to challenge the risk theorists' declaration that class as a material force no longer matters (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Still, class as a collective identity functioning in the lives of these young women does not look like traditional working class solidarity as it may elsewhere in the world (see Nayak, 2006). In addition, shared social responsibility was not completely replaced by individual associations to communities of interest, as Rose (1996) and others maintain is the norm in the current moment of a 'culture of the self.' Instead, the girls here engaged in a form of self-making that was class-specific yet informed by racial solidarity, racialization, and a collective experience of working-class abjection. It is the girls' unvalued classification as working class as it interfaces with race that impacted the girls' lives and served to unite them.

This shared social responsibility that is, in part, class-based, also suggests that the idea of 'choice' for stigmatized working class girls, which is prominent in the rhetoric of 'New Times' and prevalent in girls' cultural studies research, does not hold true for all stigmatized working-class girls everywhere. The material element of social class—economic deprivation—prevented the girls from acquiring the 'right' tools to display a self with value. This was made evident through the behaviors constituting the girls' redemption narratives as they attempted to create a 'new self' and to 'be good.' Expressing these desires the girls utilized the language of 'New Times' with its focus on individual self-sufficiency and choice-

making. Yet, despite their attempts at transformation through working on themselves they are never seen as the independent, success-oriented, contemporary, ‘future girl’ (Burman, 2005; Harris, 2004) because they don’t attach themselves to the correct objects and cultural practices (which are middle class in form) that are required for successful self-making (Skeggs, 2004c). It was this inability for the girls to project a symbolic self in-line with the ideals of modern citizenship (very much class-based) that inscribed them as abject.

The powerful significance of class in the lives of these young women, and its psychic costs, was persistently visible throughout the fieldwork. One of the more potentially transformative observations was a recognition of their ‘defiant’ or ‘obstinate’ behavior as an affective response to a history of class abjection. Defiance would sometimes come out in the form of anger directed towards a social worker that they thought was unfair, or as disgust directed towards the foster care system. Most often, however, the girls displayed little or no affect at all, either a flat sense of placeless-ness or a genuine or perhaps, metaphorical experience of homelessness. Their affective displays, however, like anger, disgust, and lack of affect were, at root, expressions of pain resulting from the erasure of the history of colonization of their space and the erasure of their histories as working-class, indigenous, and ethnic minorities. The public erasure of history, which is the project of imperialism, means that stigmatized working-class girls are born into a place of no memory. The pain of being born into loss becomes theirs alone to bear. Thus, rebellious displays by the girls are a way to bring their pain into the open. It is a form of agency declaring their refusal to be made invisible.

Placing the girl’s emotional displays within an affective economy provides a way to reposition their outward ‘bad’ behavior within a class context. Class has an affective dimension. This also suggests that the cultural performance of class is structured by a set of affects and emotions. Such a reading has the potential to challenge classification narratives and narratives of empire as the emotional displays of abject working-class girls are read as expressions of these oppressive histories. This starts a process of re(e)valu(at)ing the abject other as we read the behaviors deemed by dominant society as inappropriate for girls not as their own instances of defiance, but as the moments when their shared histories of pain and struggle seep out. With the inaugural moment of this kind of reading, re-valuing has begun.

Reflections, Contributions, and (Im)practicalities

As I come to the end of both this research project and the writing of this text I resist making the too-easy leap to the (expected) ‘closural’ moment or resolution of (unexpected) ‘agency.’ Such an applied approach is a way for social theorists to bring a secure narrative closure to their otherwise productive theoretical interventions. Instead, here at the end I will stay with the question of history: the then, the now, the could be. What is historically possible given the conditions girls face? How can we avoid comforting but ultimately un-rigorous utopian imaginings? Do we have the language and the concepts we need to see where we are (or where we could have been by now)? This dissertation arms its readers not with “blueprints for the future”, as Marx said (Buchanan, 1982, p. 24), but with language and concepts to decipher the terrain of inequality and exploitation of young people by adults. In the remainder of this chapter I will present my reflections and thoughts on where this research leaves us and takes us.

Rewriting the Narrative on Girls: Not ‘can do’ and Not ‘at risk’

In this work, I’ve sought to widen the discussion on working-class girls by providing a spatialized materialist account of the construction of youth difference. In this way, I am rearticulating how the girl comes to be defined and suggesting that we can read girlhood differently; by ‘different’ I mean different from the predominant post-structural cultural frame whereby agency, individuality, and multiple hybrid identities are foregrounded. As I stated in Chapter Two many of the post-structuralist informed understandings within contemporary research on the girl have dematerialized ‘difference’ and in doing so have dislocated girl subjectivities from their structural meaning, leaving a description of the girl without an explanation for *why* hegemonic meanings of the girl have been circulated. To address these issues, I’ve sought to expand the theoretical terrain of the field by bringing together a dynamic position on class with a conception of space as relational to explain why a discrete form of girlhood is manufactured. This theoretical approach conceptually challenges how we think about theories of girlhood by highlighting the absence of class analyses within the preponderance of individualized cultural accounts of girl identities. My theoretical approach, thus, offers a distinctive way to investigate the material realities of girlhood while retaining all that is useful and pertinent in the current cultural investigation of the girl.

This may be an appropriate place to briefly comment upon the notion of categorization since in this study while I have offered a critique of the old positivist notion of ‘categorization’ as a tool for social sorting, I have also invoked a very definite set of ‘categories’ to extend my analysis. Categories are frequently invoked as contrary to the notion of humanistic inquiry (they ‘perpetuate stereotypes’). However, categories are not metaphysical containers imposed by the researcher upon a passive object or individual but are articulations of already existing social differences. To understand categories dialectally as I have is to grasp the combination of identity and difference within them.

It is with this in mind that I can say that the research participants in this study were all working-class and, while not in the category of the ‘respectable’ working-class, weren’t necessarily in the ‘rough’ category either. They experienced times of deprivation, struggle, and failure and were always under the weight of multiple forms of oppression. At the same time, however, they worked hard, were extremely supportive and conscientious toward their friends, had aspirational visions, and believed in a positive future. Through this research, I hope to have demonstrated the hegemony behind the term ‘girl’ by bringing into the conversation young women who are on the fringes of popular thought, economic security, and social scientific inquiry. The young people you met throughout this work defy simple (positivistic) categorization. Still, the commonality of the differences they share is quite in evidence. This suggests, I believe, that it is possible to study a population (that there are certain kinds of data sets) that resist dominant theoretical assumptions and offer counter narratives to the mainstream framing of the girl.

We can never escape categorization, but by revealing the significance and operation of class in forming classification systems I hope to have highlighted where the ‘future girl’ and ‘at risk’ girl emanate from suggesting that neither group is free from historical and cultural fabrication. This is also why I chose to refer to the girls as ‘stigmatized’ and ‘abject’ to make clear that their unvalued subjectivity is ‘doing’ something to the girls. By focusing on the process of abjection, I hope to have removed the secretive veneer that protects those in the business of defining who is abject. These are people like myself, researchers, social workers, and educators, whose thinking and practice is often bound by a stigmatizing, hegemonic discourse about the ‘other.’

Considerations on Practice

Throughout the conceptualization and writing of this dissertation I've resisted the temptation to simply 'give voice' to the girls' experiences through a blank description of their activities. At the same time, including the voices of girls who are usually spoken for and spoken for in a negative fashion, is epistemologically and politically important. One of the reasons why stigmatized young people who don't make up a specific population are understudied is because they are difficult to reach. I spoke in Chapter Three about the challenges I had in recruiting girls for participation in this study. In order to reach any girls and make their involvement practical for them, and to read girlhood differently, I had to do ethnography differently. Thus, I used a critical feminist ethnographic approach along with multiple visual methods. The use of critical ethnography for studying young people is not new, but a multi-method ethnography of this scope, breadth, and depth is the first of its kind to study urban, working-class girls in the Canadian context and has hopefully provided a different way of looking at girlhood.

One of the biggest strengths of this ethnographic approach in contributing to reading girlhood differently is that it took place in the multiple milieus that constitute the girls' lives. Moving through multiple milieus requires translation (even something so simple as a girl explaining to a youth worker where she is going is an act of translation). The degree to which this cross-milieu/cross-border translation is needed is something I learned from my research. I did not expect to discover that it was the girls' non-action rather than action that would most significantly mark them as a problem. Had I confined my observations only to one institutional setting, like just social services, or conducted the study in a school, I would have been privileging the usual child socializing agents. Yet, it was the girls' lack of participation in such institutions that most fiercely marked them as abject. I was also surprised to find that the girls' abject status moved with them as they traveled. Confining the research to one primary location would have made it difficult to identify how multiple institutional practices work in concert to construct the working-class girl as 'other.' This process occurred as the girls moved about the city and encountered multiple spaces and places. My moving in and out of different spaces with them also gave me the opportunity to observe how they acquired use-value for themselves. For example, I saw how they negotiated their relationships with youth workers as a way to resist surveillance. They would withhold

certain objectionable details of their lives while in the state run space of The Center, but would allow them to be revealed when outside with me or on an outing with a youth worker. Utilizing the ‘go-along’ method or walking with research participants as they went about their daily routine was another useful method for studying these young people as it added empirical strength to observations I made and statements by the girls.

In another way, a redefinition of the girl was possible using these methods because it changed the way young people traditionally engage in academic research. Part of ethnography is allowing a pedagogy to emerge over time: spatial materialism is not just a method or theory but a pedagogy. It is a way to collaborate in the sharing of knowledge in a way that acknowledges that one will not suffer the consequences usually suffered in the research discourse. I would like to resist the common sense notion that what one witnesses in socially critical research is ‘trust building’ as this still implies a hierarchy of researcher and subject. Collaborative pedagogy, on the other hand, is acting/thinking/taking within a common social space. I consider that I was able to get to know and share the stories of over twenty girls who were initially all weary of a middle-class white adult and who for the most part were living transient lives a success of this project. The fact that the girls continued to speak with me at length on multiple occasions meant they had something more to gain from our interaction than they had if they had just walked away.

The diverse array of methods that I used, particularly the varied visual methods, proved very useful for working with a group of young people who are transitory. The variety of methods enabled the girls to have some say in what their contribution in the research looked like. I had originally thought that each girl would take part in all of the research activities, but when some girls chose to opt out of an activity but were still interested in being in the research, it actually strengthened their commitment. Coming from a place where their lives are highly managed by state employees, some girls were surprised and delighted that they could have a say in how they participated in what to some was another example of ‘official’ business (my ethnography). Further, using different research methods evoked different cognitive and affective responses among participants providing multiple opportunities for the girls to tell their stories. This proved to be a useful approach for conducting research with a group of girls who don’t fit

neatly into one specific population and is something for future researchers to consider when working with mixed populations of young people.

Allowing participants to have a say in their involvement also strengthens commitments to reflexivity where a dedication to partial and multiple truths and a demonstration of the constructs of power within the research relationship are central. For this reason I suggest that these methods are appropriate for future research with historically oppressed groups. Girls are the touchstone in my study and while it is important to acknowledge the different histories that our social identities represent it would be fatal not to use the knowledges and strategies acquired by one marginalized group to fight the struggles of another.

At this point, I'd like to briefly mention how this study came to a close. As it was challenging, initially, to begin this research (to find girls willing to participate) it was equally challenging to end the research and to 'exit' the field. Over the course of the three years that I had been going to The Center, I witnessed the multitude of changes and life events that transpire over time in a community/family space. I saw staff leave, new staff come in, the death of one staff member, two staff who acquired chronic illnesses, multiple pregnancies and births, young people move away or 'age out,' and new young people discover the space for the first time. I developed friendships with many of the girls and friendships or at least professional relationships with the staff. I had become a 'regular' presence at The Center and 'it' became part of my life.

Given how enmeshed I was at The Center, I decided it would be better to leave the space gradually by transitioning from researcher back to volunteer. I didn't want to be another adult who one day disappeared from the lives of the young people. I told the director that I had completed my research activities and then slowly reduced the amount of time I spent at The Center. My intention to remain as a volunteer didn't really go as planned (the program I had worked with before was eliminated and they didn't have another place for me); however, I was able to make a gradual exit and was not forced to say 'goodbye' to the girls. I still continue to stop by The Center from time to time.

Political Pasts, Presents, and Futures

Readers of this text may at this point come back with the question, “What’s next”? Whether this is articulated by activists (who wish to ‘act’) or by educational professionals (who would prefer to shape policy), the assumption is that ‘acting’ (whether as ‘doing’ or as ‘policy making’) is something that comes after reading or after thinking has concluded. I would maintain, however, that critique itself is a practice that needs to be maintained while moving toward action. To reiterate my use of critique in this work, I use the explanation by feminist Marxist Theresa Ebert (1993): “Critique is a practice through which the subject develops historical knowledge of the social totality. ...in other words, an understanding of how the existing social institutions have in fact come about and how they can be changed” (p. 9). Thus, critique is change thinking *and* change acting; it is knowledge through which the subject acquires a historical perspective with which to make change.

By telling the stories of girls who remain outside of the popular definition of girl, I hope to have challenged the idea that difference is purely discursive. This materialist informed approach, therefore, contributes to a girls’ studies that can be part of transformative social change. A spatialized class analysis could be useful for scholars working not only in girls’ studies but also in youth studies, the sociology of education, and the sociology of childhood, where empirical investigations of the material effects of global change on the lives of young people are needed. For example, I looked at one group of young people positioned as abject, girls who utilize social services, my theoretical approach could be used as a conceptual gateway to study other groups of young people who are positioned as a problem. While conducting this research particular social positions within the urban milieu emerged, each of which could be investigated further. These positions include: girls in ethnic specific gangs, girls in the criminal justice system, young female sex workers, and new immigrant girls. What are the value systems utilized by the young people in each of these populations? What institutional practices and modes of categorization position such youth as ‘a problem’? And finally, what are the spaces of representation lived out by the young people in these groups that challenge exclusionary spatial practices?

There are also arenas beyond the academic arena where the findings from this research could have some interventionary impact, specifically, in the field of education and education and child policy.

The conditions whereby negative youth subjectivities are formulated occur within institutional settings. It is obviously too simplistic to point to social services, the school, and the police as the structural source behind the creation of abject youth. I could fill another 200 pages if I were to specifically critique these settings. Still, educators and policy makers would do well to look at young people who are marked as ‘a problem’ and recognize how it is the very institutions into which such youth are expected to be a part of that are positioning them as a problem. This is part of the girls’ inability to be disciplined that I discussed in Chapter Six. The only approach put forth to ‘help’ the economically disadvantaged recalcitrant young person is to get them more involved in the standard child socializing institutions. Further, their lack of participation in these settings is not by choice. They have either been pushed out because of their categorization (their racialized, gendered, or classed categorization) or have rejected these institutions as a means for survival. Without institutional change, stigmatized working-class girls will continue to be put at risk for failure by the very settings that are designed to ‘help’ them.

This research, thus, could serve as a starting point for programmatic interventions in the institutional settings that economically marginalized young people come in contact with. In considering such a redesign it is important to retain an expansive definition of education as a site where learning takes place. Within the pedagogical dimension power and knowledge are always intertwined. Social services (and the criminal justice system) itself is an educator of young people. Consequently, as this research has shown working-class young people who encounter social services are being educated for a reproduction of class inequality. Stigmatization (which serves to reinscribe the abject young person) was reproduced every time the girls went into The Center to receive services. This suggests that some sort of ‘un-social servicing’ is needed that teaches service recipients, in this case young people, how to receive services as a matter of social justice while rejecting the ideological imperative.

By ‘un-social servicing’ I do not mean a welfare system that operates outside of the state (this would be something akin to ‘unschooling,’ or child-led education which usually is a rejection of state run educational institutions (Griffith, 1998). Such a grassroots welfare system already exists in the form of economic justice movements and activist organizations that provide for the basic needs of poor and

economically oppressed individuals. Rather, I mean a radical alteration in how services are provided and for what purposes and ends.

Looking to the field of critical social work may be a place to start such a project. This literature positions social work practice within a structured context. The objective is to transform existing social inequalities (Baines, 2004; George, Coleman, & Barnoff, 2010). Mullaly (1997) defines the tenants of ‘structural social work’ as thus: “...linking personal problems of people to broader social structures and holding a critical analysis of social structures” (p. 7). Implementing this philosophy in practice is challenging, but there are exciting examples coming out of this field (see Houston, Magili, McCollum, & Spratt, 2001; Smith, 2007; Vodde & Gallant, 2002). Even in The Center there was an example of structural social work in the program I volunteered with called Music Matters. Steven, the youth worker who created the program, was aiming to foster a critical consciousness among the young people by teaching them how to connect their personal problems to broader social issues through the use of popular media. Steven did not have formal training in critical social work, but rather, developed the program because of a need he saw to address the challenges that the young people faced at a structural level.

The research I present here, however, demonstrates that one radical program within a standard social service agency is not enough to change the negative outcomes of social service delivery. In addition to structural social work being taken up widely and systemically throughout the entire field, some accounting of the political, historical, and contextual placement of social work within society is needed. In other words, it is not just about changing social service delivery to make it reflective of structural constraints; but rather, acknowledging how the spatial (i.e., physical buildings), affective (feelings present in a space), and historical elements of social services contribute to the formation of abjection.

In closing, I want to reiterate that change comes through changing the meaning of everyday processes and this begins with expanding the materialist definition of girl, and critiquing those that conceal or diffuse the materiality of the girl. This is what I’ve attempted to do with this dissertation. If there is a “what next?” it should be directed to the young people. Above all, the lesson that the personal is political is a lesson for all women, regardless of age, and one that will hopefully carry them into their struggles for their own futures, a future which is ours as well.

References

- Aapola, S., Gonick, M., & Harris, A. (2005). *Young Femininity: Girlhood, Power and Social Change*. New York: Palgrave.
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, (2008). Aboriginal Rights in BC. Retrieved February 24, 2011 from <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mr/is/abr-eng.asp>.
- Aboriginal Canada Portal, (2010). Aboriginal Organizations – Provincial. Retrieved October 20, 2010 from <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/eng/ao20053.html>.
- Adamoski, R. (2002). "The Child-The Citizen-The Nation." In. R. Adamoski, D. Chunn, & R. Menzies (Eds.), *Contesting Canadian Citizenship*. Toronto: Broadview Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2004). Affective Economies. *Social Text*, 22(2), 118-139.
- Ahmed, S. (2008). Multiculturalism and the promise of happiness. *New Formations*, 63, 121-137.
- Aitken, S. (2001). *Geographies of young people: the morally contested spaces of identity*. London: Routledge.
- Albanese, P. (2010). *Child Poverty in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Alcoff, L. (1991). The problem of speaking for others. *Cultural Critique*, 20, 5-32.
- Ali, S. (2003). 'To Be a Girl': culture and class in schools *Gender and Education*, 15(3), 269-283.
- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. In A. Althusser (Au.), *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. (B. Brewster, Trans.) (pp. 108-126). London: Monthly Review Press.
- American Association of University Women, (1991). *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Women.
- American Association of University Women, (1992). *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Women.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2nd ed.). London: Verso.
- Anderson, J. (2004). Talking whilst walking: A geographical archaeology of knowledge. *Area*, 36(3), 254-261.
- Anderson, J., & Jones, K. (2009). The difference that place makes to methodology: uncovering the 'lived space' of young people's spatial practices *Children's Geographies*, 7(3), 291-303.
- Archer, L., Halsall, A., & Hollingworth, S. (2007). Inner-city femininities and education: 'race', class, gender and schooling in young women's lives. *Gender & Education*, 19(5), 549-568.
- Archer, L., Hollingworth, S. & Halsall, A. (2007) 'University's not for me – I'm a Nike person'. Inner-city young people's negotiations of 'new' class identities and educational engagement, *Sociology* 41(2), 219–237.
- Archer, L., & Leathwood, C. (2003). New Times—Old Inequalities: diverse working-class femininities in education. *Gender and Education*, 15(3), 227-235.
- Art History Archive. (2007). Haussmann's Architectural Paris. Retrieved July 17, 2011 from <http://www.lilithgallery.com/arthistory>.
- B.C. Assessment. (2010). Residential Property Owners Inventory. Retrieved February 24, 2011 from <http://www.bcassessment.bc.ca/public/Pages/Homeowners.aspx>.
- B.C. Gov, Ministry of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government. (2011). BC Minimum Wage Fact Sheet. Retrieved March 14, 2011 from <http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/facshts/min-wage.htm>.
- Baines, D. (2004). Losing the 'eyes in the back of our heads': Social service skills, learn caring, and violence. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 31(3), 31-50.
- Baines, D. (2007). *Doing anti-oppressive practice: Building transformative, politicized social work*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Bala, N., Carrington, P. J., & Roberts, J. (2009). Evaluating the Youth Criminal Justice Act after Five Years: A Qualified Success. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 51(2), 131-167.
- Ball, S., McGuire, M., & McCrae, S. (2000). *Choice, Pathways and Transitions Post-16: New Youth, New Economies in the Global City*. London: Routledge Falmer.

- Banks, M. (2001). *Visual Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Barker, R.L. (1999). *The Social Work Dictionary* (4th Ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, or, The End of the Social and Other Essays* (P. Foss, Trans.). Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Baumgardner, J., & Richards, A. (2000). *Manifesta*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Baxter, J.A. (1999). Teaching Girls to Speak Out: The Female Voice in Public Contexts. *Language and Education*, 13(2), 81-98.
- BCCSW. (2009). *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. Board of Registration for Social Workers in British Columbia. Retrieved January 27, 2011 from <http://www.bccollegeofsocialworkers.ca/>.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Bennett, A. (1999). Subcultures or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste. *Sociology*, 33(3), 599-617.
- Bennett, A., & Kahn-Harris, K. (2004). Introduction. In A. Bennett & K. Kahn-Harris (Eds.), *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture* (pp. 1-18). New York: Palgrave.
- Berg, B. L. (1995). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Heedham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Berquist, J. (2002). Critical Spatiality and the Uses of Theory. *AAR/SBL Constructions of Ancient Space*. Retrieved December 11, 2007 from <http://www.case.edu/affil/GAIR/papers/2002papers/berquist.html>.
- Besley, A. C. (2003). Hybridized and Globalized: Youth cultures in the Postmodern Era. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 25, 153-177.
- Bettie, J. (2003). *Women Without Class*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Bivens, J. (2012). No Shelter Here: Young workers did not wait out the weak labor market in college. *Economic Policy Institute*. Retrieved February 17, 2012 from www.epi.org.
- Blackman, S. (2005). Youth Subcultural Theory: A Critical Engagement with the Concept, Its Origins and Politics, from the Chicago School to Postmodernism. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8 (1), 1-20.
- Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S.K. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Borden, A., & Coyote, S. (2007). The Smudging Ceremony. Retrieved February 2, 2011 from http://www.asunam.com/smudge_ceremony.html.
- Bottrell, D. (2007). Resistance, Resilience and Social Identities: Reframing 'Problem Youth' and the Problem of Schooling. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10(5), 597-616.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Univ. of Cambridge Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (R. Nice, Trans.) Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social Space and Symbolic Power. *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 14-25.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice* (trans. R. Nice). Cambridge: Polity.
- Boyd, J. (2008). Gentrification and playful disregard. *Resources for Feminist Research, Spring-Summer*. Retrieved March 14, 2011 from <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/>.
- Boyden, J. (1997). Childhood and the Policy Makers: A Comparative Perspective on the Globalization of Childhood. In A. James & A. Prout (Eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (pp. 190-215). London: Falmer Press.
- Brannen, J., & Nilsen, A. (2005). Individualisation, choice and structure: a discussion of current trends in sociological analysis. *Sociological Review*, 412-428.
- Branthwaite, A., & Patterson, S. (2011). The Power of Qualitative Research in the Era of Social Media. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 14(4), 430-440.
- Britzman, D. (1995a). Beyond innocent readings: educational ethnography as a crisis of representation. In W. T. Pink & G. W. Noblit (Eds.), *Continuity and contradiction: the futures of the sociology of education* (pp. 133-156). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 723-742.
- Brown, L. M. (1998) *Raising Their Voices: The Politics of Girls' Anger*. Cambridge,
- Brown, W. (2003). Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy. *Theory & Event*, 7(1).

- Bruckheimer, J. (Producer), & Hogan, P.J. (Director) (2009). *Confessions of a Shopaholic* [Motion picture]. USA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Buchanan, A.E. (1982). *Marx and Justice*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Burawoy, M. (1998). The Extended Case Method. *Sociological Theory*, 16(1), 4 - 33.
- Burman, E. (2005). Childhood, neo-liberalism and the feminization of education. *Gender and Education*, 17(4), 351-367.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex."* New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997). Merely Cultural. *Social Text* 52/53, 15(3-4), 265-277.
- Cannon, L.W., Higginbotham, E., & Leung, M.L. (1988). Race and Class Bias in Qualitative Research on Women. *Gender & Society*, 2(4), 449 – 462.
- CanWest News. (2007, Sep. 1). Youth and random violent crime appears to be escalating. *Canada West News Service*, p. 2. Retrieved from <http://www.canada.com/topics/news/story>
- Castells, M. (2000). *The Rise of the Network Society* (2 ed. Vol. 1). Oxford: Blackwell.
- CBC News. (July 10, 2009). Youth unemployment highest in 11 years: Stats Canada. *Canadian Press*, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada>.
- CBC News. (2010). *Vancouver eyes rental fix for Olympic Village 'Very difficult to recoup all of the investment for taxpayers'*. Retrieved April 12, 2011 from <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia>.
- CCSD. (2000a). Poverty trends call for new approach in government policy. Retrieved April 12, 2011 from <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2000/fbpov00/pr.htm>.
- CCSD. (2000b). Thinking Ahead: Trends Affecting Public Education in the Future. Retrieved March 25, 2011 from <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/gordon/part2.htm>.
- Chesney-Lind, M. (2004). *Girls and Violence: Is the Gender Gap Closing?* : National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.
- Chesney-Lind, M., & Irwin, K. (2004). From Badness to Meanness: Popular Constructions of Contemporary Girlhood. In M. Fine & A. Harris, (Eds.), *All About the Girl* (pp. 45-58). New York: Routledge.
- Chesney-Lind, M., Morash, M., & Stevens, T., (2008). Girls' troubles, girls' delinquency, and gender responsive programming: A review. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 41(1), 162-189.
- Christian-Smith, L. (1987). Gender, Popular Culture, and Curriculum: Adolescent Romance Novels as Gender Text. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 17(4), 365-406.
- Chunn, D. E. (2003). Boys Will be Men, Girls Will be Mothers. In N. Janovicek & J. Parr (Eds.), *Histories of Canadian Children and Youth* (pp. 188-206). Oxford: Oxford University Press
- City-of-Vancouver. (2005). City Services and Community Resources. Retrieved April 12, 2011 from http://vancouver.ca/community_profiles/index.htm.
- City-of-Vancouver. (2008). Vancouver Economic Development: Economic Profile. Retrieved April 13, 2011 from <http://www.vancouvereconomic.com>.
- Clark, C.D. (1999). The autodriven interview: A photographic viewfinder into children's experiences. *Visual Sociology*, 14, 39-50.
- Clark-Ibanez, M. (2007). Inner-City Children in Sharper Focus: Sociology of Childhood and Photo Elicitation Interviews. In G. Stanczak (Ed.), *Visual Research Methods* (pp. 167-196). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clegg, S. (2006) The problem of agency in feminism: a critical realist approach. *Gender and Education*, 18(3), 309 – 324.
- Clifford, J. (1986). Introduction: Partial Truths. In J. Clifford & G.E. Marcus, (Eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (pp. 1-26). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cohen, P. (1980). Subcultural conflict and working-class community. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis, (Eds.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 1972-79 (pp. 78-86). London: Routledge.
- Cohen, P. (1999). *Rethinking the Youth Question*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

- Collins, P.H. (1994). Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood. In E.N. Glenn, G. Chang, L.R. Forcey (Eds.), *Mothering: Ideology, experience, and agency* (pp. 45-66). London: Routledge.
- Comacchio, C. (2006). *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920-1950*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Connell, R.W. (1987). *Gender and Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Connolly, P. & Healy, J. (2004) Symbolic violence and the neighborhood: the educational aspirations of 7–8 year old working class girls. *British Journal of Sociology*, 55(4), 511–529.
- Connor, S. (2000). Making an issue of cultural phenomenology. *Critical Quarterly*, 42(1), 2-6.
- Cook, P. & Johnston, C. (1988). The Place of Woman in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh. In C. Penley (Ed.), *Feminism and Film Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Corrado, R., Odgers, C., & Cohen, I. (2000). The incarceration of female young offenders: Protection for whom. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 42(2), 189-203.
- Corsaro, W.A. (2005). *Sociology of Childhood*. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Crawford, D.M., Whitbeck, L.B., & Hoyt, D.R. (2009). Propensity for Violence Among Homeless and Runaway Adolescents: An Event History Analysis. *Crime & Delinquency*, 56 (3). Retrieved from <http://cad.sagepub.com/content/57/6/950.short>.
- Crawford, P. I. (1992). Film as discourse: the invention of anthropological realities. In P. I. Crawford & D. Turton (Eds.), *Film as Ethnography* (pp. 66-84). Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press.
- Croghan, R., Griffin, C., Hunter, J., & Phoenix, A. (2006). Style Failure: Consumption, Identity, and Social Exclusion. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9(4), 463-478.
- Crompton, R. (1998). *Class and Subjectification*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Crompton, N. (2010). The new gentrification package for Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Rabble*, Retrieved August 2011, from <http://www.rabble.ca/news/2010/01>.
- Cuadraz, G.H., & Uttal, L. (1999). Intersectionality and In-depth Interviews: Methodological Strategies For Analyzing Race, Class, and Gender. *Race Gender Class*, 6(3), 156-186.
- CYCABC. (2010). Code of Ethics. Retrieved June 15, 2010 from <http://www.cycabc.com>.
- Davies, B. (1989). The Discursive Production of the Male/Female Dualism in School Settings. *Oxford Review of Education*, 15(3), 229-241.
- Davies, B. (1990). The concept of agency: A feminist poststructuralist analysis. *Social Analysis: Journal of Culture and Social Practice*, 29, 42-53.
- Davies, B. (1997). The Subject of Post-structuralism. *Gender and Education*, 9(3), 271-283.
- Davies, B., & Banks, C. (1992). The gender trap: a feminist post structuralist analysis of primary school children's talk about gender. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 24(1), 1-25.
- Davies, B., Dormer, S., Gannon, S., & Laws, C. (2001). Becoming Schoolgirls: the ambivalent project of subjectification. *Gender and Education*, 13(2), 167-182.
- Davis H.C., & Hutton T. (1994). "Marketing Vancouver's producer services to the Asia Pacific" *The Canadian Geographer*, 38(1) 18-28.
- de Graaf, M., & Grotenhuis, S. (1993). Socialization, a useful category for women's studies? In M. de Ras & M. Lunenberg (Eds.), *Girls, Girlhood, and Girls' Studies in Transition*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- de Ras, M., & Lunenberg, M. (1993). Alice in Wonderland. In M. de Ras & M. Lunenberg (Eds.), *Girls, Girlhood, and Girls' Studies in Transition*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Dean, A. (2005). *Locking Them Up To Keep Them 'Safe': Criminalized Girls in British Columbia*. Justice For Girls: Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1977). *Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia* New York: Viking Press.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., (pp. 1–28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Dept. for Children, Schools & Families UK. (2006). Every Child Matters-Change for Children. Retrieved May 19, 2011 from <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/>.
- Dept. of Health & Human Services, US. (2007). *Girl Power*. Retrieved January 12, 2008, from <http://www.girlpower.gov>.

- Dept. of Justice. (2009). The Youth Criminal Justice Act: Summary and Background. Retrieved April 29, 2011 from <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/yj-jj/ycja-lsja/back-hist.html>.
- Derksen, J., & Smith, N. (2002). Urban Regeneration: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy, In R. Shier (Ed.), *Stan Douglas: Every building on 100 West Hastings* (pp. 62 - 95). Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Dillabough, J.A., Wang, E., Kennelly, J. (2005). "Ginas," "thugs," and "gangstas": young people's struggles to "become somebody" in working-class urban Canada. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 21(2), 83-108.
- Driscoll, C. (1999). Girl Culture, Revenge and Global Capitalism: Cybergirls, Riot Grrls, Spice Girls. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 14(29), 173-197.
- Driscoll, C. (2002). *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.
- Early Learning and Child Care Research Unit. (2007). *Summary of BC Child Care Program Funding Reductions*. Retrieved January 18, 2011 from <http://www.catchcoalition.ca>.
- Ebert, T.L. (1996). For a Red Pedagogy: Feminism, Desire, and Need. *College English*, 58(7), 795-817.
- Ehrenreich, B., & Hochschild, A.R., (2003). *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Ellsworth, E. (1992). Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (pp. 90 – 119). London: Routledge.
- Engels, F. (1943). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (A. West, Trans.). New York: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.
- England, K. (2010). Home, Work, and the Shifting Geographies of Care, *Ethics, Place and Environment*, 13(2), 131-150.
- Entwisle, D.R., Alexander, K.L., & Olson, L.S. (2009). The Adult Transition of At-Risk Youth: Mode of Exit from High School. *Journal of Sociological Research*, 1(1), 1 – 30.
- Epstein, D., Elwood, J., Hey, V. & Maw, J. (1998) *Failing boys? Issues in gender and achievement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Farley, M., & Lynne, J. (2007). *Prostitution of Indigenous Women: Sex Inequality and the Colonization of Canada's First Nations Women*. Retrieved January 12, 2011 from. http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/Prostitution_Indigenous_Women.html.
- Fasick, F.A. (1994). On the "Invention" of Adolescence. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 14(1), 6-23.
- Fetterman, D.M. (1998). *Ethnography Step by Step*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban Public School*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Fine, M. (1995). The politics of who's "at risk." In B. B. Swadener & S. Lubeck (Eds.), *Children and Families "At Promise"* (pp. 76-96). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Fine, M., & Weis, L. (1998). *The Unknown City*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- First-Call. (2007). *Child Poverty Report Card*. Vancouver: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition.
- Foley, D. (2002). Critical ethnography: the reflexive turn. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(4), 469-490.
- Forrest, R. & Kearns, A. (2001). Social cohesion, social capital and the neighborhood. *Urban Studies*, 38, 2125–2143.
- Foucault, M. (1977) [1975]. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1990) [1976]. *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*. (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- France, A. (2008). Risk factor analysis and the youth question. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(1), 1-15.
- Francis, B. (2005) Not knowing their place: girls' classroom behaviour, in: G. Lloyd (Ed.), *Problem girls: understanding and supporting troubled and troublesome girls and young women*. London: Routledge-Falmer.
- Francis, B., & Archer, L. [London Feminist Salon Collective]. (2004). The problematization of agency in postmodern theory: as feminist educational researchers, where do we go from here? *Gender and Education*, 16(1), 25– 33.
- Fraser, M. (1999). Classing Queer. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16(2), 107-131.

- Frazer, E. (1989). Feminist Talk and Talking about Feminism: teenage girls' discourses of gender. *Oxford Review of Education*, 15(3), 281-290.
- Fritzsche, B. (2004). Spicy Strategies: Pop Feminist and Other Empowerments in Girl Culture. In M. Fine & A. Harris, (Eds.), *All About the Girl* (pp. 155-162). New York: Routledge.
- Frommer's On Line. (2005). *Introduction to Vancouver*. Retrieved February 12, 2011 from <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/vancouver/0171010001.html>.
- Gagnier, R. (2000). The Functions of Class at the Present Time: Including Taste, or Sex and Class as Culture. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 11(1), 37-44.
- Galster, G. C. (1986). What is neighborhood? An externality-space approach. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 10, 243-263.
- Galster, G.C. (2001). On the nature of neighborhood. *Urban Studies*, 38, 2111-2124.
- Garcia, F., Kilgore, J., Rodriguez, P., & Thomas, S. (1995). "It's like having a metal detector at the door": A conversation with students about voice, *Theory Into Practice* (Vol. 34, pp. 138): Ohio State University.
- Garrison, E. K. (2000). U.S. Feminism--Grrrrl Style! Youth (Sub)Cultures and the Technologies of the Third Wave. *Feminism Studies*, 26(1), 141-170.
- Gauntlett, D., & Holzwarth, P. (2006). Creative and visual methods for exploring identities *Visual Studies*, 21(1), 82-91.
- Geertz, C. (1995). *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- George, P., Coleman, B., & Barnoff, L. (2010). Stories from the Field: Practicing Structural Social Work in Current Times. *Critical Social Work*, 11(2), 13-27.
- Gibson, K., & Graham, J. (2006). *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Giddens, A. (1996). *In defence of sociology: essays, interpretations, and rejoinders*. Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 147-166.
- Gillies, V. (2005). Raising the 'Meritocracy': Parenting and the Individualization of Social Class, *Sociology*, 39(5), 835-853.
- Gilligan, C., & Brown, L.M. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads: women's psychology and girls' development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gilligan, C., Lyons, N.P., & Hanmer, T.J. (1990). *Making connections: the relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Giroux, H. (1983). Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 53(3), 257-293.
- Giroux, H. (2003). Public Pedagogy and the Politics of Resistance: Notes on a critical theory of educational struggle. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 35(1), 5-16.
- Gleason, M. (1998). "Growing Up to be 'Normal': Psychology Constructs Proper Gender Roles in Post-World War II Canada, 1945-1960." In E. Montigny & L. Chambers (Eds.), *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History* (pp. 39-56). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press
- Glenn, E.N., Chang, G., & Forcey, L.R. (1994). *Mothering: Ideology, experience, and agency*. London: Routledge.
- Goldstein, N., Dovidio, A., Kalbeitzer, R., Weil, J. & Strachan, M. (2007). Anger Management for Female Juvenile Offenders: Results of a Pilot Study. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 7(2), 1-28.
- Gonick, M. (2001). What is the 'Problem' with these Girls? Youth and Feminist Pedagogy *Feminism and Psychology*, 11(2), 167-171.
- Gonick, M. (2003). *Between Femininities*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Gonick, M. (2006). Between "Girl Power" and "Reviving Ophelia": Constituting the Neoliberal Girl Subject. *NWSA*, 18(2), 1-23.

- Gore, J. (1992). What We Can Do For You! What *Can* "We" Do For "You"? Struggling over Empowerment in Critical and Feminist Pedagogy. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (pp. 54 – 73). London: Routledge.
- Gorman, J. (2000). Reconsidering Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class(es), *Sociological Forum*, 15(4), 693–717.
- Goutor, D. (2007). *Guarding the Gates: The Canadian Labour Movement and Immigration, 1872–1934*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Greeno, C. G., & Maccoby, E. E. (1986). How Different Is the "Different Voice"? *Signs*, 11(2), 310-316.
- Griffin, C. (1980). *Feminist ethnography*. CCCS Work Group, University of Birmingham: Unpublished working paper .
- Griffin, C. (1985). *Typical girls? Young women from school to the job market*. London: Routledge.
- Griffin, C. (1993). Forever young: discourses of femininity and resistance in British youth research during the 1980s. In M. de Ras & M. Lunenberg (Eds.), *Girls, girlhood and girls' studies in transition*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Griffin, C. (2000). Absences that Matter: Constructions of Sexuality in Studies of Young Women's Friendships. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(2), 227–245.
- Griffith, M. (1998). *The Unschooling Handbook*. Roseville, CA: Three Rivers Press.
- Griffiths, V. (1984). Feminist Research and the Use of Drama. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 7(9), 511-519.
- Griffiths, V. (1986). Using Drama to Get at Gender. *Studies in Sexual Politics*, 9, Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Manchester.
- Grossberg, L. (2007). Cultural Studies, the War against Kids, and the Re-Becoming of U.S. Modernity. In N. K. Denzin and M.D. Giardina (Eds.), *Contesting Empire Globalizing Dissent: Cultural Studies after 9/11*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Gunew, S. M. (2004). *Haunted Nations: The colonial dimensions of multiculturalisms*. London: Routledge.
- Halford, S., & Knowles, C. (2005). More Than Words: Some Reflections on Working Visually. *Sociological Research Online*, 10(1).
- Hall, S. [1989] (1996). New Ethnicities. In D. Morley & K. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (pp. 441-449). London: Routledge.
- Hall, S. (1996). The meaning of New Times. In D. Morley & K. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (pp. 223-237). London: Routledge.
- Hall, S., & Jefferson, T. (1976). *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. London: Hutchinson.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Routledge.
- Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Harding, S. (2004a). *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. New York: Routledge.
- Harding, S. (2004b). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is 'Strong Objectivity'? In S. Nagy Hesse-Biber & M. Yaiser (Eds.), *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research* (pp. 39-64). New York: Oxford.
- Hare, J. (2003). Aboriginal families and Aboriginal education: coming full circle. In J. Barman & M. Gleason (Eds.), *Children, teachers and schools in the history of British Columbia*. (pp. 411-430). Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.
- Harper, D. (1998). An argument for visual sociology. In J. Prosser (Ed.), *Image-based Research* (pp. 22-41). London: Routledge.
- Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: a case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, 17(1), 13-26.
- Harris, A. (1999). Everything a Teenage Girl Should Know: Adolescence and the Production of Femininity, *Women's Studies Journal*, 15(2), 111-124.
- Harris, A. (2003). gURL scenes and grrl zines: the regulation and resistance of girls in late modernity. *Feminist Review*, 75, 38-56.
- Harris, A. (2004). *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty First Century*. New York: Routledge.
- Harris, A., & Fine, M. (2004). *All About the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity*. New York: Routledge.

- Harvey, D. (1990). *The condition of postmodernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Harvey, D. (2006a). Space as a key word. In *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (pp. 119-148). London: Verso.
- Harvey, D. (2006b). The Political Economy of Public Space. In S. M. Low & N. Smith (Eds.), *The Politics of Public Space* (pp. 17-34). New York: Routledge.
- Hattam, R. & Zembylas, M. (2010). What's anger got to do with it? Towards a post-indignation pedagogy for communities in conflict. *Social Identities*, 16(1), 23-40.
- Haylett, C. (2003). Culture, Class and Urban Policy: Reconsidering Equality. *Antipode*, 55-73.
- Health Link BC. (2010). Feeding Your Infant. Retrieved from <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/tn9212.html>.
- Hey, V. (1997a). Northern Accent and Southern Comfort: Subjectivity and Social Class. In P. Mahony & C. Zmroczek (Eds.), *Class Matters: Working Class Women's Perspectives on Social Class*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Hey, V. (1997b). *The Company She Keeps*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hey, V. (2003). Joining the Club? Academia and Working-class Femininities. *Gender and Education*, 15(3), 319-335.
- Hijin, P. (2010). The stranger that is welcomed: female foreign students from Asia, the English language industry, and the ambivalence of 'Asia rising' in British Columbia, Canada. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 17(3), 3-20.
- Holmes, M. (2004). Feeling Beyond Rules: Politicizing the Sociology of Emotion and Anger in Feminist Politics. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 7, 209-227.
- Hookey, G. (2009, Aug. 13). Skyrocketing youth crime distressing. *Maple Ridge News*. Retrieved from <http://www.mapleridgenews.com/>.
- Houston, S., Magili, T., McCollum, M., & Spratt, T. (2001). Developing creative solutions to the problems of children and their families: Communicative reason and the use of forum theatre. *Child & Family Social Work*, 6(4), 285-293.
- Howell, J.T. (1973). *Hard Living on Clay Street: Portrait of Blue-Collar Families*. New York: Anchor/Doubleday Press.
- HRSDC. (1998). Concentrations of Poverty and Distressed Neighbourhoods in Canada. Retrieved May 17, 2011 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/pkrf/publications/1997-002563/page04.shtml>.
- HRSDC. (2008). 2008 Departmental Tracking Survey - Wave 3. Retrieved May 18, 2011 from http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/por/subjects/departamental_tracking/2008/por_164_07b/page04.shtml.
- James A., & Prout, A. (1997). Introduction. In A. James & A. Prout, (Eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (pp. 1-6). London: Falmer Press.
- Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Jameson, F. (2004). The Politics of Utopia. *New Left Review*, (Jan-Feb).
- Jiwani, Y., Steenbergen, C., & Mitchell, C. (2006). *Girlhood: Redefining the Limits*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Jones, G. W. (1991). Urbanization issues in the Asian-Pacific region. *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature*, 5(2), 5-33.
- Jones. (1993). Becoming a 'girl': Post-structuralist suggestions for educational research. *Gender and Education*, 5(2), 157-167.
- Jordon, G., & Weedon, C. (1994). *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World*. London: Blackwell.
- Juristat-Statistics-Canada. (2008). Youth Custody Rates. Retrieved May 20, 2011 from <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=85-002-X&CHROPG=1>.
- Justice-for-Girls. (2009). The Human Rights of Girls in the Criminal Justice System of British Columbia: Realities and Remedies. Retrieved June 6, 2010 from <http://www.justiceforgirls.org>.
- Kaplan, E.A. (1997). *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze*. New York: Routledge.
- Katz, C. (1994). Playing the field: Questions of fieldwork in geography. *The Professional Geographer*, 46(1), 67-72.

- Katz, C. (1998). Disintegrating developments: global economic restructuring and the eroding of ecologies of youth. In T. Skelton & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (pp. 130-144). New York: Routledge.
- Kearney, M. C. (2006). *Girls Make Media*. New York: Routledge.
- Kearney, M.C. (2007). Productive Spaces: Girls' bedrooms as sites of cultural production. *Journal of Children and Media*, 1(2), 126-141.
- Kearns, A. & Parkinson, M. (2001). The significance of neighborhood. *Urban Studies*, 38, 2103-2110.
- Kelly, D., & Pomerantz, S. (2009). Mean, Wild, and Alienated: Girls and the State of Feminism in Popular Culture. *Girlhood Studies*, 2(1), 1-19.
- Kennelly, J. (2011). *Citizen Youth: Culture, Activism, and Agency in a Neoliberal Era*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Kerber, L. (1986). Some Cautionary Words for Historians. *Signs*, 11(2), 304-310.
- Khan, S. (2005). Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the global age, *Signs*, 30(4), 2017-2035.
- Klein, S. (2010). Child Poverty and the Need for a Comprehensive BC Poverty Reduction Plan. *Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives*. Retrieved February 27, 2012 from www.policyalternatives.ca.
- Kline, M. (1993). Complicating the Ideology of Motherhood: Child Welfare Law and First Nation Women. *Queen's Law Journal*, 18, 306 - 324.
- Knowles, C., & Sweetman, P. (2004). *Picturing the Social Landscape: visual methods and the sociological imagination*. London: Routledge.
- Krane & Davies, (2000). Mothering and child protection practice: rethinking risk assessment. *Child & Family Social Work*, (5)1, 35-45.
- Krinsky, C. (2008). *Moral Panics over Contemporary Children and Youth*. London: Ashgate.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). Approaching Abjection. In J. Kristeva (Au.), *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (L. Roudiez, Trans.) (pp. 1-31). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kusenbach, M. (2003). Street phenomenology: The go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography*, 4(3), 455-485.
- Lareau, A. (1989). *Home Advantage. Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press.
- Lauder, H., Brown, P., Halsey, A.H. (2011). The sociology of education as 'redemption': a critical history. In J. Furlong & M. Lawn (Eds.), *Disciplines of Education: Their Role in the Future of Education Research* (pp. 13-30). New York: Routledge.
- Lawler, S. (2004). Rules of engagement: Habitus, power and resistance. In L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu* (pp. 110-128). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lawler, S. (2005a). Disgusted subjects: the making of middle-class identities. *The Sociological Review*.
- Lawler, S. (2005b). Introduction: Class, Culture, and Identity. *Sociology*, 39(5), 797-806.
- Leblanc, L. (1999). *Pretty in punk: Girls' gender resistance in a boys' subculture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991a). *Critique of Everyday Life* (J. Moore, Trans.). London: Verso.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991b) [1974]. *The Production of Space* (H. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Lesko, N. (1990). Curriculum differentiation as social redemption: The case of school-aged mothers. In R. Page & L. Valli (Eds.), *Curriculum differentiation: Interpretive studies in U.S. secondary schools* (pp. 113-136). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lesko, N. (1996). Denaturalizing Adolescence: The Politics of Contemporary Representations. *Youth and Society*, 28(2), 139-161.
- Lesko, N. (2001). *Act Your Age*. New York: Routledge.
- Lewis, M. E. (2004). A teacher's schoolyard tale: illuminating the vagaries of practicing participatory action research (PAR) pedagogy. *Environmental Education Research*, 10(1), 89-114.
- Lichtman, M. (2010). *Qualitative Research in Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Llewellyn, M. (1980). Studying girls at school. In R. Deem (Ed.), *Schooling for Women's Work* (pp. 42-51). London: Routledge.

- Lovell, T. (2004). Bourdieu, class and gender: 'The return of the living dead'? In L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lucey, H., Melody, J., & Walkerdine, V. (2003). Uneasy Hybrids: psychosocial aspects of becoming educationally successful for working-class young women. *Gender and Education*, 15(3), 285-299.
- Luttrell, W. (2000). Good Enough? Methods for Ethnographic Research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 70(4), 499-523.
- Luttrell, W. (2003). *Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds: Gender, Race, and the Schooling of Pregnant Teens*. New York: Routledge.
- MacDonald, R. (1998). Youth, transitions and social exclusion: Some issues for youth research in the UK, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1(2), 163-176.
- MacDonald, R., & Marsh, J. (2004). Missing School: Educational engagement, youth transitions, and social exclusion, *Youth Society*, 36, 143-162.
- MacDonald, R., & Shildrick, T. (2007). Street Corner Society: Leisure Careers, Youth (Sub)culture and Social Exclusion. *Leisure Studies*, 26(3), 339 - 355
- MacDonald, R., Shildrick, T., Webster, C., & Simpson, D. (2005). Growing Up in Poor Neighborhoods: The significance of class and place in the extended transitions of 'socially excluded' young adults. *Sociology*, 39(5), 873-891.
- Mahony, P., & Zmroczek, C. (1997). *Class Matters: Working Class Women's Perspectives on Social Class*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Maira, S., & Soep, E. (2005). *Youthscapes: The Popular, the National, the Global*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Philadelphia Press.
- Males, M. (1996). *Scapegoat Generation*. Monroe, ME.: Common Courage Press.
- Mann, R.M., Senn, C.Y., Girard, A., Ackbar, S. (2007) Community-Based Interventions for At-Risk Youth in Ontario under Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act: A Case Study of a "Runaway" Girl. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 49(1), 37-74.
- Margolis, E. (2004). Looking at discipline, looking at labour: Photographic representations of Indian boarding schools. *Visual Studies*, 19(1), 72-96.
- Marquez-Zeknov, K. (2007). Through city students' eyes: urban students' beliefs about school's purposes, supports and impediments. *Visual Studies*, 22(2), 138-154.
- Martin, D.G. (2003). Enacting Neighborhood. *Urban Geography*, 24(5), 361-385.
- Marx, K. [1867] (1976). *Capital, Vol. 1* (B. Fowkes, Trans.) Chap. 1. London: New Left Review.
- Massey, D. (1992). Politics and Space/Time. *New Left Review*, 1(196), 1-13.
- Massey, D. (1995). *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. London: Macmillan.
- Massey, D. (1998). The Spatial Construction of Youth Cultures. In T. Skelton & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (pp. 121-129). New York: Routledge.
- Massey, D. (1999). *Spaces of Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. Chap. 12 - 14. London: Sage Publications.
- Massey, D., Allen, J., & Sarre, P. (1999). Introduction. In D. Massey, J. Allen & P. Sarre (Eds.), *Human Geography Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mazzarella, S. (2007). Girls in Crisis: Newspaper Coverage of Adolescent Girls. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 31(1), 6-27.
- Mazzarella, S., & Pecora-Odom, N. (1999). *Growing up Girls: Popular Culture and the Construction of Identity*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- McCorkel, J., & Myers, K. (2003). What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field. *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(2), 199-231.
- McIntyre, A. (2000). Constructing meaning about violence, school, and community: participatory action research with urban youth. *The Urban Review*, 32(2), 123-154.
- McLaren, P. (2005) *Capitalists and Conquerors*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.
- McLeod, J. (2000). Subjectivity and Schooling in a Longitudinal Study of Secondary Students. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 21(4), 501-521.
- McLeod, J., & Wright, K. (2009). The Talking Cure in Everyday Life: Gender, Generations and Friendship. *Sociology*, 43(1), 122-139.

- McLeod, J., & Yates, L. (2006). *Making Modern Lives: Subjectivity, Schooling, and Social Change*. New York: SUNY Press.
- McMahon, M. (1995). *Engendering Motherhood*. New York: Guilford Press.
- McRobbie, A. (1978). Working-class girls and the culture of femininity. In Women's Studies Group (Ed.), *Women Take Issue* (pp. 96-108). London: Hutchinson.
- McRobbie, A. (1980). Settling Accounts with subcultures: a feminist critique. *Screen Education*, 34, 37-49.
- McRobbie, A. (1991). *Feminism and Youth Culture: from 'Jackie' to 'Just Seventeen.'* Hampshire: MacMillan Press.
- McRobbie, A. (2000). *Feminism and Youth Culture*. London: MacMillan Press.
- McRobbie, A. (2004a) 'Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime'. In A. Harris (Ed.), *All About the Girl: Culture, Power and Identity* (pp. 3-14). New York: Routledge.
- McRobbie, A. (2004b). Notes on 'What Not to Wear' and post-feminist symbolic violence. In L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu* (pp. 99-109). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- McRobbie, A. (2007). TOP GIRLS? Young women and the post-feminist sexual contract. *Cultural Studies*, 21(4), 718-737.
- McRobbie, & Garber, J. (1976). Girls and Subcultures. In S. Hall & T. Jefferson (Eds.), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. London: Hutchinson.
- McRobbie, A., & McCabe, T. (1981). *Feminism For Girls. An adventure story*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Merriam, S.B., & Johnson-Bailey, J. (2001). Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *Intl. Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(5), 405-416.
- Merrifield, A. (2002). Henri Lefebvre: the Urban Revolution. In A. Merrifield (Au.), *Metromarxism: A Marxist Tale of the City*. New York: Routledge.
- Michaels, L. (Producer), & Waters, M. (Director). (2004). *Mean Girls* [Motion picture]. USA: Paramount Pictures.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Source Book*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Miles, S. (2000). *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Miller, W.I. (1997). *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Miron, L. F., & Larua, M. (1998). Student Voice as Agency: Resistance and Accommodation in Inner-City Schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29(2), 189-213.
- Mirzoeff, N. (2002) What is visual culture? In N. Mirzoeff (Ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader* (pp. 3-13). London: Routledge.
- Mohanty, C.T. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press.
- Muggleton, D. (2000). *Inside Subcultures: The Postmodern Meaning of Style*. New York: Berg.
- Mullaly, B. (1997). *Structural social work practice: Ideology, theory, and practice* (2nd ed.). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Mulvey, L. (1988). Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.' In C. Penley (Ed.), *Feminism and Film Theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Myers, T. (2006). *Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.
- Mythili, R. (2006). Girls, White Worlds: Adolescence and the Making of Racialized Selves. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 43(2), 165-183.
- Naples, N.A. (1992). Activist Mothering: Cross-Generational Continuity in the Community Work of Women from Low-Income Urban Neighborhoods. *Gender & Society*, 6(3), 441-463.
- Nathanson, C.A. (1991). *Dangerous Passage: The Social Control of Sexuality in Women's Adolescence*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Nayak, A. (2003). *Race, place, and Globalization: youth cultures in a changing world*. New York: Berg.
- Nayak, A. (2006). Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth and class in the Post-Industrial City. *Sociology*, 40(5), 813-831.

- Nicholson, L. (1987). Feminism and Marx: Integrating Kinship with the Economic. In S. Benhabib & D. Cornell (Eds.), *Feminism as Critique* (pp. 16-30). Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Noblit, G. (2004). Reinscribing Critique in Educational Ethnography: Critical and Postcritical Ethnography. In K. deMarrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences* (pp. 181-202). Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum Associates.
- O'Connor, C.D. (2008). Citizen attitudes toward the police in Canada. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 31(4), 578-595. Retrieved from www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.
- O'Reilly, A. (2004). *Mother Outlaws: Theories and practices of empowered mothering*. Toronto: Women's Press.
- O'Reilly, K. (2006). Women Fieldworkers and the Politics of Participation. *Signs*, 31(4), 1075-1098.
- O'Sullivan, D. (2008). Turning theory on ourselves: Some resources and constraints for adult educators. *The Adult Learner*, pp. 13-32.
- Olds, K. (1995). Globalization and the production of new urban spaces: Pacific Rim megaprojects in the late 20th century. *Environment and Planning*, 27(11), 1713-1743.
- Olson, P. (1982). Urban neighborhood research: Its development and current focus. *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 17, 491-518.
- Orenstein, P. (1994). *School Girls*. New York: Doubleday.
- Ou, S.R. (2008) Do GED Recipients Differ From Graduates and School Dropouts? Findings From an Inner-City Cohort. *Urban Education*, 43(1), 83 – 117.
- Packard, J. (2008). I'm gonna show you what it's really like out here: the power and limitation of participatory visual methods. *Visual Studies*, 23(1), 63-77.
- Pakulski, J., & Waters, M. (1996). The Reshaping and Dissolution of Social Class in Advanced Society. *Theory and Society*, 25, 667-691.
- Palmer, D.L. (1996). Determinants of Canadian attitudes toward immigration: More than just racism? *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 28(3), 180-192.
- Palsley, B. (2008). The Global Tradition of Smudge and Incense. Retrieved March 20, 2011 from <http://www.gumboot.net/projects/heavenscent.html>.
- Park, R. E., Burgess, E. W., & McKenzie, R. D. (Eds.). (1967). [1925], *The City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Peck, J. (1995). TV Talk Shows as Therapeutic Discourse: The Ideological Labor of the Televised Talking Cure. *Communication Theory*, 5(1), 58-81.
- Peter, G. (1988). *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. London: Papermac.
- Peters, J. (2011). Neoliberal Convergence in North America and Western Europe. *Review of International Political Economy*, 1, 1-28.
- Pilkington, H., & Johnson, R. (2003). Peripheral youth: Relations of identity and power in global/local context. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6(3), 259-283.
- Pink, S. (2001). More visualizing, more methodologies: on video, reflexivity and qualitative research. *The Sociological Review*, 49(4), 586-599.
- Pink, S. (2007a). *Doing Visual Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Pink, S. (2007b). Walking with video. *Visual Studies*, 22(3), 240-252.
- Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. New York: Ballantine.
- Plant, R. J. (2010). *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pomerantz, S. (2005). *Dressing the part: girls, style & school identities*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from University of British Columbia library, Vancouver, BC.
- Praso, S. (2005). *The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls, and Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient*. Cambridge, MA: Public Affairs.
- Prout, A., & James, A. (1997). A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood? In A. James & A. Prout (Eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (pp. 7-33). London: Falmer Press.
- Prosser, J. (2007). Visual Methods and the Visual Culture of Schools. *Visual Studies*, 22(1), 13-30.
- Pumain, D. (2006). Spatiality. *Hypergeo*. Retrieved July 20, 2011 from http://www.hypergeo.eu/article.php3?id_article=181.

- Qvortrup, J. (1997). A voice for children in statistical and social accounting: A plea for children's rights to be heard. In A. James & A. Prout, (Eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (pp. 85-95). London: Falmer Press.
- Raby, R. (2002). A Tangle of Discourses: Girls Negotiating Adolescence. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 5(4), 425-448.
- Racker, H. (2001). *Transference and Counter-Transference*. International Universities Press.
- Rattansi, A., & Phoenix, A. (2005). Rethinking Youth Identities: Modernist and Postmodernist Frameworks. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 5(2), 97-123.
- Rathzel, N. (2000). Living Differences: Ethnicity and Fearless Girls in Public Spaces. *Social Identities*, 6(2), 119-142.
- Ramazanoglu, C., & Holland, J. (2000). Still telling it like it is? Problems of feminist truth claims. In S. Ahmed, (Ed.), *Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism* (pp. 207-220). London: Routledge.
- Ramazanoglu, C., & Holland, J. (2004a). From Truth/Reality to Knowledge/Power: Taking a Feminist Standpoint. In *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* (pp. 60-78). London: Sage.
- Ramazanoglu, C., & Holland, J. (2004b). Researching 'Others': Feminist Methodology and the Politics of Difference. In *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices* (pp. 105-122). London: Sage.
- Raphael, D. (2007). *Poverty and Policy in Canada: Implications for Health and Quality of Life*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Reay, D. (1997). The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic: The Success of Failure or the Failure of Success? In P. Mahony & C. Zmroczek (Eds.), *Class Matters: 'Working-Class' Women's Perspectives on Social Class*, (pp. 19-30). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Reay, D. (1998). Rethinking Social Class: Qualitative Perspectives on Class and Gender. *Sociology*, 32(2), 259-275.
- Reay, D. (2004). Mostly Roughs and Toughs: Social Class, Race and Representation in Inner City Schooling. *Sociology*, 38(5).
- Reay, D. (2007). 'Unruly Places': Inner-city Comprehensives, Middle-class Imaginaries and Working-class Children. *Urban Studies*, 44(7), 1191-1201.
- Reay, D., & Lucey, H. (2000). "I don't really like it here but I don't want to be anywhere else:" Children and inner city council estates. *Antipode*, 32(4), 410-428.
- Reay, D., & Plummer, G. (2001). Failing working-class girls. Response. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71, 175-176.
- Reid-Walsh, J., & Mitchell, C. (2004). Girls' Web Sites: A Virtual "Room of One's Own"? In M. Fine & A. Harris, (Eds.), *All About the Girl* (pp. 173-182). New York: Routledge.
- Renold, E. (2000). 'Coming out': Gender, (hetero)sexuality and the primary school. *Gender and Education*, 12(3), 309-326.
- Ringrose, J. (2006) A New Universal Mean Girl: Examining the Discursive Construction and Social Regulation of a New Feminine Pathology. *Feminism Psychology*, 16(4), 405-424
- Ringrose, J. (2007). Successful girls? Complicating post-feminist, neoliberal discourses of educational achievement and gender equality. *Gender and Education*, 19(4), 471-489.
- Roe, G.W. (2009). Fixed in Place: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the Community of Clients. *BC Studies*, 64, 75-101.
- Rose, G. (2006). *Visual Methodologies: An Intro. to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: Sage.
- Rose, N. (1990). Governing economic life. *Economy and Society*, 19(1), 1-31.
- Rose, N. (1996). The death of the social? Re-figuring the territory of government. *Economy and Society*, 25(3), 327-356.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Ross, A. (1989). *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Rouse, R. (1995). Thinking through transnationalism: notes on the cultural politics of class relations in the contemporary United States. *Public Culture*, 7(2), 353-402.
- Rubin, L. (1976). *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class Family*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ruddick, S. (2003). The Politics of Aging: Globalization and the Restructuring of Youth and Childhood. *Antipode*, 334-362.

- Samuels, J. (2007). When Words are Not Enough: Eliciting Children's Experiences of Buddhist Monastic Life Through Photographs. In G. Stanczak (Ed.), *Visual Research Methods* (pp. 197-224). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sandaoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.
- Sangster, J. (2002a). Creating Social and Moral Citizens. In R. Adamoski, D. Chunn & R. Menzies (Eds.), *Contesting Canadian Citizenship* (pp. 337-358). Toronto: Broadview Press.
- Sangster, J. (2002b). *Girl Trouble: Female delinquency in English Canada*. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Sassatelli, R. (1999). Interaction Order and Beyond: A Field Analysis of Body Culture with Fitness Gyms. *Body & Society*, 5(2-3), 227-248.
- Sassen, S. (2001). *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Satzewich, V., & Shaffir, W. (2009). Racism versus Professionalism: Claims and Counter-claims about Racial Profiling. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 51(2), 199-226.
- Schilt, K. (2003). I'll Resist with Every Inch and Every Breath. *Youth & Society*, 35(1), 71-97.
- Schissel, B. (1997). Youth Crime, Moral Panics, and the News: The Conspiracy against the Marginalized in Canada. *Social Justice*, 24.
- Schissel, B. (2006). *Still blaming children: youth conduct and the politics of child hating*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing Co.
- Schrum, K. (2004). Emergence of Teenage Girls. In, *Some Wore Bobby Sox* (pp. 11-21). New York: Palgrave.
- Shields, R. (1991). *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. London: Routledge.
- Shields, R. (1999). *Lefebvre, love, and struggle: Spatial dialectics*. New York: Routledge.
- Shier, R. (Ed.) (2002). *Stan Douglas : Every building on 100 West Hastings*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Shildrick, T. (2006). Youth culture, subculture and the importance of neighborhood. *Young*, 14(1), 61-74.
- Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of Exclusion*. London: Routledge.
- Sipe L., Ghiso M. (2004). Developing conceptual categories in classroom descriptive research: Some problems and possibilities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 35(4): 472-485.
- Sison, M.N. (2007, Nov. 1). Church may soon be reimbursed for residential school payouts. *Anglican Journal*. Retrieved from <http://media.knet.ca/node/3142>
- Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of Class and Gender*. London: Sage.
- Skeggs, B. (2004a). *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Skeggs, B. (2004b). Context and Background: Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of class, gender, and sexuality. In L. Adkins & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu* (pp. 19-34). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Skeggs, B. (2004c). Uneasy Alignments, Resourcing Respectable Subjectivity. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 10(2), 291-298.
- Skeggs, B. (2005). The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation. *Sociology*, 39(5), 965-982.
- Skourtes, S. (Producer/Director). (2003). *Growing Up a Mother: The story of three teenage girls and their babies* [Motion picture]. (Available from the Meme Factory, www.thememefactory.org).
- Skourtes, S. (2008). Key Debates in Social Theory in Relation to Girls' Studies: Comprehensive Exam Question #2. University of British Columbia.
- Smith, A. (1776). *The Wealth of Nations*. London: W. Strahan & T. Cadell.
- Smith, D. (1988). Femininity as text. In L. Roman, L. Christian-Smith & E. Ellsworth (Eds.), *Becoming feminine: The politics of popular culture* (pp. 37-59). New York: Falmer Press.
- Smith, D. (2005). *On the Margins of Inclusion*, London: Policy Press.
- Smith, J. (1997). Doin' It for the Ladies—Youth Feminism: Cultural Productions/Cultural Activism. In L. Heywood & J. Drake (Eds.), *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (pp. 226-238). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Smith, K. (2007). Social work, restructuring and everyday resistance: "Best practices" gone underground. In D. Baines (Ed.), *Doing anti-oppressive practice: Building transformative, politicized social work*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Smith, N. (2002). New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy. *Antipode*, 34(3), 427-441.

- Smith, D. & Furlong, M.J. (1998). Addressing Youth Anger and Aggression in School Settings, *Psychology in the Schools*, 35(3).
- Sommers, J., & Blomley, N. (2002). The Worst Block in Vancouver. In R. Shier (Ed.), *Stan Douglas : Every building on 100 West Hastings* (pp. 89 - 101). Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Stacey, J (1991). Can there be a feminist ethnography? In S.B. Gluck and D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. London: Routledge.
- Stanczak, G. (2007). *Visual research methods: Image, society, and representation*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Stats-Canada. (2006). City of Vancouver Comm. Statistics. Retrieved November 10, 2010 from <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/>.
- Statistics-Canada. (2008). Youth custody and community services in Canada. Retrieved June 2, 2010 from <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=85-002-X&CHROPG=1>.
- Strange, C. (1995). *Toronto's girl problem : the perils and pleasures of the city, 1880-1930*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.
- Strathern, M. (1992). Qualified value: the perspective of gift exchange. In C. Humphrey & S. Hugh-Jones (Eds.), *Barter, Exchange and Value: An Anthropological Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Strathern, M. (1999). *Property, Substance and Effect: Anthropological Essays on Persons and Things*. New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone.
- Strong-Boag, V. (2002). "Getting to Now: Children in Distress In Canada's Past." In. B. Wharf (Ed.), *Community Work Approaches to Child Welfare*. Toronto: Broadview Press.
- Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2001). *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Swadener, B. B. (1995). Children and Families "at Promise": Deconstructing the discourse on risk. In B. B. Swadener & S. Lubeck (Eds.), *Children and Families "At Promise."* (pp. 76-96). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Swadener, B.B., & Lubeck, S. (1995). The Social construction of children and families "at risk." In B. B. Swadener & S. Lubeck (Eds.), *Children and Families "At Promise."* (pp. 1-14). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Sweeney, K. (2005). Grrls Make Movies: The emergence of women-led filmmaking initiatives for teenage girls. *Afterimage*, 33(3), 37-42.
- Taefi, N., & Czapska, A. (2007). *Girl Homelessness in Canada*. Retrieved January 15, 2011 from <http://www.justiceforgirls.org/publications/index.html>.
- Thompson, E.P. (1968). *The Making of the English Working Class* (2nd Ed.). London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- Thompson, S.J., et. Al., (2008). Runaway and Pregnant: Risk Factors Associated with Pregnancy in a National Sample of Runaway/Homeless Female Adolescents, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 43(2), 125-132.
- Thorne, B. (1987). Re-Visioning Women and Social Change: Where Are the Children? *Gender & Society*, 1(1), 85-109.
- Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Thornton, S. (1995). *Club cultures: Music, media and subcultural capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tomlinson, L. (1998). "This Ain't No Disco"...or Is It? Youth Culture and the Rave Phenomenon. In J. Epstein, (Ed.), *Youth Culture: Identity in a Postmodern World* (pp. 195-211). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.
- Tupechka, T., Martin, K., Graham, T. (1997). *A Pictorial History: Commercial Drive, 1912-1954*. Vancouver: Our Own Backyard.
- US-Dept-of-Education. (2007). Building On Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening the No Child Left Behind Act. Retrieved December 2007, from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/nclb/factsheets>
- United Church of Canada. (2010). Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Retrieved May 27, 2011 from <http://www.united-church.ca>.

- van Duin, J., Poel, Y., & de Waal, M. (1993). Theoretical and Methodological Developments in Youth Research. In M. de Ras & M. Lunenberg (Eds.), *Girls, Girlhood, and Girls' Studies in Transition*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Vancouver-Port-Authority. (2009). Facts and Statistics. Retrieved November 1, 2010 from <http://www.portmetrovanancouver.com/en/Default.aspx>.
- Vincent, C., Ball, S.J., & Braun, A. (2008). 'It's like saying "coloured"': understanding and analyzing the urban working classes. *The Sociological Review*, 56(1), 61-77.
- Vogel, A., & Wyse, D. (1993). *Vancouver: A History in Photographs*. Bnaff: Altitude Publishing.
- Wagner, J. (2004). Constructing credible images: Documentary studies, social research and visual studies. *Visual Studies* (January).
- Walkerdine, V. (1989). *Counting Girls Out*. London: Virago.
- Walkerdine, V. (1990). *School Girl Fictions*. London: Verso.
- Walkerdine, V. (1993). Girlhood through the looking glass. In M. d. Ras & M. Lunenberg (Eds.), *Girls, girlhood and girls' studies in transition*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Walkerdine, V. (1997). *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Walkerdine, V. (2003). Reclassifying Upward Mobility: femininity and the neo-liberal subject. *Gender and Education*, 15(3), 237-248.
- Walkerdine, V., Lucey, H., & Melody, J. (2001). *Growing up Girl, psychsocial explorations of gender and class*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Walks, R.A., & Bourne, L.S. (2006). Ghettos in Canada's cities? Racial segregation, ethnic enclaves and poverty concentration in Canadian urban areas. *Canadian Geographer*, 50(3), 273-297.
- Ward, J. V., & Benjamin, B. C. (2004). Women, Girls, and the Unfinished Work of Connection: A Critical Review of American Girls' Studie. In M. Fine & A. Harris (Eds.), *All About the Girl* (pp. 15-28). New York: Routledge.
- Weis, L. (1990). *Working Class without Work: High School Students in a Deindustrializing Economy*. New York: Routledge.
- Weis, L., & Hall, J. (2001). 'I had a lot of black friends growing up that my father didn't know about': an exploration of white poor and working class female racism. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 10(1), 43-66.
- Weis, L., Proweller, A., & Centrie, C. (1997) Re-examining "A Moment in History:" loss of privilege in side white working-class masculinity in the 1990s. In, M. Fine, L. Weis, L. Powell, & M. Wong (Eds.), *Off White: readings on race, power, and society*. New York: Routledge.
- Whyte, W.R. (1955). *Street corner society: the social structure of an Italian slum* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to Labor*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Willis, P. (2003). Foot soldiers of modernity: The dialectics of cultural consumption and the 21st-century school. *Harvard Educational Review*, 73(3), 390-415.
- Wilson, B. and Atkinson, M. R. (2005). Rave and Straightedge, the Virtual and the Real: Exploring Online and Offline Experiences in Canadian Youth Subculture, *Youth & Society*, 36(3), 276-311.
- Wimsatt, W.U. (1999). *No More Prisons*. New York: Soft Skull Press.
- Wiseman, R. (2002). *Queen Bees and Wannabes*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Woodcock, R. (2012). Knowing where you stand: Neoliberal and other foundations for social work. *Journal of Comparative Social Welfare*, 28(1), 1-15.
- Woodhead, M. (1997). Psychology and the cultural construction of children's needs. In A. James & A. Prout, (Eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (pp. 63-77). London: Falmer Press.
- Wright, T. (1997). *Out of Place*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Zaman, H. (2006). *Breaking the Iron Wall: Decommodification and Immigrant Women's Labor in Canada*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

APPENDIX A – Research Participants (The Girls)

	Name	Ethnicity / age	Affiliation	Research Participation
1	Cali	White / 18	Center regular	2 interviews w/ photos & go along
2	Ramona	First Nations / 23	Center regular	2 interviews w/ photos & go along
3	Alyssa	White & Black / 16	Center regular	1 interview w/ photos
4	Sam	White / 22	Center regular	2 interviews w/ photos & go along
5	Riley	First Nations / 21	Center regular	2 interviews
6	Donna	White & Black / 20	Center regular	2 interviews & go along
7	Lilly	First Nations / 22	Center regular	2 interviews & go along
8	Jessica	White / 19	Center	1 interview w/ photos
9	Mary	First Nations / 19	Center	2 interviews & go along
10	Kimberly	First Nations / 17	Center	1 interview
11	Sybil	First Nations / 16	Center	1 interview
12	Krista	White / 17	ABE program	2 interviews w/ photos & go along
13	Vangie	Filipina / 17	ABE program	1 interview w/ photos
14	Michelle	White / 17	ABE program	2 interviews w/ photos
15	Alice	Chinese Canadian / 17	ABE program	2 interviews w/ photos & go along
16	Charu	East Indian / 17	ABE program	1 interview & go along
17	Lareina	Filipina / 16	ABE program	2 interviews w/ photos
18	Bethany	Chinese Canadian / 17	ABE program	1 interview
19	Tisha	White / 18	ABE program	1 interview w/ photos
20	Bianca	First Nations / 17	ABE program	1 interviews w/ photos
21	Veronica	First Nations / 17	ABE program	1 interview w/ photos

APPENDIX B - Codes

Self / Use-Value / Affect / History

Girls' Views of Themselves

Self as capable
 Self Good mother
 Self Hard worker
 Self as strong
 Self as bad abject
 Self friendly helpful
 Self – as different
 Self happy
 Self redemption—prove self
 used to party or hang
 out with bad people but
 now trying to be good
 Self identify with outsiders
 identify with the
 downtrodden
 Getting by
 Value – in family
 Value – exchange
 building soc. capital
 Challenges
 Subjectivity care/govt
 View of future

Affect

Affect
 Abject affect – feels out of
 place
 Gender, race – fulfilling
 gendered and/or racialized
 expectations
 Fear
 Fed up
 Flat
 Feels stuck
 Alone
 Sad

Ethnicity

Ethnicity – self as different
 Ethnic identity
 Ethnic pride
 Ethnic resistance
 Value - ethnic discrim.
 discriminating against
 others cause of ethnicity

Inscription/Exchange

Inscription

Inscription
 Class as culture
 Child saving
 School – book smart OR told
 not smart
 Collective minded
 Bad youth -- partier
 Inscription on body – size or
 appearance
 Language
 Space – where you live/hang out
 Peer exclusion/discrimination

Abject

Made to be -- doesn't fit in
 Police
 Class no money

Relationship to Others

Friends as family
 Family
 BYRC

History

Exile born in
 Loss, death
 Residential school
 Accommodation

Reflexivity

Reflexivity
 Relationship to me

Children

Children
 Reasons for having children
 Children source of pride

Space/Spatial Imaginary

Space

BC
 East side spatial imaginary – knows
 east side is bad
 Space West side avoid
 Space hang outs
 Space escape
 No place to go – stuck or isolated,
 trapped
 Space Lefebvre –counter to the
 dominant depiction of the place
 Streets hang out
 Connection outside of Van.
 Moved a lot
 Not connected to space
 Location ES – the occurrence or
 residence happened on the east side
 of Vancouver
 Fear connected to space

Pop. Culture/Gender

Gender

Gender violence
 Gender
 Gender partner/boyfriend
 Gender doesn't like girls

Culture

Culture – counter pop or
 Culture – youth

Leisure
 Work
 Violence
 Alcohol
 Political consciousness

APPENDIX C – Interview Protocol – Staff

Interview Protocol – Staff

To fulfill the requirements of my Ph.D. degree, I am investigating what life is like for young women who live in a global city that has been impacted by economic and social transformations, like Vancouver, and who, on occasion, utilize social services. I am specifically interested in understanding the ways in which young women experience the city. For help in understanding these topics, I would like to interview you since you work in the Vancouver area at a social service agency. I am interested in learning about your views on delivering services to youth in Vancouver, your experiences working at (The Center), and your thoughts about the youth who you work with.

Working in Social Services

1. So, to begin How long have you been working in social services in general and can you talk a little bit about what brought you to this kind of work?

Work at (The Center)

2. Let's talk specifically about The Center, how long have you been working here?
3. What is your job title at The Center and what is it that you do?
4. What do you see as your primary role as an employee here?

The Youth

5. How would you describe the young people who come to the Center?
6. In your mind, why do young people, voluntarily, come to The Center?
7. What is your primary goal for the young people who you work with?
8. Do you have a specific goal for the girls that is different from the boys?

Economic Situation

9. Funding for human and social services is always a challenge, and now that Canada is entering difficult economic times, are you witnessing any financial impacts here at the center? Or anything that you are aware of in terms of funding?
10. What are the biggest challenges that youth who you work with are facing right now? Is it finding a job, finding housing, domestic problems, etc. ?
11. Is it hard for kids to find a job right now? Find housing? Is this different than in the past?
12. What types of familial stresses are you seeing now? Is this different than in the past? What do you attribute this to?