MARKETING CHILDHOOD:
A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ELEMENTARY DRESS CODES

by

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

**Marketing Childhood: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Elementary Dress Codes**

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**ABSTRACT**

“My body is not a distraction” and “Yes, I have breasts” were the slogans used by a group of secondary students from Princeton Secondary School in Princeton, British Columbia who went braless to protest the disciplining of female students for showing their bra straps. In response, the school’s Vice Principal stated “It’s not all about bra straps. I believe in individual expression but I don’t want to see anyone’s butt cheeks” (Demeer, 2018). Body surveillance through dress codes has been a common, but not unattested, practice in public schools. The messages of the dress codes, similar to the Vice Principal’s response, reveals how bodies are constructed as offensive, uncomfortable, distracting, and unruly. Dress codes are often gendered to specifically target girls’ bodies as sexual objects that need to be covered (Arns, 2017; Drewicz Ewing, 2014; Pomerantz, 2007). They can also carry racist or classist assumptions that protect hegemonic white, middle-class values (Aghasaleh, 2018; Morris, 2005).

This thesis shifts the discussion from the bodies of secondary students to the place where dress code disciplining begins, at the Elementary school level. Dress codes are not only value-laden, but actively work as a social practice to produce childhood itself (Pomerantz, 2007). The aim of this thesis was to map out how seven public Elementary school dress codes position bodies and how actors in the surveillance of bodies, such as parents, staff, and students, are entangled in the practice of body disciplining. Through the methods of a Foucauldian discourse analysis, which looks at how disciplinary power works through surveillance to produce subjects, it is argued that dress codes construct childhood as a period of co-investment during which the child’s body is the property of parents and, likewise, the student’s body is property of the school. A major theme throughout the analysis is the concept of productivity and its relation to cultural and economic capital.
LAY SUMMARY

Dress codes are policies typically found in a school’s code of conduct or handbook which detail the requirements for a student’s appearance. This thesis conducts an analysis of seven Elementary public-school dress codes to examine ideas of children’s bodies and childhood. The analysis concluded that children’s bodies in general are treated as property, specifically of parents and the school. Their bodies are meant to be productive and the school is positioned as a workplace and a business where children go through the process of becoming workers. The analysis also found that female students were unequally targeted in the dress codes and faced more pressure to cover-up and keep the school a distraction-free place. Schools, therefore, continue to govern student’s bodies through gendered assumptions. Finally, the dress codes perpetuate religious discrimination, by positioning the covered head as abnormal, and class discrimination by marginalizing students of low socio-economic status.
PREFACE

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Mariah Franzmann.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Wear a bathing suit,” I replied to my third-grade student. Her eyes continued to widen with concern, meeting together with her crinkled nose and furrowed brows. She continued to stand nervously in front of me and explain, again, that her bathing suit showed her belly and had skinny straps. After reassuring her that as long as her bathing suit was functional it would be fine for our swimming field trip, I looked up to see a number of other girls in my classroom watching our conversation from their desks, while the boys chatted excitedly about water slides and diving boards.

I sat at my desk after the final bell with the school’s code of conduct in front of me. There was indeed a section of the dress code that banned showing the midriff and clothing with spaghetti straps. It was surprising to me that my young student already knew the dress code and its application clearly, perhaps so clearly that she didn’t even connect the code to the school space anymore. My student was able to recognize that the dress code did not apply only to the building but was applicable anytime students were under the supervision of a teacher. The idea that I was in charge of her bathing suit decision did not sit well with me. In fact, it only seemed to bring about more questions.

The disbelief I felt in this interaction with my student was not that our Elementary school had a dress code, but rather that my student was applying it to her body the way I once had as a young adult. I was taken back to inscriptions of modesty, purity, and self-control placed on my body and I recognized similar constructions taking place on the bodies of my students. French philosopher Michel Foucault (1995) saw the body as a site of power, specifically a form of disciplinary power that subjectifies individuals through constant surveillance. This power is relational, always operating in actions between people, rather than simply possessed and
exercised by an authority figure. Foucault’s concepts of the body, power, knowledge, and discourse form the theoretical basis for my analysis of Elementary school dress codes.

As a site of power, bodies, particularly the child’s body, are wrapped up in much debate. ‘Moral panics’, or public anxieties around an issue, have involved the child’s body in many ways such as concern over the hypersexualization of girls (Caron, 2006, p. 3) or overinfluence of popular media on youth (Tsaliki, 2015). One way that the body has been impacted by these panics is the widespread implementations of dress code policies. Dress codes have been a long-standing practice in Western schooling and have become a ‘hot topic’ as of late. Dress codes are school policies that provide parameters for student appearance. Drewicz Ewing (2014) stated that, “the language of the dress code does not represent an essence of a/the body; rather, the body is produced through the language of the dress code” (p. 7). In other words, educational policies frame dress in a certain way and work to imagine and (re)produce a particular kind of body.

The construction of a body takes place through the limiting of possible actions as Foucault stated (1982/2000) that “the exercise of power is a ‘conduct of conducts’ and a management of possibilities” (p. 341). Furthermore, policies “are based on the idea that an external regulation is needed, given that the bodies in question are not able to govern themselves either because they are lawless bodies or because they do not yet know how to self-regulate their conduct” (Dussel, 2004, p. 103).

Valentine (2010) argues that each school “evolves its own specific educational ethos, by individual teachers through the exercise of their professional autonomy, and through the individual agency of children in responding to them” (pp. 26-27). This ‘educational ethos’, sometimes referred to as school climate or culture, is an area in Western compulsory schooling that receives much attention. One factor of this environment — student dress — has been a
central focus in media and scholarly avenues. This thesis joins a burgeoning conversation about
dress codes with at least three academic articles published within the last year (Aghasaleh, 2018;
Edwards & Marshall, 2018; Hoose, 2018). Scholars have approached this issue from the legal
and ethical perspective of student’s rights (Arnold & Workman, 2003; DeMitchell, Fossey, &
Cobb, 2000; Gereluk, 2007; Mackay & Burt-Gerrans, 2005) as well as analyzing the
intersections of school dress codes with race, class, and gender (Aghasaleh, 2018; Caron, 2006;
Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998; Drewicz Ewing, 2014; Glickman, 2016; Morris, 2005; Pomerantz,
2007; Raby, 2010; Raby, 2005). These analyses, and most media attention, locate the issue of
dress code disciplining within middle and secondary schools, whereas this thesis will shift the
discussion to the Elementary years, carving out a space for the important examination of, for
example, the sexualization of children’s bodies through dress codes. I’ve entitled my thesis
‘Marketing Childhood’ because dress codes work to construct particular images of childhood,
not only as a branding mechanism to attract consumers to the school, but also to prepare students
as ‘human capital’ for the market. As will be seen in my analysis, schools invest in childhood in
order to produce a productive future worker.

**Purpose Statement**

This thesis will analyze Elementary school dress code policies to map out a network of
surveillance and the positions of the major actors within this network. It will then explore what
‘truths’ about children’s bodies are constructed through these educational policies. Michel
Foucault’s (1982/2000) ‘dividing practices’ will be used to analyze seven Elementary public-
school dress codes. Dividing practices are governing tactics which spatially and socially exclude
bodies. The exclusions have normalizing power in which bodies are positioned within delimited
subjectivities. Importantly, the first delimitations are the two main subject-positions of student
and child. The analysis will then explore the subject-positions of student and child through the concept of ‘human capital’, specifically that of cultural and economic capital\(^1\). It will not only be the amount of cultural or economic capital that the child possesses that will be explored, but also how the child’s body is used as cultural and economic capital by adults. The analysis will provide a brief deconstruction of each of the policies followed by a thematically organized detailing of the dividing practices located in these educational policies.

**Statement of Subjectivity**

My personal conception of ‘teacher’ has mostly stayed within the bounds of compulsory schooling, it is my chosen career and continual fascination. While the term ‘teacher’ will be used within these pages to refer exclusively to the teacher of Western compulsory schooling, it should not be limited in thought to such a minute, yet important, role. In other words, when I refer to myself as a ‘teacher’, on the one hand, I am including myself in what is commonly known as the ‘profession’ of teaching within the compulsory schooling system; and on the other hand, I also do not mean to reduce ‘teacher’ only to the profession, but rather, acknowledge the many facets of ‘teaching’ in the broader educational sphere outside of schooling.

I must admit that my feelings of discomfort with dress codes do not negate my inclusion in the claims made about teachers as instruments of the dress code policies. I too must recognize my role in any negative aspects of dress code policies. Foucault (1982/2000) stated that “people criticize instances of power that are the closest to them, those which exercise their action on

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\(^1\) The separated forms of capital are explored in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Economic capital relates to material and financial resources and cultural capital refers to a person’s education in “the knowledge, skills, and tastes” (Johnstonbaugh, 2018, p. 594) that a person possesses. Access to each of these forms of capital effects a person’s position in society.
individuals” (p. 330). Although the catalyst for my inquiry into dress codes was my experience as a teacher required to enforce the policy, the unease of my position as a teacher stemmed from experiences as a student who was disciplined by teachers for dress violation. I attended a religious high school where female students were expected to be modest so as not to lead our male classmates into temptation. As far as I can recall, I took the female priorities of purity and modesty seriously and rarely had problems with the dress code. This only served to make my embarrassment greater when my bare shoulders earned me a lecture from a teacher and a requirement to cover up on school speech arts day. Feelings of shame embedded the experience in my memory and these resurfaced as a teacher when I found myself in charge of a dress code so similar to the one that controlled my younger self.

I also must recognize the place of privilege from which I write. As a white, middle-class, cis-gender person I have benefited unfairly in society. A central privilege are the opportunities that have allowed me to become a school teacher. It is again privilege that allows me access to the program in which I can write this thesis.

I owe this project to my students and students everywhere who have questioned dress codes. If they did not make me aware of dress codes as an issue, I would never have looked at my own role as teacher. I would not have seen my involvement in the objectification of students’ bodies through dress codes. It has also encouraged me to analyze all facets of my practice in which I may contribute to the objectification of students.

**Overview**

My thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One provided a brief introduction into dress codes and a statement to position myself within the research. I begin with a personal narrative to ground my discussion of educational policy and governance as embodied by myself and my
students and give context for my interest in studying Elementary school dress codes. I also discuss how the opportunity to bear out this ‘interest’ in the form of research comes from a place of privilege.

Chapter Two introduces my theoretical framework and methodology based on the work of Michel Foucault. The three instruments of his “means of correct training” (Foucault, 1995, p. 170), hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and the examination, will form the basis for my argument that dress code policies employ disciplinary power in the construction of children and childhoods. Chapter Two also introduces Foucault’s (1982/2000) methodological concepts of the genealogy of the subject. After a brief discussion of his three modes of objectification, I locate my research within the second mode, dividing practices, and discuss how my analysis will identify the ways bodies are positioned within educational policies. This section will also distinguish the form of discourse analysis used in this thesis, which looks at how educational policy as a governing form produces normalized subjects, from the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis which explores the linguistic aspects of a text to connect to social processes.

Chapter Three is structured as a literature review and it relates to Foucault’s (1980/2000) second mode of objectification, the status of science, as it explores claims made about children’s bodies. The literature review is situated within an analytical framework which draws from the field of children’s geographies to locate how dress codes are influenced by historical understandings of children’s bodies and childhood. Two main historical imaginings are presented: Appollonian, children are innocent and should be protected, and Dionysian, children are deviant and must be controlled (Valentine, 2010). Scholarly work on dress codes is divided into these two sections.
The analysis begins in Chapter Four with a brief overview of the policies and how they were selected. After a discussion of dividing practices, the analysis is sectioned in four major themes, Surveillance, Individual vs. Collective, Spaces of Exception, and Learn to Work and Work to Learn. The first theme begins the mapping of the network of surveillance and how the main actors — parents, staff and students — are positioned. I draw upon Foucault’s (1995) Hierarchical Observation instrument of disciplinary power, but also suggest how surveillance in dress codes presents a ‘heterarchical’ structure and can be expanded to an ‘omniopticon’ rather than the static panoptic framework. The following three themes begin to explicate the discursive regime of ‘productivity’ which normalizes the governing of children’s bodies as property invested by adults. Chapter Five presents conclusions of the analysis and offers recommendations for future research.
My theoretical framework draws heavily on the work of Michel Foucault, who is well-known for his work on knowledge, power, and objectification. In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault details the transition from public forms of punishment such as public executions, chain gangs, and open torture, to a modern form of coercive punishment which he calls ‘discipline’ through the 16th to 20th centuries. Foucault (1995) stated that “discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (p. 170). This was the transition from body-as-spectacle where physical pain and torture represented punishment to using the body as an instrument of productivity. The punishments of this stage were to affect “life rather than the body” through a “system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions” (Foucault, 1995, pp. 11-12). Although the body was no longer the direct object of punishment, it was always “directly involved in the political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it” (Foucault, 1995, p. 25).

Foucault (1995) uses Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, a modern prison design, to illustrate the new form of punishment, which in contrast to the violent, public display of premodern punishment, consists of constant surveillance for the purpose of inducing “in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (p. 201). Bentham’s design achieved this effect through a central tower that could surveil all prisoner’s cells at all times, but through the use of backlighting, the prisoners could not see into the tower. The prisoner then is “seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). This panopticism makes possible the ‘discipline’
which molds obedient subjects through the instruments of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and the examination. Foucault (1995) stated that “the chief function of the disciplinary power is to ‘train’...the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements” (p. 170). The three instruments make up the “means of correct training” (Foucault, 1995, p. 170) which, as the next sections will show, are actively functioning within contemporary Western schooling.

**Hierarchical Observation**

The hierarchical observation begins in the very architecture of the schools as disciplinary institutions as Foucault (1995) stated that “stones can make people docile and knowable” (p. 172). Schools are designed for the constant observation of students; every minute of the school day students can expect their bodies to be under surveillance. The “pedagogical machine” is arranged so that there is a network of surveillance over students that works to increase productivity and functionality (Foucault, 1995, p. 172). This panopticism is present in the regulation of students’ appearance with the dress code as the central tower which is an unseen but seeing figure through peer-to-peer, teacher, and administrator surveillance.

Although Foucault (1995) focused on a panoptic network of surveillance, the observation of students is not limited to this narrow form. Indeed, rather than assume dress codes only operate within the leveled system of administration in schooling, it is important to view the process of dress code discipline in a broader network with multiple actors. A “synopticism” which refers to “the many observing the few” and an “omniopticism” which “refers to the many observing, the many” are two other kinds of surveillance (Ellaway, 2014, p. 548) which can account for the multiplicity of surveillant viewpoints. The differing forms of surveillance align with Foucault’s (1995) conception of power as it is “exercised rather than possessed” (p. 26).
Power is not held by the administrator to be executed on the students, but rather forms a network of positions which exercise power. The multiplicity of surveillance types can more fully account for the network of power relations.

The multiple vantages to surveil student dress present not just a hierarchical observation, but rather a “heterarchical” structure in which dress code surveillance becomes a web of “interconnected and interdependent” networks (Olmedo, Bailey, & Ball, 2013, p. 493). Where a hierarchical structure may present the illusion of a stable, predictable network of disciplinary surveillance (Merlingen, 2011), the heterarchical structure allows for the fluid and varied dynamic of dress code observation. Indeed, this heterarchical organization can account for the differing strengths of links (Lewis, 2017), including the positions of institutional actors and non-institutional actors, in the network of power relations that encompasses dress code disciplining. In other words, a mapping of the network that surveils students’ dress must take into account the plurality of observation points from administrators, parents, educational stakeholders, organizations, and students themselves.

Normalizing Judgement

The second instrument, normalizing judgement, is referred to by Foucault (1995) as the “micro-economy of perpetual penalty” in which people are constantly compared to one another and levelled in comparison (p. 181). This is the beginning of ranks, grades, and hierarchies of progress. This double method of rewards and punishments is well-known to the school system as “all behaviour falls in the field between good and bad marks” (p. 180). Gutting (2005) argues that this ranking system began to define what was ‘normal’ or “socially (or even humanly) acceptable” (p. 84). If a ‘norm’ exists it follows that the ‘abnormal’ exists, which became the most unacceptable human behaviour (Gutting, 2005). Dress code policies attempt to define the
image of ‘normal’ student and consequently punish and view as ‘abnormal’ those who do not meet the criteria of the code. Rabinow (1984) writes that the “technologies of normalization are purportedly impartial techniques for dealing with dangerous social deviations” (p. 21).

**The Examination**

The final instrument is that of the examination, which is a combination of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgement to “establish over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault, 1995, p. 184). In the joining of observation and judgement there is also the bonding of power and knowledge. The ritual of the examination can be found in the exams of formal schooling, medical inspections, military reviews, and more. Foucault (1995) specifically uses the school to illustrate this instrument as he stated, “the school became a sort of apparatus of uninterrupted examination” (p. 186). It is through this uninterrupted surveillance and judgement that the student is individualized and measured as a “describable, analyzable object” (Foucault, 1995, p. 190). The examination treats the individual as a ‘case’ and an “object of knowledge” (p. 192) through their performance of dressing according to policy. Thus, in the case of dress codes, students’ bodies are objectified as sites of knowledge that can be classified, hierarchized, and punished through the exercise of discipline. Foucault (1995) stated that “at the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subject” (p. 197).

**Genealogy of the Subject**

“My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous” (Foucault, 1984, p. 343). This statement by Foucault is part of his response when asked if his work looks for a solution to the problems he illuminates. On the contrary, he firmly rejects the concept of
solutions and attempts only to do a “genealogy of problems” (p. 343). The focal point for this analysis as a critique of dress codes is that they are not bad, but rather, dangerous and, therefore, it is vital to explore this ‘danger’ in relation to Elementary school bodies and attire.

Although this analysis is labelled as a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA), there is no strictly FDA methodology (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017; Hook, 2001). Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis, a methodology pioneered by Norman Fairclough (2013) which focusses on the linguistic aspects of a text to make connections between the text and social processes, Foucault’s (1982/2000) primary focus of his research was the subject, more precisely he aimed to “create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (p. 326). In other words, rather than conduct a systematic analysis of the textual features of the policies, this analysis will map the discursive field produced by educational policies that subjects navigate. One such approach to studying the subject is Foucault’s concept of genealogy. Foucault’s (1977/1994) aim in genealogy was to “arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework” (p. 118). He describes genealogy as:

a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. (p. 118)

Foucault (1984) also stated that there are three domains of genealogy that are possible:

First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation
to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents. (p. 351)

It is the second historical ontology, the “power axis” (Foucault, 1984, p. 352), that Foucault uses in *Discipline and Punish*, and it will be the focus of this analysis; however, this is not to say the other domains are irrelevant as they are interconnected (Levesque, 2013).

**Three Modes of Objectification**

Within the second historical ontology, there are “three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects” which are the modes of inquiry that give themselves the status of sciences, the modes through which the subject is divided in themselves or from others, and the modes in which a person turns themselves into a subject (Foucault, 1982/2000, pp. 326-327). These three modes are enmeshed in one another and can only be distinguished through a dedicated analysis of each mode (Rabinow, 1984).

**Status of Science**

For the first mode of inquiry, “it is a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions that are scientifically acceptable and, hence, capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures” (Foucault, 1977/1994, p. 114). This governing of and by statements is ‘discourse’ which is produced within “the schema of power-knowledge” (Foucault, 1995, p. 227). Power, for Foucault, is not possessed by someone, but rather constitutes actions and relations. The terms power and knowledge have been joined together because Foucault (1995) argued that: “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (p. 27). To analyze discourse,
therefore, is to look at the implications of power-knowledge relations and the governing techniques that have made possible the emergence of a particular subject.

Foucault (1973/2000) viewed the analysis of discourse as a “strategic and polemical game” (p. 3). This ‘game’ has at its base the separation of knowledge from human nature, and of truth from a search for origins. In other words, genealogy looks “not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation” (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 95). Drawing from Nietzsche, Foucault (1973/2000) stated that

knowledge is simply the outcome of the interplay, the encounter, the junction, the struggle, and the compromise between the instincts. Something is produced because the instincts meet, fight one another, and at the end of their battles finally reach a compromise. That something is knowledge. (p. 8)

What is disrupted in this production of knowledge is a unified, cohesive subject. Rather, the subject is constituted within struggle and power relations (Foucault, 1973/2000). This struggle “is always the historical and circumstantial result of conditions outside the domain of knowledge” (Foucault, 1973/2000, p. 13). Thus, genealogy attempts to reveal that knowledge, and the subject, are historically constituted and change through time.

Genealogy interrogates a “regime of truth” that shapes society by focusing on “the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true” (Foucault, 1977/1994, p. 131). Truth, for Foucault (1977/1994), is defined as “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements” (p. 132). These ‘regimes of truth’ operate through scientific discourses to make claims about human beings. Discourse which appeals to science attempts to claim a legitimate, immutable status. Thus, genealogy attempts to
de-naturalize the ‘truths’ about the subject which have been normalized (Levesque, 2013).

Chapter Three of this thesis will focus on this mode of inquiry through a literature review that identifies discourses in dress codes operating as a ‘regime of truth’ that make scientific claims about children’s bodies.

**Dividing Practices**

The second mode of objectification that genealogy examines is how the subject is divided within themselves and/or from others. As the subject is constituted historically, there are “real practices – historically analyzable practices” that cause the subject to be divided (Foucault, 1984, p. 369). This mode of objectification looks closely at the mechanisms of power within these practices that (re)produce norms. In his work on insanity and criminality, Foucault (1982/2000) reveals the process of objectification in the dividing of the mad from the sane and the criminals from the law-abiding. My analysis will look at how children’s bodies are divided, what norms are created to uphold naturalized claims about their bodies, and how these practices in turn create evaluations of children’s subjectivities such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Regarding his method, Foucault (1980/2000) stated, “to put the matter clearly: my problem is to see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth” which he defines as “the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent” (p. 230).

**Internalization**

The final mode of objectification is concerned with the techniques by which subjects internalize the discourses of disciplinary regimes thereby turning themselves into subjects. Foucault (1982/2000) distinguished between two types of subjects: “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (p. 331). Foucault (1995) used Bentham’s panopticon, previously described, to illustrate
internalization as the prisoners began to self-regulate their behaviour as a result of surveillance. On one level, surveillance controls the behaviour of prisoners through discipline, but on another level, it ensures the constant objectification of the subject and internalization of themselves as a ‘criminal’ or ‘delinquent’. It is in this mode of objectification that Foucault’s statement about ‘danger’ is given weight. In my analysis of dress codes, I use this mode to examine the techniques that coerce children into exercising control and regulation over their own bodies. It identifies the normalizing discourses of dress codes (among many others) that children must identify themselves with, as part of the system of schooling.

**Discourse Analysis**

Foucault (1982/2000) stated that “linguistics and semiotics offered instruments for studying relations of signification – but for power relations we had no tools of study” (p. 327). This is a key distinction between a form of discourse analysis which looks at how “language and discourse are used to achieve social goals,” such as Critical Discourse Analysis (Bloor & Bloor, 2015, p. 2), and a form of discourse analysis which navigates the practices of a technique of power which “determines who one is” (p. 331). A discourse analysis, in the Foucauldian sense, is looking at the struggle of the subject, with less emphasis on the lexical and grammatical aspects of the text. The dress code policies will be examined to see where the subject is positioned within a heterarchy of power relations that predicates a struggle against “forms of subjectification” (Foucault, 1982/2000, p. 331).

The genealogical method can illuminate the “taken-for-granted” (Foucault, 1980/2000, p. 200) rationalities in dress codes that work to produce various childhoods. I use the plural form of childhood intentionally, to signify again that it is not a historical constant, but rather is continually formed and reformed through discourse. Foucault (2008) stated of his research on
madness that he began with the statement, “let’s suppose that madness does not exist” (p. 3). This allowed him to explore the practices that suppose madness to exist and specifically to “locate the emergence of a particular type of rationality in governmental practice” (Foucault, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, this discourse analysis will examine the governmental practice of dress code policies that normalize subjectivities of children and childhood.

The analysis will focus on the second mode of objectification, dividing practices, to identify how bodies are subjectified through their spatial and social exclusions. These exclusions represent a “management of possibilities” (Foucault, 1982/2000, p. 341) which is an exercise of governance. Dress codes, as a form of governance, define the performance and performativities of bodies through the regulation of dress. Through an exploration of scholarly literature on these policies, the next chapter will return to the first mode of objectification, the status of science, to interrogate the scientific discourses that have been operating within dress codes.
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Status of Science

How are Children’s Bodies Imagined?

Foucault (1977/1994) stated that school discipline “succeeded in making children’s bodies the object of highly complex systems of manipulation and conditioning” (p. 125). This disciplinary regime, Foucault argues, resulted from a capitalist system that needed to accumulate productive bodies. Thus, the schooling system became an essential governing apparatus. The traditional model of schooling where grade level corresponds to age, sometimes referred to as the ‘factory’ model (Fuss, 2018), is an example of the control and direction of population. On one level, schooling functions as population control by matching chronological age to grade, however, it is also influenced by “social age” which are attitudes and norms about young people at various stages (Gleason, 2017, p. 37).

The social age of students, or how adults may perceive they should look and act, has influenced school policies such as dress codes. I bring attention to the concept of social age because scholarly work in the area of dress codes, discussed below, has focused exclusively on middle and secondary level students. Studies on dress codes have made visible the discursive formation of young people, particularly adolescents, through policies that regulate bodies. As scholarship on dress codes includes a diverse array of disciplines and methodologies, the field of children’s geographies, which looks at how children occupy or use space, provides an analytical framework from which to challenge, trouble, and engage with work on the relationships between student’s bodies, dress, and schooling. Drawing from the field of children’s geographies, this literature review highlights how studies have tried to make sense of the regulation of young people’s bodies in dress codes. As social norms of childhood undoubtedly differ from the
elementary to secondary level, this literature review will act as a departure point from work done on the upper end of childhood and make space for an analysis that looks at what ‘truths’ emerge about young children in dress codes.

Entangled within dress codes are historical understandings about children’s bodies. Under the sub-discipline of children’s geographies, Valentine (2010) looks at “how children’s bodies are ‘present’ in particular ways by considering how they have become a symbol of the meaning of childhood itself” (p. 22). She argues that children have been viewed in Western thought according to a binaried relationship: either as “innately good” or as “evil.” Imagining the child as the “embodiment of ‘goodness’” is the Appollonian view in which children must be protected as they are innocent, vulnerable beings. In contrast, the Dionysian view is related to the “notion of original sin” in which the child is seen as corrupt and must be controlled and disciplined into civilized membership with adult society (Valentine, 2010, p. 23).

In either understanding of childhood, the child is seen as ‘not yet’ adult, in “a process of ‘becoming’” (Valentine, 2010, p. 25). Through practices of “bodily control and comportment,” compulsory schooling has become a “‘hot-bed’ of moral geographies – of moral codes about how and where children ought to learn and behave” (Fielding, 2000; as cited in Valentine, 2010, p. 26). Dress codes, as one of these bodily control practices, shape the space of the school and define how young people can occupy that space. Using the Appollonian/Dionysian binary as an analytical framework, this literature review will look at how dress codes are influenced by dominant understandings of childhood and thus construct the space of the school and regulation of young people’s bodies according to beliefs about childhood. Under this framework, this literature review will endeavor to situate dress codes in a similar way to how Foucault (1995) regarded punishment. Dress codes will be seen as a “complex social function” with both positive
and negative effects and the “punitive methods” are not just “indicators of social structures,” but rather can be framed as a “political tactic” (Foucault, 1995, p. 23).

**Dionysian: Students must be controlled**

Valentine (2010) argues that, in the Dionysian imagining, “the evil child threatens the stability of the adult world and is in need of education and discipline to enable it to develop sufficient bodily control to be civilized into membership of the human race” (p. 23). There are a “range of practices” which schools employ to ensure the appropriate transition from adolescence to adulthood and monitoring appearance is one of these practices (Valentine, 2010). Couched within the discipline of young people’s bodies through dress codes are arguments of professionalism (Glickman, 2016), self-respect (Raby, 2005), and self-discipline (Morris, 2005). These arguments represent the understanding that young people need to learn the qualities of adulthood which they currently lack or resist.

The prerogative for schools to transform young people’s bodies into professional, self-respecting adults results in a constant suspicion of adolescents’ bodies. Based on a correlation analysis of a questionnaire given to secondary students, Arnold and Workman (2003) argue that ownership of offensive t-shirts should be used by teachers as a sign of possible problem behaviour. The analysis correlated the self-reported ownership of an offensive t-shirt, although it was most often only worn at home, with problem behaviours such as substance use, violence, or negative attitudes towards school. The authors base their argument on the communicative power of t-shirts, where “attitudes, behaviour, values, and group affiliation” can be read from clothing (Arnold & Workman, 2003). However, Nguyen (2015) argued that this renders youth “deviant through association” where the offensive t-shirt is read as a sign of criminal potential. Likewise, although Holloman, LaPoint, Alleyne, Palmer, and Sanders-Phillips (1996) argue that dress and
behaviour are related, they would caution against a policy that ignores the background of youth such as “cultural and subcultural influences” (p. 277).

The school’s demand for a certain student appearance reveals assumptions of how appearance and behaviour interact. Nguyen (2015) argues that clothing, specifically the hoodie, “dramatize the materiality of bodies” (p. 795). It is in the relationship between clothing and the body that the object of clothing becomes meaningful; in other words, “these objects only become suspicious when contiguous with some bodies and not others” (Nguyen, 2015, p. 796). Thus, there is a relationship between bodies and clothing to be explored. Scholars who have pursued this have identified how the gender, class, and race of the body changes the perceived communication of the clothing. For example, Nguyen (2015) states that “clothes might also provide an alibi for a racial optics as a surrogate for flesh” (p. 792). All bodies then are not treated equally, and this provides grounds to question what assumptions about young people’s bodies are communicated through dress codes.

According to Aghasaleh (2018), the discourse of suspicion in which clothing is used as a representation of potential negative behaviour, leads to the objectification of certain bodies. This suspicion allows for dress codes to operate as an “oppressive curriculum” functioning through racist, sexist, and heteronormative discourses (Aghasaleh, 2018, p. 94). Moreover, Drewicz Ewing (2014) argues that “institutionalized white supremacy, patriarchy and heteronormativity” (p. 6) set the ideal standard of a body as the “white, male heteronormative, middle class, professional” (p. 98) and all bodies that cannot meet this standard are marked as deviant.

The school’s attempt to mold students into an ideal body for membership in adulthood means that some bodies are privileged, and others are punished (Aghasaleh, 2018; Drewicz Ewing, 2014). Dress codes commonly cite school safety and security, particularly from gang
violence, as a rationale to ban various ‘suspicious’ clothing items such as hoodies, headgear, gang colours, and clothing with reference to drugs, alcohol, and profanity (DeMitchell, Fossey, & Cobb, 2000; Glickman, 2016). However, scholars question whether banning clothing only gives the appearance of violence reduction and provides administrators with an “illusion of control” (Crockett & Wallendorf, 1998, p. 128). Furthermore, the judgements targeting supposedly suspicious gang related clothing can be based on harmful stereotypes that specifically target racial-minority students (Aghasaleh, 2018).

Although Hethorn (1994) argues that dress codes only provide a “Band-aid solution” to gang violence and that educators should focus on “behaviour, not appearance” (p. 48), Gereluk (2007) argues that educators should be able to ban clothing that is oppressive to self or others. Thus, at the same time that banning clothing cannot be used as an alibi for oppression of students, clothing that communicates oppression of a group should be banned. Gereluk (2007) argues that gang clothing can be seen as “designed to intimidate, to bully and to inflict harm on others” and therefore, is oppressive (p. 651). Specifically, the oppression that is felt by students as a result of the ‘intimidating’ clothing causes them to become “disempowered, excluded and unable to challenge the perpetrator” (p. 650). Although other types of oppressive messages, such as racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic, are not referred to by Gereluk (2007), these can also be viewed as oppressive clothing that may be banned.

Similar to the exclusion felt by oppressive messages, students who cannot reach the ideal body standards set by dress codes go through a process by which they “deeply internalize their ‘wrong’ body as part of their subjectivity” (Drewicz Ewing, 2014, p. 99). This internalization can have harmful consequences. Glickman (2016), for example, argues that dress codes are an entry
point for a trans*\(^2\) school to prison pipeline. Writing from the context of the United States, Glickman (2016) argues that students who do not align with ‘typical’ gender roles — “girls are to become ladies and boys are to become gentlemen” (p. 264) — are set on a track that can lead to incarceration as they are forced to suppress their gender identity and expression which can push students out of the education system, which is seen as an unsafe place, and into the criminal justice system. Disciplinary measures that restrict gender expression create a safety issue for trans* students as they can become susceptible to ostracization from peers and could be vulnerable to conflict in their family and home life.

However, it should be noted that students do not passively accept dress code disciplining. Students also use the dress code as a point of resistance against the school when they perceive a mismatch between adult expectations and student identity. Morris (2005) argues that schools are not just teaching students content, but also how to “embody raced, classed, and gendered realities” (p. 28). Students whose bodies do not fit the norm are alienated and this distancing can lead to resistance, which educators may then perceive as oppositional and a dangerous cycle of discipline and resistance is perpetuated (Morris, 2005).

**Appollonian: Students need to be protected**

In binary opposition to the Dionysian approach to the construction of childhood, the Appollonian imagining looks at how childhood has been socially constructed as a period of innocence and vulnerability requiring nurturing and protection from adults (Valentine, 2010). Clothing that disrupts the vision of childhood innocence becomes problematic. Scholars have referred to adult anxiety over young people’s appearance as a moral panic (Caron, 2006;  

\(^2\)Trans* is used by Glickman (2016) “as an umbrella term in an effort to be as inclusive as possible” (p. 264).
Pomerantz, 2007) and this panic has manifested itself in dress codes structured as a health and safety issue (Gereluk, 2007). This section will discuss how discourses of vulnerability and protection in relation to gender expression and identity and the legal rights of young people are exhibited in dress code literature.

Notions of gender and sexuality complicate the innocent imagining of childhood when clothing conflicts with dominant views of femininity and masculinity (Aghasaleh, 2018; Glickman, 2016). A common narrative in dress code literature is that girls’ bodies are a distraction in the learning environment (Aghasaleh, 2018; Pomerantz, 2007; Raby, 2005; Retallack, Ringrose, & Lawrence, 2016; Caron, 2006). Raby (2010) distinguishes this “distraction” as a discourse of normative gender and heterosexuality where “being feminine is about attraction to boys, and masculine boys are attracted to girls” (p. 350). This positions girls’ bodies as inherently sexual and boys as incapable of resisting their sexuality (Raby, 2010). This has been referred to by scholars as a double standard (Pomerantz, 2007; Raby, 2010) and by students as a “slut shaming discourse” (Retallack, Ringrose, & Lawrence, 2016, p. 87).

This double standard shows the discourse of vulnerability by positioning boys as victims of the hyper-sexualization of girls. In contrast to the deviant, provocative positioning of girls’ bodies, boys embody innocence as their “sexuality is presumed neutral” (Caron, 2006, p. 8). These discourses also contradict as girls are simultaneously positioned as ‘in need of help’ because they are assumed to not understand what they are doing when they dress provocatively (Pomerantz, 2007). There are assumptions that boys, media, and other influences pressure naïve girls into dressing in a so-called “sexy” manner (Pomerantz, 2007). Dress codes then paradoxically protect boys from the danger of provocative girls and protect girls as they are victims of societal pressures to be sexy.
Furthermore, at the same time that girls are views as victims of pressure, schools put pressure on girls to protect the learning environment of their male colleagues. Girls are positioned as ‘responsible’ for, what Pomerantz (2007) argues, is the “moral community” of the school (p. 378). Whereas boys cannot be held responsible for their behaviour because of their vulnerability to sexual desires, girls are burdened with the responsibility to keep the school environment distraction-free. This has led to students speaking out in the media about the unfair targeting of females through the Twitter hashtag “#iamaomorethanadistraction” (Retallack, Ringrose, & Lawrence, 2016).

In the American context, Morris (2005) found that the views of femininity and masculinity were also changed by perceptions of race. He notes that African American males have been viewed as “dangerously masculine” and he finds in his study that black girls were viewed as “inadequately feminine” (p. 44). Thus, the Appollonian view of the innocent child is complicated by the perception of black girls as “loud and aggressive” (Morris, 2005, p. 44). The intersection of race and gender reveals another layer of vulnerability manifest within dress codes that works to reproduce inequality. Morris (2005) states that, although it may not be intentional, the discipline of black girls’ femininity worked to “mold these energetic girls into models of quiet compliance and deference” (p.44). In other words, the dress codes aimed to protect norms of white femininity.

The discourse of protection of young people can be found within legal debates over dress codes, particularly in regards to freedom of expression. MacKay and Burt-Gerrans (2005) argue that children live in a duality where they are “legitimate rights bearing individuals at the same time as…being under the protection of adults” (p. 424). This duality has created a tension between the school’s supposed need to protect students’ innocence, and students’ freedom of
expression through dress. McDaniel (2016) offers guidelines for administrators and teachers to navigate the “t-shirt conundrum,” however, these guidelines only provide parameters to ensure administrators are within legal bounds of dress code discipline. Although the guidelines emphasize the protection of students’ freedom of expression, they also position students as in need of protection by the school.

Underlying the discourse of protection is the assumption that schools should be able to discipline students to the threshold of their legal right without consideration about whether certain practices will have a positive or negative affect on students. Indeed, the legality of dress code policies have been challenged in courts in Canada and the United States and Newhall (2013) argues that these challenges “distract educators from their primary mission: educating children” (p. 210). Instead, Aghasaleh (2018) asks the question: “how can we, as teachers, school administrations [sic], and teacher educators, resist those practices that produce our bodies as vulnerable and potential victims and others’ bodies as dangerous and potential violators?” (p. 104; emphasis added).

**Implications for Research**

Raby (2005) states that, “school rules are not only about constructing citizens, but also adolescence” (p. 84). In this literature review I have argued that dress code policies construct, sometimes paradoxically, a vision of youthfulness that aligns with the ability to control, protect and discipline students. Students are either positioned as deviant through the lack of, or resistance to, white, male, heteronormative, middle-class values or as in need of protection as vulnerable, naïve beings. As this literature review has highlighted the construction of adolescence, the next chapter will analyze dress codes at the elementary level to explore how constructions of childhood are present. The way that young children’s bodies are understood will
be different from that of adolescence, including how the Appollonian/Dionysian binary plays into the construction of childhood. For example, perhaps there is a greater presumption of ‘innocence’ in younger children which transfers into ‘deviance’ as they become less ‘child-like’. Thus, the analysis of how dress codes are formulated for younger ages could provide new insights into how dress codes effect young adults, although the two age groups will not be explicitly compared in this analysis.
 CHAPTER 4: FASHIONING THE INSTITUTIONAL SPACE

The data for this analysis are the dress code policies from seven individual Elementary school handbooks publicly available on school websites. The collection process involved gathering school handbooks from schools across British Columbia and reviewing the dress code policies within them. Out of the handbooks collected, seven dress code policies were selected for this analysis. The following section details how specific codes for this analysis were chosen and how they will be used in the analysis. The selected policies are listed in the Appendix and the terms P1, P2, P3, etc. will be used to refer to Policy 1, Policy 2, Policy 3, etc., respectively.

The policies used in this sample originate from separate school districts across British Columbia. Although preference was given to the content of the codes – in terms of clear expressions of dividing practices such as gendered statements or references to the governance of schools – the representation of both rural and urban communities was taken into account during the selection process. Included in the sample are dress code policies from larger urban cities in the Lower Mainland and smaller rural communities in Northern and Central Interior British Columbia to account for differences in social contexts as it can be a factor in the creation of educational policies. Although the dress code policies are available online, many of the school names indicated their geographical region, therefore, schools have been provided pseudonyms. It is acknowledged that the policies can easily be found online regardless of pseudonyms. This section will provide a brief discussion of each of the policies as a foundation for the analysis which follows.

Policy 1 begins with a statement regarding the student’s freedom of expression and the school’s responsibility for the learning environment. At this point, it is unclear what impact the policy assumes clothing has on the learning environment. The policy then states that
“consideration must be given to the health, safety and welfare of the school community.”

Although still vague, the policy determines that there is a connection between student dress and health and safety which then has an impact on the learning environment. This connection is not unique to this particular policy as researchers have found that schools or districts use health and safety – rather vaguely – as a reason for implementing dress codes (Edwards & Marshall, 2018).

Policy 1 then presents a disclaimer regarding freedom of expression in that the choice of student attire “rest[s] primarily with the parent and student,” however the school is presenting “some standards that should assist these decisions.” The list of dress at the end of the policy that is considered inappropriate is presented as “guidance” instead of enforceable prohibitions. As such, the policy does not state any disciplinary processes for those who do not follow the guidelines. Instead, the policy uses terms such as “good examples” and “appropriate for their particular roles” as well as the consideration that school is “a place of work and business and clothing should be reflective of that setting.” Although Policy 1 started with a concern for the health and safety of the school community, it ends with no enforceable protections for health and safety and instead relies on value statements about the purpose of schooling in connection to business and future workers such as, “please consider that the school is a place of work and business and clothing should be reflective of that setting” (Policy 1).

The opening statement of Policy 2 balances the comfort of the individual, in that they should be able to “get through the day,” with the “fact that they are in an environment that must remain favorable to learning for all in attendance.” Similar to Policy 1, this beginning statement is an appeal to the greater good of the school which is seen to be impacted by individual actions when it is concerned with an individual. The policy then includes a list of prohibited dress that is considered “unacceptable” as it can “offend or distract others,” followed by the consequences,
which will be determined by staff and administration, such as “the opportunity to cover up” or removal from class until a parent brings a change of clothing. Policy 2 separates clothing that is prohibited due to its distracting or offensive nature and dress that is regulated due to health standards, specifically, indoor footwear.

Policy 3 has an opening statement that is unlike the other policies included in this analysis as it begins with a statement on the nature of childhood and young adulthood. Instead of beginning like the first two policies with a contrast of individual and collective rights, Policy 2 states, “we want to create a wholesome atmosphere where children can be children without the pressures to ‘hurry up and be young adults’.” This policy does not prioritize control over the collective or production of future workers, but rather presents a judgement of how clothing impacts children’s social and psychological development. However, this developmental statement is left vague as the policy transitions immediately to a focus on the “physical and personal safety of all of our students,” which is followed by a long list of dress prohibitions including that of cosmetic makeup. The policy does not include any disciplinary consequences for dress violations.

Policy 4 begins with, “the attitude we bring to learning is reflected in the way in which we come dressed for it.” This policy endorses a belief in a communicative character of clothing, such that an attitude can be ‘read’ from one’s dress. Clothing that shows the correct attitude for learning is “clean, warm, and comfortable” and is not clothing that is “too revealing or displays inappropriate words or messages.” The policy lists specific prohibited clothing and a measurement guideline for clothing that could be too revealing. For example, shorts or skirts “should fall below the tip of your longest finger when your hands are placed at your sides.” It is not just the student’s attitude toward learning that is important because the policy also aligns
school with the “workplace.” It can be expected through this comparison that an attitude toward learning is similar to an attitude towards work.

Policy 5 begins with an authoritative position that “home and school need to co-operate in the matter of dress” and that “school is the child’s place of business, and children who are dressed in appropriate school clothing seem to do a better job.” Similar to the previously mentioned policies, Policy 5 again correlates school with business and presents the concern that dress can impact work productivity. The policy ends with a brief list of prohibited clothing and a reminder to wear proper footwear.

“Common sense” and “good taste” are the primary concerns for dress in Policy 6. Again, it views school as “a place of work” and presents a list of prohibited clothing and a measurement guideline to ensure clothing is not too revealing, “tops must adhere to the ‘3 finger rule’ (straps are to be 3 fingers wide covering undergarment straps).” Although the list of prohibited items, which overwhelmingly target female students, are highly specific and extensive, the justification for the dress code in this policy is brief and vague. ‘Common sense’ and ‘good taste’ assume a shared understanding of these terms, which arguably does not exist. Rather, they are both intricately entangled with ideals of class, gender, and race intersections. Furthermore, ‘place of work’ does not narrow down what type of dress is required. There are many different types of work which require all varieties of dress.

Policy 7 places the responsibility of appearance on the child and their parents, but states that clothing cannot be “distracting or offensive” as this could be “detrimental to the educational atmosphere of the school.” The policy specifies that it could be distracting to both teachers and other students. Although it does not specify who may report that a student’s appearance “is felt to be negatively distracting,” the policy includes consequences for dress violations such as
changing, covering up, or a parent meeting with administration. The policy ends with a list of prohibited clothing that is considered ‘detrimental’ which are said to be agreed upon by “staff in conjunction with parents.” It is unclear the process by which the parents and staff came to an agreement on each of the items in the dress code. Furthermore, if all parents truly agreed that their children will not wear these clothes, it may not be necessary to have the strict code. Thus, it may be that such lists represent the desires of a portion of parents who have agreed in order to enforce these expectations on the rest of the parents.

Through this brief deconstruction of each of the policies, it is evident that although they appear to be written neutrally, they are heavily influenced by the values of their anonymous authors. Within these seven policies are beliefs about the purpose of schooling, the nature of learning, the rights of an institution, and understandings of children, childhood, and development. Many of the codes included in this analysis provide specific statements about the connections between dress, work, and learning. The following section will present a dedicated analysis of the major themes of these policies.

Dividing Practices

Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them (Foucault, 1970/1977, p. 200).

Thus far, this thesis has attempted to show how the subject of ‘youth’ has been constructed through presumptions of deviance and innocence. The previous chapter illustrated how appeals to a legitimate authority of dress codes represents “a certain way of regulating and constructing discourses that define a particular domain of objects and, at the same time,
determine the place of the ideal subject that can and must know those objects” (Foucault, 1980/2000, p. 267). The question that Foucault (1980/2000) explores is “how can a scientific knowledge arise from a real practice?” (p. 268). At this point, the analysis will now turn to focus on the ‘real practices’ within the dress codes. These practices, previously referred to as dividing practices, represent the practical steps taken to separate one subject from another. However, ‘practical steps’ may be a misleading phrase because for Foucault (1980/2000), “these types of practices are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances…but, up to a point, possess their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence, and ‘reason’” (p. 225). It is the internality of these practices that allows them to operate in a “taken-for-granted” (Foucault, 1980/2000, p. 225) form that will be examined in the dress code policies.

Paul Rabinow (1984) states that, “essentially, ‘dividing practices’ are modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science (or pseudo-science) and the practice of exclusion – usually in a spatial sense, but always in a social one” (p. 8). The task of this section is to present both the spatial and social exclusions that are created through dress codes which define the subject-positions that Elementary students can occupy. These subject-positions will be located through an analysis of the concept of ‘capital’, defined as “the assets and characteristics that a person or position possesses” (Johnstonbaugh, 2018). Two main areas of capital will be explored: cultural and economic. It will not only be the amount of cultural or economic capital

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3 The separated forms of capital are explored in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Economic capital relates to material and financial resources and cultural capital refers to a person’s education in “the knowledge, skills, and tastes” (Johnstonbaugh, 2018, p. 594) that a person possesses. Access to each of these forms of capital effects a person’s position in society.
that the child possesses that will be explored, but also how the child’s body is used as cultural and economic capital by adults.

Importantly, it should be acknowledged that this analysis begins on a foundation of, at least, two crucial subject-positions: student and child. As to the former, it must be recognized that the ‘student’ referred to in these policies has been constructed through the creation of a compulsory schooling system. The form of ‘student’ that must attend a school in which their grade corresponds to their age and they are ranked, compared, and graded against their peers and ‘norms’, is a subject-position constructed by and connected to a, relatively recent, history of institutional practices. Likewise, it is the aim of the analysis of dividing practices to separate the concept of ‘child’ from a transcendental, always-already to a socially constructed idea rooted in history. In this analysis, the interplay between these two primary subject-positions, student and child, will offer a beginning lens from which to examine the regulation of bodies.

**Theme 1: Surveillance**

Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces; the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralization of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather than the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies (Foucault, 1995, p. 217).

As discussed in Chapter 2, disciplinary power begins with a network of surveillance. This section will provide an analysis of the surveillant organization of the dress codes. Merlingen
(2011) argues that “networked power is more about the co-ordination of actors than it is about their disciplinary normalization” (p. 152). This section is structured as a detailed look into how each of the main actors – parents, students, and staff – are positioned within the policies.

**Parental surveillance and surveillance of parents**

The practices of compulsory schooling that require children to register and attend a school for a set number of days in the year have created a new space in which the child’s body must be present. In this new space, the subject-positions of ‘child’ and ‘student’ collaborate and conflict in a concert of discursive regimes. Robinson (2008) describes compulsory schooling as “a critical area perceived to require close surveillance to stabilize and reinforce the status quo” (p.118). Tension around the moral influence of the school have led to panics which can put pressure on policy makers and school administration.

All of the policies in this analysis specifically mention the role of the parent, although in differing ways: “choices regarding student attire rest primarily with the parent and student” (Policy 1); “in some cases a parent may be asked to bring suitable clothing to school” (Policy 2); “school administration, staff and the PAC [Parent Advisory Council] endorse the following clothing expectations” (Policy 3) “we would appreciate parents monitoring what their children are wearing to school” (Policy 4); “the home and the school need to co-operate in the matter of dress” (Policy 5); “it is expected that parents will ensure their child(ren) use common sense and good taste in dress for school” (Policy 6); and, “the appearance of any young person is primarily the responsibility of the child and his/her parents” (Policy 7). These statements are representative of the struggle between ‘child’ and ‘student’ and the tension between institutional control and parent agency. Policy 5 frames the issue in a jurisdictional sense where there are two distinct places, home and school, which are forced to work together. Although presented as cooperation,
ultimately, home must meet the requirements of the institution. Children are required by law to ‘be[come]’ students by attending an institution or institutionalizing the home. These policies align dress with the process of ‘be[com]ing’ a student and the parent is positioned as the ‘manager’ of this transition. As will be discussed further, this is not a static process from child to student and vice versa simply with the change in space from home to school. As such, parents are not simply responsible for a child, but a child-student.

According to Policy 6, there are ‘expectations’ that the parent must meet when managing the child-student. The vague reference points of “common sense” and “good taste” are provided for the parent. These ideals are in effect direct reference to class values, historically associated with the middle-class. This statement in Policy 6 is an example of how dress code policies are part of the surveillance used to “reinforce the status quo” (Robinson, 2008, p. 118). The cooperation between home and school may change based on the socioeconomic class of the parents in order to reinforce the values of the dominant class. In this policy, the dress decisions are not presented as a mutual relationship between institution and parent, but rather a directive from the institution to parents.

The idea that the school and home must work in a partnership is explored by Crozier (1998) who found that the increasing marketization of education, in the context of the UK, has led to more surveillance over parents which is enacted differently based on class. For working-class parents, the ‘partnership’ between parents and teachers was used more to train parents how to be ‘good parents’, whereas for middle-class parents the partnership was used to ensure that teachers could maintain their professional rights without over-influence from parents (Crozier, 1998). Recalling the anticipated ‘cooperation’ from Policy 5, the relationship between home and school is affected by class values. In this way, the ambiguity of dress codes with terms such as
“co-operate” (Policy 5) and “common sense” (Policy 6) allow for the subjective targeting of parents based on socioeconomic status. The child’s body becomes a marker of wealth and the assumed values connected to that social position. Dress codes create the opportunity for middle-class values to be reinforced through the disciplining of parents as managers of children’s bodies. Good parents are those who understand “good taste,” who are already part of the middle-class, and are able to ensure the child’s adherence to “common sense” (Policy 6). Thus, the child’s body becomes a symbol for the cultural and economic capital of parents.

The positioning of parents as the managers of the child-student’s body assumes a “natural’ authority over their offspring” (Valentine, 2010, p. 31). Policy 6 upholds the idea of the parent as the authority figure as it addresses the parent directly, “it is expected that parents will ensure…” However, Policy 1 and Policy 7 approach the body management of children by parents more as a partnership in that, “choices regarding student attire rest primarily with the parent and student” and “the appearance of any young person is primarily the responsibility of the child and his/her parents.” The position of parent-manager does not disappear in this case, but rather the self-management of the child becomes more visible. Policy 7 still maintains that parents are the managers as it titles the dress code “Expectations of Parents/Guardians.”

Policy 4, on the other hand, positions parents more as ‘gatekeepers’ rather than managers as it asks parents to “monitor” their children’s clothing. In this case, the child chooses, and the parent assesses the clothing according to the standards of the school. The parent intervenes only when necessary, in the form of an inspection.

The mention of parents in the dress codes works to create a “continuous hierarchical figure” (Foucault, 1995, p. 197) between home and school. Instead of the bodily inspection existing only within the school space, the body is examined in the home as well. The surveillance
of the child-student’s body by parents contributes to the “omnipresent and omniscient power that subdivides itself in a regular, uninterrupted way” (Foucault, 1995, p. 197). Indeed, so far this analysis has approached the parent-manager as only having jurisdiction over their own child, but the idea of the “school community” (Policy 1) places parents in the broader sense as managers over all the child-students. The conflation of child and student in the community removes the idea of ‘ownership’ between parent and child, allowing for the management of all child-students by all parent-managers. As such, the surveillant relationship between parent and their own child may be stronger, but there still exists a surveillance of all children by all parents. Thus, the discursive establishment of a ‘school community’ widens the surveillant architecture from a panopticon, few observing the many, to an omniopticon of the many observing the many.

This omnioptic surveillance also extends to parents observing parents as “the school tends to constitute minute social observatories that penetrate even to the adults and exercise regular supervision over them” (Foucault, 1995, p. 211). The child’s clothing becomes a marker for good or bad parenting. Foucault (1995) stated that “the codified power to punish turns into a disciplinary power to observe” (p. 224). This ‘power to observe’ links the network of actors together to create an efficient disciplinary apparatus. Through the surveillance of parents, norms of parenting can be maintained. A ‘natural’ authority of parents over their children is normalized through the dress code policies by the expectations placed on parents to monitor their children. This authority comes under the scrutiny of the omniopticon whereby parents judge parenting. Parenting is discursively constructed as an authoritarian role which must be properly enacted for the good of the ‘school community’. The dress code policies construct ‘bad parenting’, or non-authoritarian parenting, as a threat to the well-being, safety, and security of the school.
The positioning of parents as a ‘natural’ authority over children constructs parenting as a stage of property ownership. The child’s body is owned by the parent as property that can be manipulated and disciplined according to the requirements of the institution. Childhood is the property of adults. Similar to how an expensive brand name material item signals wealth, the child’s body is constructed by dress codes to be a signal of good or bad parenting abilities (cultural capital) and socioeconomic status of the family (economic capital).

**Surveillance by students**

During the Elementary school years, children’s bodies vary widely and change rapidly in a relatively short period of time. While Secondary dress codes address a body that is still continually changing, arguably, the Elementary years see the most dramatic and rapid physical changes. In other words, Elementary dress codes speak to a more diverse variety of bodily awareness, bodily performance, and identity. The dress codes of these years are then formative for how children understand their bodies and what spaces their bodies can occupy and exist within. Not only are these years important for how the body is understood in later years, but as Gleason (2001) argues, “since children had few sources of cultural capital besides their physical selves, the body was an important signifier of identity and acted as a commodity both of belonging and ostracization” (p. 202). This section will also address how surveillance of each other’s bodies has an impact on social peer groups.

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1995) focusses on the built-in ambiguity of Bentham’s panopticon in that the prisoners do not know when or by whom they are being surveilled. Likewise, the dress code policies build in this ambiguity, for example, Policy 7 states that “when a student’s appearance is felt to be negatively distracting, he or she will be asked to get changed or to cover up.” In this case, there is a person who *feels* there is a distraction. The
The anonymous nature of who can report a distraction means that students can surveil and report each other, both in terms of being distracted or reporting on behalf of someone who is distracted. In other words, it may not be staff or administration who feel that a student or themselves are negatively distracted by another student’s clothing. It may be another student reporting a negative distraction and performing the examination of attire. The ambiguity of ‘distraction’ allows for a surveillance of students by each other, thus the policy aims to “enroll them as allies in its network” (Merlingen, 2011, p. 155).

The term ‘distraction’ targets the subject-position of student and it is highly influenced by essentialized positioning of the child into male and female. Specifically, the male child is a distracted-student and the female child is a distracting-student. A large portion of the clothing that is prohibited is typically worn by females (skirts, shirts showing midriff, low cut clothing, high heels, spaghetti strap tops, short shorts). The ambiguity of ‘distraction’ normalizes the surveillance of female students by male students. In other words, the dress codes assume that male children are intuitively surveyors of female children’s bodies, and, as such, female students are responsible for ensuring their appearance does not overly attract the male’s attention. The use of ‘distraction’ as ‘distraction from learning’, constructs male students as incapable of regulating their own behaviour towards learning. It also assumes that male students prioritize the surveillance of female students over their own learning, and thus a dress code protects the education of male students against their own instincts. This preserves gender inequality in education where it is the male-student who is prioritized and also works to uphold heteronormative values in that it assumes all males are attracted to females.

In terms of a map of network surveillance, males assume a dominant position in contrast to females through the production of a “hegemonic masculinity” (Valentine, 2010, p. 30). The
expectation that males are natural surveyors consequently positions females as the naturally surveilled. Although the policies prefer that students do not see bodies, less they be distracted, but rather remain disciplined, focused learners, they simultaneously set up a reference point by which students do surveil bodies. Dress codes allow for students to surveil each other to determine the ‘deviants’ as Foucault (1995) stated that the deviant became the “social enemy” (p. 299). Educational policies teach students to exclude those who do not share the same image. Valentine (2010) states that “young people’s bodies and identities are embedded in complex networks of relations in which the power to permit or withdraw friendship – to include or to exclude – is central to children’s school cultures” (p. 27). Dress codes do not necessarily align the deviant with exclusion from social groups. On the contrary, deviance from the teacher’s perspective could represent acceptance from peers. However, what remains is that dress codes add another layer to the network of power relations within children’s social groups. Dress codes mobilize the exclusion of peers based on appearance.

Considering the previously discussed connection of social and economic class to the policies, students may see clothing as a “status-marker” (Bodine, 2003, p. 56) and discriminate on the basis of socioeconomic status. The language in Policy 6 referring to “good taste” could be perceived as a requirement for brand-name clothing creating a competitive atmosphere than delineates those who have money and those who don’t. This may put pressure on families to buy clothing that is out of their means for the purpose of meeting the institution’s standards or ensuring their child a higher place in the social hierarchy, perhaps even in ‘resistance’ to such unstated expectations for those without the expected means. Competitive dressing has been a foundational argument for the adoption of strict uniform policies in schools (Bodine, 2003).
The uniform debate aside, the dress code policies in this analysis serve to exacerbate a competitive atmosphere that leads to class discrimination. One way this is done is through the language of “respect for themselves” (Policy 1). Raby (2005) discusses the impacts of creating external criteria for the concept of self-respect in that it is connected to “gendered and class-laden terms” (p. 82). Thus, the requirements of self-respect or even to “keep themselves warm and dry” (Policy 2) or “clean, warm, and comfortable” (Policy 4), works to make the child responsible for their economic disadvantages and connect these disadvantages to their intrinsic self-worth. In other words, it is not self-respecting to be of a lower socioeconomic class.

Another key word which bears the same ambiguity of ‘distraction’, is the term ‘offense’ used in Policy 2, Policy 3, Policy 6, and Policy 7. Gereluk (2007) aptly states that “the criteria for what is deemed offensive shifts from place to place, along with the shared norms and values of the particular community and context” (p. 647). Policy 2 places the term ‘offensive’ within quotation marks nodding to the interpretive quality of the word and also follows with “i.e, drug, violence, racist or sexist related message” within parentheses. In contrast, Policy 3 uses the term offensive as interchangeable with inappropriate, broadening the scope of the word to infinite interpretations. Likewise, Policy 6 bans “articles of clothing that display vulgar, offensive or suggestive slogans, alcohol related and/or offensive pictures.” Placing offensive as compatible with suggestive again contributes to the vague nature of the word. Policy 7 specifies not the type of clothing that this considered offensive but rather the target of offense who are “teachers or other students,” which is a very broad scope of governance. However, the policy mentions later that clothing which is “advertising drugs or alcohol or displaying any suggestive sexual message…expressing vulgar language, be racist or sexist comments” (Policy 7) is prohibited and this could be correlated with the type of appearance considered offensive.
Without specifically mentioning ‘offense’, Policy 1 presents a list that has similar items to the policies that do specify offense:

- Represents or promotes alcohol or drugs
- Makes sexual reference
- Uses inappropriate language
- Depicts or promotes violence, racism, or other discriminations
- Is intimidating to others; has brand names that relate to profanity

Additionally, Policy 5 includes “clothing with obscene suggestions violent sayings or pictures” in prohibited dress and Policy 4 bans “clothing that is too revealing or displays inappropriate words or messages.” Altogether, the policies place illicit substances, sexism, racism, violence, vulgar language, and appearance or communication that is sexual within the realm of offense. Therefore, each of the policies attempts to define a category of clothing as offensive.

Although they may use similar terms to define offense, the policies have not been able to separate ‘offensive’ from its broad and subjective position. In other words, there is still no clear line for what is offensive, why something is offensive, or even who has the right to be offended. Considering how the network of surveillance is a fluid organization with bodies in strong and weak positions, members of this network will have differing access to using the diffuse concept of ‘offense’. Cultural capital may influence who can be offended. For example, considering how a previously mentioned study by Morris (2005) saw the construction of Black female students as “inadequately feminine” and Black male students as aggressive, the access to naming an ‘offense’ by students who already face discrimination may be less than those who do not have to counter harmful constructions of their bodies. Furthermore, vague renderings of ‘offense’ can be used to normalize the discrimination of marginalized bodies.
**Surveillance of staff**

Staff members of the schools, teachers and administration, are also mentioned in the dress codes. Policies 2, 3, and 7 position staff as part of the surveillance of children’s dress and in charge of the formal discipline of students who violate the policy. However, Policy 1 states that “as role models, staff should dress in ways that set good examples for students” which brings the dress code to bear not only on students, but on staff as well. School staff must embody the policy and willingly invite surveillance of their dress as exemplars of “respect for themselves, for others, and for the school” (Policy 1). Hence, school staff are enveloped within the heterarchical networks of dress codes. Even though staff may enjoy a privileged position within the heterarchy, they are not outside these relations.

Although assumed to be a hierarchical structure with staff and parents holding power to discipline children’s dress, the network of power relations in dress codes is much more complex. Parents, staff, and children are all positioned in the surveillance of each other. Foucault (as cited by Rabinow, 1984) states that “in this form of management, power is not totally entrusted to someone who would exercise it alone, over others, in an absolute fashion; rather, this machine is one in which everyone is caught, those who exercise this power as well as those who are subjected to it” (p. 19).

**Theme 2: Individual vs. Collective**

Although Policy 1 recognizes the “individual’s right to self-expression,” it ultimately prioritizes the well-being of the collective school community as a justification for the dress code. It is the only policy of those selected for analysis that nods to the individual’s rights within the collective. The other policies target the “environment” (Policy 2) or “educational atmosphere” (Policy 7) as the priority target of schooling to be cultivated, one that is susceptible to being
spoiled by clothing that lacks “good taste” (Policy 6). As such, referring back to the primary subject-position of student, it is not a student that schools are concerned with, but rather always students. It is only when the individual marks themselves apart from the collective that they are seen as an individual. The institution is meant to cultivate one cohesive ‘atmosphere’ of which individuals are a threat. Therefore, dress codes prioritize the collective so as to continue to mask individuality. As Foucault (1995) stated, “discipline is no longer simply an art of distributing bodies…but of composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine” (p. 164) and in this machine “it was the departure from the norm, the anomaly…that haunted the school” (p. 299).

The machinery of individuals is created through the process of disciplinary power which “marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him” (Foucault, 1982/2000, p. 331). There is a process of social exclusion as part of the dividing practice.

A prominent exclusion in the dress code policies involves the types of dress typically associated with sexuality. The policies refer to this as clothing that “makes sexual reference” (Policy 1), “bare midriff, low cut clothing, and very short skirts/shorts” (Policy 2), “spaghetti straps…bare midriffs or backs (tops should be long enough to cover stomach and back when student is standing or sitting)...low cut tops…short shorts” (Policy 3), “clothing that is too revealing…bare midriffs, pants which have a tendency to fall down, t-shirts with a low neckline or spaghetti straps and no short skirts/shorts (they fall below the tip of your longest finger when your hands are placed by your sides)” (Policy 4), “short shorts, tank tops, halter tops” (Policy 5), “extremes…(too tight, too short, too little, too much)...spaghetti strap tops, beach wear, open midriff tops” (Policy 6), and “too revealing such as: spaghetti straps, short shorts, or short shirts” (Policy 7). The important question to ask is: Why must this clothing be excluded?
A number of the dress codes include a form of rationalization for the exclusion of these forms of dress such that it: “is distracting or offensive to teachers or other students” (Policy 7), is not appropriate for a “workplace” (Policy 4), does not represent “good taste” (Policy 6), and “distracts oneself or others from focusing on teaching and learning” (Policy 1). These arguments are examples of the “taken-for-granted” nature of dress code policy rationalizations. It is not self-evident that school is a workplace, that a halter-top is distracting or offensive, or that teaching and learning cannot take place if there is a bare midriff in the room. These arguments can be seen as “a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly to all” (Foucault, 1980/2000, p. 226). As to the latter, it is not immediately obvious that everyone knows and agrees upon a definition of “good taste” (Policy 6) and as Raby (2005) notes, taste is linked to class and is “slippery and flexible in its application” (p. 80). Indeed, Valentine (2010) notes that the beginning of universal education, at least in the UK context, had the intention of imposing “middle-class values on the population as a whole” (p. 25). As a point of clarification, it is not the goal of this analysis to judge arguments in dress codes according to a standard of ‘wrong’ or ‘right’. Instead, the aim is to examine how the arguments operate on a form of rationality because “it’s true that ‘practices’ don’t exist without a certain regime of rationality” (Foucault, 1980/2000, p. 230).

In his meticulous analysis of incarceration, Foucault (1995) showed the prison system largely as a failure in the context of the rehabilitation of its inhabitants or reduction in crime, but the broader penal mechanisms as a success in the legitimization of the power to punish and in the division of the delinquents from the law-abiding. Foucault (1995) distinguished how the prison system is not interested in crime, but rather in the delinquency behind the crime. Therefore, dress codes are not concerned with the clothing, but rather the sexuality of the body as it is presumed
to influence the productivity of the student. There is a taken-for-granted rationality that clothing
deemed to be sexual, such as “halter tops,” “spaghetti straps,” and “bare midriffs,” will cause a
student or teacher to become distracted. Furthermore, there is a presumption that a child wearing
clothing considered sexual will engage in ‘undesirable’ sexual behaviour.

Banning clothing thought to be connected to sexuality creates a separation between
normal, productive students, presumed to be asexual, and abnormal, unproductive students,
presumed to be sexual ‘too early’ or in an ‘undesirable’ way. However, recalling previous studies
on the relationship of dress codes and sexuality, it is primarily female students who are targeted
as abnormal sexual objects (Drewicz Ewing, 2014). Indeed, much of the clothing listed in the
dress code policies for this analysis are typically worn by female students. Therefore, the female
body is constructed as inherently sexual, but this sexuality must be sublimated in the Elementary
ages for the benefit of male students and teachers.

The opening statement of Policy 3 further exemplifies the drive to hide or delay sexuality
in the Elementary ages: “we want to create a wholesome atmosphere where children can be
children without the pressures to ‘hurry up and be young adults’.” This phrase induces a
discussion about the various ‘pressures’ and subsequently the different definitions of
‘productivity’. For example, thought of from an essentialist perspective that sexuality is for the
purpose of choosing a mate from which to produce children, female sexuality becomes
necessarily unproductive at the Elementary age. The particular exclusion of female sexuality for
the benefit of male teachers and students could reveal patriarchal norms of males as the
productive, laboring subjects and females as the unproductive distraction. Thus, when the dress
code policies refer to schools as a “workplace” (Policy 4) or as the “child’s place of business”
(Policy 5), it is primarily the male students who are expected to embody the ideals of a working
subject. Female elementary students, on the contrary, cannot fulfill their productive purpose of child-bearing and their sexuality must be controlled to ensure the productivity of male students.

However, the practice of shaming female students by marking parts of their bodies as illegal creates norms of femininity that suggest their sexuality should not be visual. Furthermore, it also reduces the complexity of gender into a sex-based binary that separates children according to body parts, or more specifically body parts to be covered (Edwards & Marshall, 2018). Thus, there is at once the normalization of traditional femininity/masculinity and the division of students based on sex. Students, particularly female students, are objectified as they are no longer a person, but a combination of body parts.

The dominant focus in dress codes on female students also means that they are disproportionately surveilled. Discussing outfit choice for a job interview, Hoose (2018) states that “I follow these rules to try to receive the same opportunity as my male peers. However, my white, heterosexual, cisgender male peers may dress to look professional, but they likely do not get dressed wondering whether they look too sexual” (p. 57). To apply this to the school setting, female students not only have to be concerned about their own learning but have the additional responsibility to ensure the visibility of their body does not affect the learning of their male classmates. This means that female students have an additional barrier to increasing their cultural capital.

**Theme 3: Spaces of Exception**

Another common exclusion in the dress codes policies is clothing that “depicts or promotes violence, racism or other discriminations” (Policy 1), “clothing baring ‘offensive’ language, images or acronyms (i.e., drug, violence, racist, or sexist related messages)” (Policy 2), “clothing with obscene suggestions violent sayings or pictures” (Policy 5), “clothing that display
vulgar, offensive, or suggestive slogans” (Policy 6), or “expressing vulgar language, be racist or sexist comments [sic]” (Policy 7). Where the first exclusion focused on clothing that showed body parts, this exclusion is about the content or messages of clothing.

Two of the dress codes also implement a ban on headgear while including an exception for ‘religious head coverings’ (Policy 6). Although at first it seems inclusive to allow an exception for religious head coverings, it normalizes the uncovered – presumably white – body as the neutral body and a person with a head covering fills the place of abnormal but permitted. In positioning students who wear religious head coverings in a place of exception, it grants them the opportunity to exist. It makes the institution of the school a place which normally would not have students wearing religious head coverings but has adjusted to allow this.

In the process of writing in religious headgear as an exception, there has been an examination, which Foucault described this as a method to “establish over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them” (Foucault, 1995, p. 184). This examination produces a hierarchy and it can be argued that the space of exception places those with religious head coverings as subordinate. Furthermore, because head coverings are written as an exception, uncovered heads are asserted as the norm and those who depart from this norm will be surveilled more as they are the anomaly. It can be seen from the one short phrase, “unless it is for religious reasons” (Policy 7), that these policies are intimately engaged in the workings of knowledge and power whereby a person is given the permission to exist.

In her discussion on the practice of veiling, Zine (2006) states that:

whether the veil and burqa is a mandated form of dress for women in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan, or if it is outlawed in secular public institutions in countries like Turkey, the effect is essentially the same; namely that these practices of disciplining and regulating women’s bodies are imposed by state authorities and thereby challenge the
political and spiritual autonomy of Muslim women to make reasoned choices about their bodies. (p. 244)

While the space of exception in the dress codes in this analysis may be viewed as a place that fosters the right to choose because it neither bans nor mandates head coverings, it still remains that the policies assert themselves as the cultural, political, and spiritual authorities who provide this choice. That said, the space of exception could be a very powerful place. The mention of religious head-coverings could be seen as an example for students to challenge rules that do not take into account religious and cultural differences. It should be noted that Policy 2 and Policy 4 ban hats and hoods with no exception for religious coverings.

Policy 3 is the only dress code which mentions the application of cosmetic makeup: “makeup is discouraged. Minimal makeup (lip-gloss and/or mascara) is acceptable only at the upper-intermediate level). No makeup is to be applied at school.” The exception for older Elementary students to wear minimal makeup is part of the discursive construction that childhood and child’s body is in a state of natural innocence (Robinson, 2008). Makeup represents a departure from this state that must be resisted. Recalling that Policy 3 begins with the task to create a “wholesome atmosphere where children can be children without the pressures to ‘hurry up and be young adults’,” it would appear that makeup is constructed as a threat to this wholesome environment. Where the ‘natural’ face of childhood is one without makeup, the use of lip-gloss and mascara represents a loss of this innocence. The application of makeup becomes a dividing line between the worshiped, mythical state of childhood innocence and the grieved tragedy of its premature end.

Garlen (2019) states that ‘childhood’, “is not simply a descriptor of human development or an innate characteristic of human existence, but rather an identity instituted through habitual acts” (p. 57). Policy 3 constructs makeup, and other items part of an exhaustive list of banned
clothing, as acts that do not correlate with the identity of childhood. However, the exception made for “upper-intermediate” students creates a space in which the transition from childhood to young adulthood is “discouraged” (Policy 3) but tolerated. These upper-intermediate students then are positioned in a space of exception as the departure point from the ‘wholesome child’ to the ‘pressured young adult’. Importantly, it is commonly girls/women who apply makeup. It is thus the natural-faced female child that is constructed as the ultimate portrait of innocence. Boys/men do not have the same ‘visible’ sign of transition into young adulthood – at least not one that is specifically targeted in the dress codes. However, with the construction of a hegemonic masculinity in the dress codes, it can be argued that the application of makeup by a male student would be ‘unwholesome’ due to its departure from norms of masculinity.

**Theme 4: Learn to Work and Work to Learn**

This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body (Foucault, 1995, pp. 25-26)

While the previous themes discuss how the body is discursively constructed in somewhat covert ways within the dress code policies, this final theme is a study of the most overt positioning of the child’s body as a productive vessel within a “workplace” setting. There is a managerial discourse in many of the policies in this analysis stemming from repeated statements about school as a “place of business” (Policy 5) or “work” (Policy 6). The correlation of
schooling with work and business is studied through the concept of “neoliberalism” or “viewing education through a market lens” (Reeves, 2018). There are many competing and complex ideas about neoliberalism and for the purpose of this analysis, it will be used to refer to the connection of schooling to the economy, the economizing of the child’s body, and producing differentiated forms of ‘human capital’ in education (Foucault, 2008).

The aligning of a school as workplace is an interesting concept as arguably, the productivity that the child’s body is expected to perform is not one of actual monetary value. In other words, what the student produces is not connected to any immediate revenue or profit. As such, I argue that the dress codes construct childhood as a period of investment. The productivity of the student is expected to ‘pay’ later by producing workers for the future. However, the students are positioned as ‘workers’ in the school and thus, the focus in dress codes on ‘business’ and ‘workplace’ dehumanizes and objectifies children until they are no more than ‘commodities’ of education.

A large part of a neoliberal view of education is being able to judge the success of teaching and learning through external criteria, usually through standardized testing (Reeves, 2018). Dress codes are also an external criteria of learning with their focus on distraction-free atmospheres and notably from statements such as Policy 5 that, “children who are dressed in appropriate school clothing seem to do a better job.” The appearance of the child is responsible for the performance of the student and this performance must be productive.

Placing the responsibility for learning onto the body of the child not only exempts the institution from being accountable for a student’s performance, but also exacerbates issues of inequality. Policy 4 states that “the attitude we bring to learning is reflected in the way in which we come dressed for it” which further works to place the responsibility for a child’s situation
within their body. For example, a child without clothing that is “clean, warm, and comfortable” (Policy 4) is categorized as a student with a negative attitude toward learning because they are not dressed “for the learning activity” (Policy 4) instead of recognizing issues of access to such clothing. Thus, this corporate pedagogy works to reinforce their marginalization.

Furthermore, factors such as socioeconomic status have a great influence on a student’s educational experience and achievement (Johnstonbaugh, 2018). It can be argued that when Policy 5 states that “children who are dressed in appropriate school clothing seem to do a better job,” this is because students with appropriate clothing may come from a higher socioeconomic status. The student’s success is less about the clothing that they are wearing and more about the advantages of their home life.

The increased marketization of education means that schools become branded. Dress codes are a branding mechanism. For example, Policy 1 which states “please consider that the school is a place of work and business and clothing should be reflective of that setting,” shows that school as a business must take steps to ensure their ‘product’ represent their brand. Although the schools included in this data set are public and service within catchment zones, the option of school choice is not entirely eliminated as parents may choose to move to area to be within a particular school catchment or certain districts may offer out of catchment enrollment. It is therefore reasonable to project that even public schools build a brand to attract consumers.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

Although symbolic understandings of childhood such as ‘innocence’ and ‘deviance’ (Valentine, 2010) still operate within dress codes, children’s bodies and childhood have also been symbolized through discursive regimes of ‘productivity’ which works to place cultural and economic value on the body. The dress codes used in this analysis construct childhood as the property of adults – specifically the child’s body is the property of the parents and the student’s body is the property of the school.

As property, the child’s body is valued as capital that acts to signify the cultural and economic capital of the parents. The dress codes position parents as managers of their property, the child’s body, and expect parents to use “common sense” and “good taste” (Policy 6). These terms are associated with middle-class values which means the school assumes parents of lower socioeconomic status do not have ‘good taste’ and must be trained. The dress codes allow for the child’s body to produce knowledge about a family’s class and consequently permit the subjective targeting of parents based on their perceived socioeconomic status.

It is not only the institution that enacts surveillance of parents through the child’s body but there is a heterarchy of surveillance which includes parents. Parents are positioned within dress codes as a ‘natural authority’ over the child which means that a child’s body becomes the marker for ‘good’ or ‘bad’ parenting. ‘Good parents’ would “ensure” (Policy 6) that their children follow the dress codes. These parents would have both the economic means to provide the appropriate clothing for their child and also the knowledge and skills about middle-class clothing values. Therefore, the child’s body is not only a marker of the parent’s economic capital but is also a symbol of their cultural capital.
In attending school, the child’s body also ‘becomes’ positioned as a student. The student’s body is managed by the school which is concerned with the productivity of students. The dress codes contend that a major threat to the productivity of students is ‘distraction’. However, the list of clothing that is considered ‘distracting’ is connected to the essentializing of the child’s body into male and female and the objectifying of the female body as a sexual object that must be covered for the benefit of the male student. The possibility of a male student becoming ‘distracted’ means that the dress codes assume students are surveilling each other. In this surveillant map, the male student has the stronger position as the surveyor and the female student is the naturally surveilled. The male child is a distracted-student and the female child is a distracting-student. The dress codes argue that distraction takes away from learning and if they are not learning they will not build their cultural capital. As distraction is targeted at female students, their cultural capital is valued less. Dress codes protect the learning of male students from the ‘distracting’ female body, making it easier for male students to accumulate cultural capital in terms of access to education. Female students will face a greater challenge in their learning due to the additional task of regulating their dress.

The differentiation of female students in the “learning environment” (Policy 1) normalizes hegemonic masculinity where a student’s sex determines their access to learning and reproduces heteronormativity in that it is assumed male children are attracted to female children. The differential valuing of children’s bodies operates in the form of taken-for-granted rationalities. Another area in the dress codes that permits the exclusion of children’s bodies through a taken-for-granted assumption is dress associated with the concept of ‘offense’. This term is arguably ambiguous and can be subjectively enforced. The fluid and multivalent nature of power relationships means that access to invoking ‘offense’ will depend on a student’s
position within the network of power. For example, this project has revealed how the female body is assumed to be naturally distracting to male students, could there be bodies within the British Columbia Elementary School context that are constructed as naturally offensive?

In a number of the dress codes in this analysis, clothing is banned with certain exceptions. Head-coverings are considered inappropriate except in the case that it is for religious reasons. Thus, there are certain bodies that exist within a space of exception. This thesis has argued that although these spaces of exception may be a powerful space, they also create as the norm the unexceptional, presumably white, uncovered body. In the normalizing of body without a head-covering, the school asserts itself as the cultural authority to decide which bodies can exist within the institution. The analysis also discussed how a dress code that allows makeup for upper-intermediate students reveals how the school views childhood as the property of adults wherein they must remain innocent, or without makeup, for as long as possible. Makeup is a visible sign of the departure from childhood and a show of independence from the ownership of the parent and school.

The final theme looks at how overt economic value is layered onto the child’s body through references to the school as the child’s workplace. Childhood through the economic lens is seen as an investment stage. The school is meant to construct a productive worker, or ‘human capital’, for future gains. In this neoliberal view of schooling, the student is an investment into the economy. However, economizing of the child’s body in the dress codes causes further differentiation of students of low socioeconomic status by producing their subjectivities based on their clothing. As schools are marketed to attract consumers, dress codes have become a branding mechanism and all those who do not meet the standards, of middle-class values, are marked as deviant. “Although it is true that prison punished delinquency, delinquency is for the
most part produced in and by an incarceration which, ultimately, prison perpetuates in its turn” (Foucault, 1995, p. 301). Similarly, dress codes produce and perpetuate gender inequality, class discrimination, hegemonic religious ideals, and finally, the dehumanizing of the child into the worker.

**Opportunities for Future Research**

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I had many conversations with colleagues, teachers, and parents about dress codes. At times the topic came up organically, with no connection to this project, and other times it was the result of interest in my pursuit of this degree. Regardless of the catalyst for the conversation, there was never a time when someone was unaware or overly surprised of the presence or nature of dress codes in public schools. The issue is well-known and increasingly being discussed in a variety of forums. It is my hope the discussion will continue and there are areas in which academic research can further the conversation.

This thesis was able to touch on several areas of interest in the dress codes such as gender, class, and religious discrimination. Each of these areas certainly warrants further, more in-depth exploration. For example, the topic of head coverings in the British Columbia public Elementary school context is a crucial and underexplored area. As the data set for this analysis was limited, future research should look at a larger set of dress codes to see how head coverings are discussed. Furthermore, dress code analysis, including this thesis, is conducted from the perspective of adults. Future research should explore children’s ideas about dress codes.

In timing with the completion of this thesis, a public-school trustee was published in a negative light in the media for comments made during a trustee meeting regarding abolishing dress codes in the school district (Peters, 2019). In his reply to the reporter he advocated for
dress codes stating that, “these have been in place, and working effectively, for a long time” and that teachers “should not have to endure inappropriate or sexually provocative or revealing dress in their work environment” (Furgason, 2019). This was not the only school district having discussions about dress codes and there is an opportunity for future research to analyze these conversations, through the recordings of trustee meetings and the subsequent media reports. These conversations further reveal how dress codes are a form of social control which continually operate to discipline students.

The aforementioned trustee also stated, “let’s ask Chilliwack parents, teachers and students their views” (Furgason, 2019). An important continuation of this research is to analyze the positions of teachers within dress code governance. How does dress code disciplining effect their practice? What are their beliefs about the positioning of the school as a ‘business’ through dress codes? How might they address the conflict of disagreement with educational policy and their responsibility to enforce it?

These questions and opportunities for future research target dress code policies not just as a barrier to choosing how to dress, but to the governing structure of school as an institution. Foucault (1977/1994) stated, “the problem is not changing people’s consciousness – or what’s in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth” and that it is a matter of “detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (p. 133).
References


Appendix

Table A1

Selected Dress Code Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Dress Code Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy 1</td>
<td>Summit Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Dress Code</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decisions regarding student dress require the careful balance of the individual's right to self-expression against the school's responsibility to ensure an appropriate learning environment. Consideration must be given to the health, safety and welfare of the school community. Although choices regarding student attire rest primarily with the parent and student, the school dress code identifies some standards that should assist these decisions and identify consistent expectations for the school as a learning community. To that end, we offer the following guidance so that students learn to make good independent decisions regarding their choice of clothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All members of the school community should dress in ways that are appropriate for their particular roles and show respect for themselves, for others, and for the school. As role models, staff should dress in ways that set good examples for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All members of the school community are expected to wear clothing appropriate for school including safe, appropriate footwear. Clothing that distracts oneself or others from focusing on teaching and learning is inappropriate. Please consider that the school is a place of work and business and clothing should be reflective of that setting. It is not appropriate or respectful to wear clothing that:</td>
</tr>
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<td>o Represents or promotes alcohol or drugs</td>
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</table>
Policy 2  Edgewater Elementary  

**School Dress Code**

Students should come to school dressed in clothing that allows them to get through the day comfortably, while giving consideration to the fact that they are in an environment that must remain favorable to learning for all in attendance. This includes dressing so they will be able to keep themselves warm and dry, wearing foot attire that will allow them to play and move throughout the school day safely, and electing to wear clothing that will not offend or distract others. Hats and hoods are not to be worn while inside the school unless it is for a school event; which will be advertised in advance.

The following are considered “unacceptable” for school attire:

- visible undergarments
- bare midriff, low cut clothing, and very short skirts/shorts
- clothing baring “offensive” language, images or acronyms (i.e., drug, violence, racist or sexist related messages)
- outside footwear is not worn inside the school.

School staff and administration will make a decision as to whether or not a particular clothing item or outfit is unacceptable. In a case where a student’s attire is not considered acceptable, the student will be provided the opportunity to cover up with another piece of clothing. In some cases, a parent may be asked to bring suitable clothing to school for the student to change into before the student is permitted to return to class.
Students **must remove outside** footwear at the entrance way and change into their ‘indoor’ shoes.

- Footwear must be worn inside the school. In the summer months a good pair of sandals (ie. protects the foot sufficiently) is acceptable.

Health regulation stipulate that bare feet and stocking feet are not permitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy 3</th>
<th>Mountain Crest Elementary</th>
<th>Clothing Expectations:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>At Mountain Crest Elementary we want to create a wholesome atmosphere where children can be children without the pressures to ‘hurry up and be young adults’. We want to see clothing worn that will ensure the physical and personal safety of all of our students. School administration, staff and the PAC endorse the following clothing expectations for all students at Mountain Crest: <strong>ALL STUDENTS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• dress appropriately for the weather</td>
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<td>• make sure footwear is safe and appropriate for the activities at an elementary school E.g. – Shoelaces must be done up</td>
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<td>No high heels or high platform shoes</td>
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<td>Pants should not be dragging on the ground</td>
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<td>• no underwear should be showing</td>
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<td>• no clothing with offensive or inappropriate language/images</td>
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<td>• no spaghetti straps (tank tops are okay)</td>
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<td>• no bare midriffs or backs (tops should be long enough to cover stomach and back when student is standing or sitting)</td>
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<td>• no low cut tops</td>
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<td>• no short shorts</td>
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</table>
- Makeup is discouraged. Minimal makeup (lip-gloss and/or mascara) is acceptable only at the upper-intermediate level. No makeup is to be applied at school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy 4</th>
<th>Central Elementary</th>
<th>REGARDING APPROPRIATE DRESS:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>The attitude that we bring to learning is reflected in the way in which we come dressed for it. We would appreciate parents monitoring what their children are wearing to school keeping these guidelines in mind.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Students need to be clean, warm, and comfortable and have clothing appropriate for the learning activity (for example, proper gym attire for intermediate students - t shirt, shorts, and gym shoes).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• School is a workplace. Therefore, Central students should not wear to school clothing that is too revealing or displays inappropriate words or messages. No bare midriffs, pants which have a tendency to fall down, t-shirts with a low neckline or spaghetti straps and no short skirts/shorts (they should fall below the tip of your longest finger when your hands are placed by your sides). Undergarments should not be visible at any time.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Students need to remove hats/hoods while they are in the school.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy 5</th>
<th>Willow Elementary</th>
<th>Student Dress</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>The home and the school need to co-operate in the matter of dress. School is the child's place of business, and children who are dressed in appropriate school clothing seem to do a better job. Short shorts, tank tops, halter tops, clothing with obscene suggestions violent sayings or pictures are not allowed. Please be reminded that students should have appropriate footwear on while in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Policy 6 | Lakewood Elementary | **STUDENT DRESS CODE**  
It is expected that parents will ensure their child(ren) use common sense and good taste in dressing for school. School should be viewed as a place of work. The guidelines include:  
   * Footwear is to be worn at all times.  
   * Extremes are to be avoided (too tight, too short, too little, too much).  
   * Hats and head covers are not to be worn indoors (excluding religious head coverings).  
   * Spaghetti strap tops, beach wear, open midriff tops are not considered appropriate school attire.  
   * Articles of clothing that display vulgar, offensive or suggestive slogans, alcohol related and/or offensive pictures will not be acceptable.  
   * Tops must adhere to the ‘3 finger rule’ (straps are to be 3 fingers wide covering undergarment straps). Tops should not be lower than the clavicle. |
| Policy 7 | Horizon Elementary | **Expectations of Parents/Guardians**  
8. The appearance of any young person is primarily the responsibility of the child and his/her parents. This appearance should not be distracting or offensive to teachers or other students. Nor should it be detrimental to the educational atmosphere of the school. When a student’s appearance is felt to be negatively distracting, he or she will be asked to get changed or to cover up. A parent meeting with administration may be requested. Staff in conjunction with parents, has agreed that the school will maintain the following dress code.  
Students are not to wear attire: |
- advertising drugs or alcohol or displaying any suggestive sexual messages;
- that is too revealing such as: spaghetti straps, short shorts, or short shirts;
- expressing vulgar language, be racist or sexist comments;
- sleepwear (pajama bottoms), unless it is part of spirit week;
- covering their heads unless it is for religious reasons, this includes hats, and hoodies.